

# Analysis to the Impact of MGNREGA on the Empowerment of Women

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## Abstract

Gender inequality has always been a prevailing issue in almost every part of the world. The estimated world population in 2014 is about 7,175,186,584 (7 billion people) where there are about 3610470 males over 3551649 females and the sex ratio is approximately 102 males per 100 females. It means that women make up about half of world's population. It's been years since India got independence but still it lacks behind in terms of women equality. Discrimination, vulnerability and inequality against women is very intense in India due to patriarchal nature of society, societal old norms and traditions, Hindu religion, caste system and poverty etc. To improve the status of women, India has implemented 17 major schemes between 1970 and 2000. By 2000, employment programmes— like the National Rural Employment Programme, Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme, Jawahar Rozgar Yojana and the Employment Assurance Scheme—witnessed women accounting for a fourth of the total employment created. Self-employment generation programmes, like the Integrated Rural Development Programme and the Training for Rural Youth in Self-employment, had more women beneficiaries; 45 per cent by 2000 respectively. In this concern in 2005, the MGNREGA act was passed by the parliament aimed to reduce rural-urban migration, create productive assets in the rural areas, create a more equitable social order, empower the panchayats and empower the women. To empower the women under MGNREGA, there are some provisions for

women such as 1/3rd place is reserved for women, worksite facilities are given such as creche, shed, sanitation etc., work provided within 1.5 radius of accommodation etc. On the other hand there are also some challenges under MGNREGA such as poor worksite facilities provided for women, less wages paid for women, limitation in case of job availability such as work of digging well etc., breaking the provision of 1/3rd beneficiaries of women, absence of childcare facilities as provision of giving crèche, shed etc. facilities, problem of dirty politics and corruption, low wage and non-continuity in payments, structural problems as negligence of the problem of issuing one job card for joint families, negligence of weather problem and more. Through this research paper we have tried to assess the impact of MGNREGA on the empowerment of women and analyze the possibilities and challenges coming in the path of MGNREGA in India through descriptive study.

*Key words: Vulnerability, sex ratio, corruption, employment programmes, MGNREGA etc.*

## Introduction

The estimated world population in 2014 is about 7,175,186,584 (7 billion people) where there are about 3610470 males over 3551649 females and the sex ratio is approximately 102 males per 100 females. Curacao has highest female sex ratio in the world i.e. 83 males per 100 females. On the contrary, the United Arab Emirates has least female sex ratio in the world i.e. 234 males over 100 females respectively. In India, women make up about 48 % of the total

population. If almost one half of India's population is disintegrated from the main stream of development of country, it might have a serious effect on the progress of the country.

Women are always supposed to perform their prime duty which is raising children and ensuring the well-being of the family. It's been years since India got independence but still it lacks behind in terms of women equality. Discrimination against women is quite common in the whole world, but very intense in India due to patriarchal nature of society, societal old norms and traditions, Hindu religion, caste system and poverty etc. To improve the status of women, India has implemented 17 major schemes between 1970 and 2000. By 2000, employment programmes— like the National Rural Employment Programme, Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme, Jawahar Rozgar Yojana and the Employment Assurance Scheme—witnessed women accounting for a fourth of the total employment created. Self-employment generation programmes, like the Integrated Rural Development Programme and the Training for Rural Youth in Self-employment, had more women beneficiaries; 45 per cent by 2000 respectively vii.

It is known that for the growth of any community, active participation of that community in the development process is very essential. Similarly, for the overall improvement in the status of women, their participation is required in the development process. Keeping in view the above perspective, the Ministry of Rural Development has formulated many programmes such as SwarnJayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) now restructured as National Rural Livelihood Mission (Aajeevika), Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY), Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) etc.

The MGNREGA act was passed by the parliament aiming to reduce rural-urban

migration, create productive assets in the rural areas, create a more equitable social order, empower the panchayats and empower the women. To empower the women under MGNREGA, there are some provisions for women such as 1/3rd place is reserved for women, worksite facilities are given such as creche, shed, sanitation etc., work provided within 1.5 radius of accommodation etc. On the other hand, there are some challenges under MGNREGA for instance poor worksite facilities provided for women, less wages paid for women, limitation in case of job availability such as work of digging well etc., breaking the provision of 1/3rd beneficiaries of women, absence of childcare facilities as provision of giving crèche, shed etc. facilities, problem of dirty politics and corruption, low wage and non-continuity in payments, structural problems as negligence of the problem of issuing one job card for joint families, negligence of weather problem and many more. Through this research paper, we have tried to assess the impact of MGNREGA on the empowerment of women and analyze the possibilities and challenges coming in the path of MGNREGA in India through descriptive study.

#### Review of Literature

Praveen Kumar Bebarta in his paper titled "Impact of MGNREGA in the Lives of Tribal People: A Study of Rayagada Block in Gajapati District" tried to assess the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and its various impacts on the lives of tribal people in the district of Gajayati. The is a quantitative study based on a random sample of 50 tribal households from Rayagada block in the Gajapati district of Odisha. The paper gives an understanding about the level of awareness related to the different provisions of MGNREGA and its impact includes socio economic condition, livelihood security, sustainable asset creation and women empowerment.

A study by Dr. S.M. Jawed Akthar, N.P. Abdul

Azeez, Md. Masroor Alam: "Rural Women Participation through MGNREGA Work in the State of Kerala" helps to analyze the women empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society including participation in the decision-making process and access to power are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace. So in Kerala they find the Kudumbashree Role in women empowerment through MGNREGA.

A study by Muhammad Swalin: "Seeing MGNREGA through Gendered Prisms: What it means for Women's Empowerment and Development" helps to analyze the women empowerment through case studies as taking ownership of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Manur block of Tirunelveli district in Tamil Nadu, a 'From the Panchayat to the People Survey' in Vadakkanchery of Kerala and the role of Self Help Groups in the Gorakhpur environment and Action Group in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

#### Problem of the Study (Repeated third time)

Here, it is tried to focus on the impact of MGNREGA on the empowerment of women as there are some provisions for women such as 1/3rd place is reserved for women, worksite facilities are given such as creche, shed, sanitation etc., work provided within 1.5 radius of accommodation etc. Along with this, it is also tried to analyze the possibilities and challenges coming in the path of MGNREGA as poor worksite facilities provided for women, less wages paid for women, limitation in case of job availability such as work of digging well etc., breaking the provision of 1/3rd beneficiaries of women, absence of childcare facilities as provision of giving crèche, shed etc. facilities, problem of dirty politics and corruption, low wage and non-continuity in payments, structural problems as negligence of the problem of issuing one job card for joint families, negligence of weather problem etc. and so on.

#### Objectives

The broad classified objectives of our study are as follows:

- (1) To recognize various possibilities and challenges responsible for the discrimination against women under MGNREGA.
- (2) To assess the impact of MGNREGA on socio-economic wellbeing of women.

#### Methodology

This study is based on qualitative and quantitative research where primary data sources are used as planning commission, reports of Ministry of Rural Development, internet websites and census etc., and the secondary data sources as books, articles, research papers are used to complete this research paper. The research design adopted is descriptive type.

#### Meaning of Women Empowerment

Women empowerment is basically a process to mobilize the vast women power also which aimed at changing the way of systematic forces. In other words, it is the creation of an environment where women can make independent decisions on their personal development as well as shine as equals in society.

- ✓ Women Empowerment through MGNREGA

#### Concept of MGNREGA

In India, for rural development various strategies and programmes through Government are still forwarded, in which MGNREGA has a valuable contribution. The NREGA Act was passed in 2005 that guaranteed 100 days wage of employment in a year to every rural house. Government of India has renamed the NREGA as MGNREGA on 2nd October 2009. On 2 Feb 2006, it was launched in 200 selected districts and was extended to 130 additional districts during 2007-08. It is now implemented in 645 districts

of the country. Under MGNREGA, work is provided for about 100 days to every household residing in rural areas. For this, people have to go through a process for getting employment. First of all, every household is supposed to register themselves in local Gram Panchayat for seeking employment then, within 15 days job cards containing photographs are issued to all the entitled applicants. After getting job cards, work is allotted to job card holders within 15 days. If failed to provide work, wage is given as per day schedule.

The nature of MGNREGA work is unskilled manual work and this is targeted to enhance livelihood security of every individual of rural areas by providing Guaranteed Wage Employment for 100 days. In the process of employment generation, durable assets are build up as it usually focuses on the work of water and soil conservation, afforestation and land development, irrigation, rural connectivity, flood protection, drought proofing etc. The projects for villages are recommended by Gram Sabha approved by Jila Panchayat, where as 50 % work should be implemented by Gram Panchayat. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIS) plays principal role over planning and implementation.

### **Salient Features of the Act**

*Salient features of the MGNREGA act are as follows:*

#### **1. Registration**

- (a) Adult members of a rural household willing to do unskilled manual work, may apply for registration either in writing, or orally to the local Gram Panchayat (GP).
- (b) The unit for registration is a household.
- (c) Under the Act, each household is entitled to 100 days of employment every year.

#### **2. Job Card**

- (a) After due verification of place of residence and age of the member/s (only adult members are eligible for

employment), the registered household is issued a Job Card (JC).

- (b) A JC is to be issued within 15 days of registration. Job Card forms the basis of identification for demanding employment.

#### **3. Application for Work**

- (a) A written application seeking work is to be made to the Gram Panchayat (GP) or Block Office, stating the time and duration for which work is sought.
- (b) The GP will issue a dated receipt of the written application for employment, against which the guarantee of providing employment within 15 days operates.

#### **4. Unemployment allowance**

In case, employment is not provided within 15 days, the state (as per the Act) will pay an unemployment allowance to the beneficiary.

#### **5. Provision and Execution of Work**

- (a) Work is provided within 5 kilometers (kms) radius of the village.
- (b) In case, work is provided beyond 5 kms, extra wages of 10 per cent are payable to meet additional transportation and living expenses.
- (c) Priority is awarded to women, such that at least one-third of the beneficiaries under the Scheme is women.
- (d) At least 50 per cent of work, in terms of cost, is to be executed by the GPs.
- (e) The cost of material component of projects including the wages of the skilled and semi-skilled workers taken up under the Scheme shall not exceed 40 % of the total project costs.
- (f) Contractors and use of labour displacing machinery are prohibited.
- (g) Work site facilities such as crèche, drinking water, shade have to be provided.

**6. Wages**

- (a) Wages are to be paid as per the State-wise Government of India (GoI) notified MGNREGA wages.
- (b) Wages are also to be paid according to piece rate, as per the Schedule of Rates (SoRs).
- (c) Payment of wages has to be done on a weekly basis and not beyond a fortnight in any case.
- (d) Payment of wages is mandatorily done through bank/post office beneficiary accounts.

**7. Planning**

- (a) Plans and decisions regarding the nature and choice of works to be undertake in a FY along with the order in which each work is to be taken up, site selection, etc. is all to be made in the Gram Sabha (GS) and ratified by the GP.
- (b) The district's shelf of works to provide employment is to be selected from the list of permissible works.
- (c) The different categories of permissible works are as follows:
  - i. Water Conservation and water harvesting including contour trenches, contour bunds, boulder checks, gabion structures, underground dykes, earthen dams, stop dams and springshed development;
  - ii. Drought Proofing including plantation and afforestation;
  - iii. Irrigation canals including micro and minor irrigation works;
  - iv. Provision of irrigation facility, dug out farm pond, horticulture, plantation, farm bunding and land development;
  - v. Renovation of traditional water bodies including desilting of tanks;
  - vi. Land Development;
  - vii. Flood control and protection works

including drainage in water logged areas including deepening and repairing of flood channels, chaur renovation, construction of storm water drains for coastal protection;

- viii. Rural connectivity to provide all weather access, including culverts and roads within a village, wherever necessary;
- ix. Construction of Bharat Nirman Rajiv Gandhi Sewa Kendra as Knowledge Resource Centre at the Block level and as Gram Panchayat Bhawan at the Gram Panchayat level;
- x. Agriculture related works, such as, NADEP composting, vermi-composting, liquid bio manures;
- xi. Livestock related works, such as, poultry shelter, goat shelter, construction of pucca floor, urine tank and fodder trough for cattle, azolla as cattle-feed supplement;
- xii. Fisheries related works, such as, fisheries in seasonal water bodies on public land;
- xiii. Works in coastal areas, such as, fish drying yards, belt vegetation;
- xiv. Rural drinking water related works, such as, soak pits, recharge pits;
- xv. Rural sanitation related works, such as, individual household latrines, school toilet units, anganwadi toilets, solid and liquid waste management;
- xv (a) Construction of anganwadi centres.
- xv (b) Construction of play fields.
- xvi. Any other work which may be notified by the Central Government in consultation with the State Government.

Women Empowerment through MGNREGA Some specific gender provisions under MGNREGA are as follows:

- ◆ To identify widowed women, deserted women and destitute women who qualify

- as a household under the Act, to ensure that they are provided 100 days of work.
- ◆ To ensure that pregnant women and lactating mothers (at least up to 8 months before delivery and 10 months after MGNREGA workers: Building the Nation 90 delivery) are given works which require less effort and are close to their houses.
- ◆ To conduct time and motion studies to formulate gender, age, level of disability, terrain and climate sensitive Schedule of Rates (SoRs) and to ensure accurate capturing of work done by women at worksites.
- ◆ To ensure that at least 50% of the worksite supervisors (mates) at all worksites are women.
- ◆ To ensure that worksite facilities such as crèches, drinking water, shade etc. are provided through convergence with Women and Child Development Schemes like ICDS.
- ◆ To encourage participation of women groups, including Self Help Groups in awareness generation, capturing demand, planning, implementation, monitoring and maintenance of works.
- **Vulnerable Group Participation:**  
Here, we will try to focus on the employment generated to the marginalized sections of the society such as women, Scheduled Tribe during the Financial Years 2006-07 to 2012-13 under the MGNREGA.

Table 1:

**Employment generated to Vulnerable Group (SCs, STs and Women) During Financial Years 2006-07 to 2012-13**

S.N.	Financial Years	Total person days (in crore person days)	Employment generated to SCs (in crore person days)	Employment generated to STs (in crore person days)	Employment generated to Women (in crore person days)
1 <sup>i</sup>	2006-07	62.01	15.58 (25.13 %)	23.46 (37.03 %)	24.26 (39.13 %)
2 <sup>ii</sup>	2007-08	96.03	25.90 (26.97 %)	29.40 (30.62 %)	41.52 (43.23 %)
3 <sup>iii</sup>	2008-09	216.01	63.39 (29 %)	54.78 (25 %)	103.41 (48 %)
4 <sup>iv</sup>	2009-10	191.16	57.41 (30 %)	41.48 (22 %)	95.56 ( 50 %)
5 <sup>v</sup>	2010-11	145	32.65 (23 %)	24.83 (17 %)	72.93 (50 %)
6 <sup>vi</sup>	2011-12	120.88	27.40 (23 %)	20.69 (17 %)	59.82 (49 %)
7 <sup>vii</sup>	2012-13	134.76	30.28 (22.47 %)	20.80 (15.43 %)	71.88 (53 %)

Source: Annual Report 2006-07 to 2012-13, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India

On the basis of above table, it can be concluded that a good number of employment is generated for the vulnerable group (SCs, STs and women) under MGNREGA. Employment generated for

STs as compared to SCs was high during financial years 2006-07 to 2007-08, but low during FY 2008-09 to 2012-13. On the other hand, work generated for women was quite high from the beginning as compared to SCs and STs respectively. Employment generated for women during the Financial Year 2006-07 was

24.26 crore i.e. about 39.13 % then, it started increasing from Financial Year 2007-08 to 2008-09, then it shows a downward trend from the Financial Year 2009-10 to 2011-12 respectively.

### Women Participation under MGNREGA

With a national participation rate of 47 per cent, evidence suggests that women are participating in the Scheme more actively than in other works. Research also indicates that MGNREGA provides significant work

opportunity for women who would have otherwise remained unemployed or underemployed.

### Inter-State Variations:

However, the significant inter-state variation in participation of women requires further research and analysis. In FY 2011-12, Kerala had the highest women participation at 93 per cent, while Uttar Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir showed low levels of women participation at 18 per cent and 17 per cent respectively.

**Table 2:**

**%age of Women Person days from Financial Years 2006-07 to 2011-12**

State	Women Person days (% of total person days in the state) FY 2006-07	Women Person days (% of total person days in the state) FY 2007-08	Women Person days (% of total person days in the state) FY 2008-09	Women Person days (% of total person days in the state) FY 2009-10	Women Person days (% of total person days in the state) FY 2010-11	Women Person days (% of total person days in the state) FY 2011-12
Andhra Pradesh	55	58	58	58	57	58
Assam	32	31	27	28	27	25
Bihar	17	28	30	30	28	29
Chhattisgarh	39	42	47	49	49	45
Gujarat	50	47	43	48	44	45
Haryana	31	34	31	35	36	36
Himachal Pradesh	12	30	39	46	48	60
Jammu and Kashmir	4	1	6	7	7	18
Jharkhand	39	27	29	34	33	31
Karnataka	51	50	50	37	46	46
Kerala	66	71	85	88	90	93

Source: MGNREGA Sameeksha, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, (2006-12), p 19

%age of Women Person-days from FY 2006–07 to FY 2011–12\*

Above table reveals that the large interstate variation in women participation has remained an issue for further analysis. In FY 2011–12, Kerala had the highest female participation rate at 93 %, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan followed with 74 % and 69% respectively. Nine states below the requirement of 33% were Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Mizoram, Assam, Nagaland, Bihar, Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh and West Bengal respectively.

Possible reasons for the inter-state variations in the women participation are as follows:

1. Cultural acceptance of female participation in the labour force,
2. Effective institutions at the State and local government level that are committed to promoting female participation in MGNREGA,
3. Wage differentials between private sector and MGNREGA,
4. lack of awareness in the poorer states,
5. Influence of Self-Help Groups (SHGs),
6. Higher rationing in poorer states such that there are still a higher %age of women in casual wage.
7. Due to a high demand and limited supply of work opportunities wherein women are forced to compete with men for employment,
8. In places where the market wages are higher than MGNREGA, men undertake jobs in the market and women seek employment under the Scheme.
9. Non-availability of work-site facilities like crèches is also a huge disincentive for women.

10. Certain types of MGNREGA work also limit the participation of women.

11. The work hours may make it difficult to balance MGNREGA with their housework such as collecting water, wood, grass for livestock, etc.

### Socio-economic Changes:

(a) In a large number of cases, women indicated that they had a substantial say in the way this money was spent. They were able to utilize the money for avoiding hunger, repaying small debts, paying for their child's schooling and bearing medical expenses. In a survey conducted in Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu and Rajnandgaon in Chhattisgarh, 81 per cent and 96 per cent of the women said they had spent their earnings from the scheme on food and consumer goods.

(b) Women have also reported better access to credit and financial institutions. The mandatory transfer of wage payment through bank accounts has ensured that a greater number of women are brought into institutional finance from which they had been largely excluded.

Picture showing women participation under permissible work of MGNREGA during construction of Thudikotukonam Pond; Village Puliveedu; District Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala





- (c) Preliminary findings suggest that the increased access to paid work due to MGNREGA has had a positive impact on women's socio-economic status and general well-being. For instance, in a survey conducted across six states, 82 per cent of the widows of the sample regarded MGNREGA as very important source of income, and of the total sample, 69 per cent of the women stated that MGNREGA had helped them avoid hunger. It was also observed that post MGNREGA, women had greater control over their wages and have been spending them on repaying small debts, paying for their children's schooling and bearing medical expenses, etc.

### Conclusion

MGNREGA has positively benefitted the women both at individual and community level. Women has empowered through participation in MGNREGA as their socio-economic conditions has been improved and they can earn more money and spend on their family. Their gram sabha participation has increased and it has proved to be beneficial for women-headed families such as widows.

The MGNREGA had a positive and remarkable impact on the marginalized groups of society as women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and BPL families. But there are some challenges and obstacles in the implementation channel for women empowerment such as discrimination against women in society (as in stigmas against women for working outside). For example, in the Financial Year 2011-12, the Kerala had the highest women participation at 93 per cent, while Uttar Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir showed low levels of women participation at 18 per cent and 17 Per cent respectively.

There are some possibilities and challenges under MGNREGA such as there is low level of awareness among people, patriarchal bend of society, lack of amenities for women and

women-centric work standards, delay in payments, lack of legality in the system, corruption, dirty politics, lack of consciousness and awareness among rural females, poor worksite facilities, low wage and non-continuity in payments, structural problems as negligence of the problem of issuing one job card for joint families, negligence of weather problem and breaking the provision of 1/3rd beneficiaries of women and so on. Government should take initiative to focus on all these issues pertaining to women empowerment under MGNREGA.

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