



MGNREGA: AN EPICENTER FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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Introduction

Previous employment guarantee scheme like Sampoorn Grameen Rojgar Yojna (SGSY) and National food for work programme (NFFWP), both were merged and a new act was enacted on 25 August as a National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). It was first launched on 2 February, 2006 in Anantpur district of Andhra Pradesh. The mandate of the act is to provide 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult member volunteers to do unskilled manual work. The act was renamed on 2 February 2009, on the 140th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

Empowerment of women involves many things like employment opportunity, social equality, and personal rights. But women deprived of these human rights, often as a matter of tradition in the rural area, women are generally not perceived to have any meaningful income generation capacity, without the power of work and to earn a good income their voices are silenced.

The act has become a fact of life for rural women with stipulation that 33 per cent of total work provided to rural women to enhance the socio-economic status of women. The one major objective of introducing the MGNREGA scheme is to ensure the economic empowerment of women. The higher the income share of women, the more likely they will have a collective social voice and they will have control over life events.

Objective:

Primary objective	Secondary objective:
“Empowering society by creation of durable assets and strengthening the livelihood resources base of rural poor by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To reduce the distress migration• Invigorating civic and community life and enlivening of PRIs• Empowerment of rural women.• Overall development of rural economy• Promotion of inclusive growth and development

Mandate

The mandate of the Act is to provide 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year (FY) to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

Provision for Women’s Empowerment through MGNREGA

- Gender parity of wages.

- Ensuring that at least 33% of work shall be women.(A report of ministry of rural development shows that women's participation in the scheme is higher than the mandatory 33 per cent.in the 10 year of MGNREGA from 2006 to 2015-2016 shown a remarkable change in women participation).
- Increased in control rights of women in earning from MGNREGA.
- Provision like –
- Work within a radius of women five kilometres from houses.
- Flexibility in terms of choosing period and months of employment.
- Crèches for the children of women works.

Factors Encouraging Women Participation

- Nature of works (not require special knowledge)
- Outmigration of male family members.
- Availability of employment opportunities at doorsteps.
- Provision of equal wages.
- Innovative experiments in implementation (female mates).
- Various provisions available at work sites.
- Synergy of MGNREGA with various programme
(In 2013, a study was conducted by Manoj and Puthukkeril in Kerala and found that the economical and personal reason for taking work under MGNREGA, it contribute mainly additional income to household and education for children).

Achievements of MGNREGA

- Women's participation in gram sabha has shown a remarkable improvement. This is investigated by Pankaj and Tanka in 4 different districts of 4 state of India and found that MGNREGA implemented in district like kangra has shown effective participation of women in gram sabha. A large number of women also said they spoke in the gram sabha – 73% of the women who had attended and also spoke in the meeting. However, it was revealed that women speak mainly about the availability of jobs, wage payment, and other related issues of personal interests.)
- It appears that account payment leads to greater incidence of self-collection and control over wages.
- Pankaj and Tanka 2010 revealed that it has opened for them an entirely new avenue for paid employment and broadened their choices and capability as a result. An important fact is that a large number of women decided on their own to work under NREGA. Out of the four districts, 57.9% joined NREGS out of their own decision, although 37.9% were asked to work by the head of the household.
- Implementation of MGNREGA is not taking positively only by government but also by the women participate. Aktar and saleem collected the review of women that have been perceived positively and found that women contribute their household income after MGNREGA.
- It is also concluded that MGNREGA reduced dependence on male and other family members. Before NREGS, 44% women said that they were able to meet their personal

needs through their own earnings. Now, 71% women were able meet their own need through own earning.

- Roy and Singh (2010) investigated that there was a change in the mean score for every components of empowerment index before and after MNREGA which showed a significant change in social participation, social esteem social confidence and level of aspiration.
- Mobilization of civil society
- Share in controlling and supervising management of assets created.

Consequence of Women Participation

- Increased their ability to earn resulted high consumption choice and reduced economic dependence.
- As women are comfortable working along with their neighbours, nearly 90% workers have been women.
- For the first time equal wages are really paid and this has boosted the earning of women.
- As the wages are paid into bank accounts the habit of thrift which was already inculcated through the kudumbasree experiment has further been strengthened.
- As the bank deposits are increasing, the intra-household status of the women has also been improving commensurately as she controls substantial cash resources and withdrawal can be only on her decision.

Conclusion

MGNREGA is a demand driven programme which promises to 100% guarantee work having a provision for women ensuring at least one third person whom work to be allotted to women which resulted in low migration. By generating employment for women at fair wages in the village, MGNREGA can play a substantial role in empowering women. It ensured their sustainable livelihood by providing sustaining their livelihood assets. Women are showing continuous positive response by steady increase participation. There was clear difference in earning of women after MGNREGA. It results in overall empowerment of women which ensured their social participation with increase in social esteem, social confidence and level of aspiration.

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