

## A Study On Role Of MGNREGA In Empowering Rural Women In Tamil Nadu

J. Sakthivel<sup>1</sup>, Dr. R. Sivakumar<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Political Science Thiruvalluvar Govt Arts College, Rasipuram, India

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Political Science Thiruvalluvar Govt Arts College, Rasipuram, India

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### ABSTRACT

The women empowerment is one of the important concepts for the development in various aspects of women's life. The concept of women empowerment focuses on social, economical, political, cultural and educational empowerment of women. All the features of women empowerment are inter - related and interdependent. The MGNREGA play a significant role in empowering rural women in India. This scheme become a beacon in the empowerment of the rural women and contributed women to be economically independent and self reliant by creating job opportunity through MGNREGA. In the present paper an attempt has been made to study on role of MGNREGA in the empowerment of rural women in Tamil Nadu. Primary data was collected from a field survey covering 50 respondents in Salem District. Secondary data was collected from books, journals, articles, government reports and other documents.

**Keywords:** women empowerment, Employment Guarantee Act

### 1. INTRODUCTION

India is primarily an agrarian country in which the two - thirds populations are living in rural areas. The rural development is crucial to the process of overall development of India. A significant portion of the population of rural India are landless labourers who do not have any fixed source of earning and have to depend on the rich farmers, contractors, money lenders and soon who provide employment on daily basis. These rural people are poor and enjoy very limited access to education, health, communication and other amenities of life. But a nation in which the bulk of its population lives in village cannot attain development without the process of rural development.

In August 2005, parliament passed the landmark legislation, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). The NREGA is a national law funded largely by the central government and implemented in all states, which creates a justifiable "right to work" for all household in rural India. Under the NREGA, rural households have a legal right to get "not less than" 100 days of unskilled manual labour on public works in each financial year. The act was introduced by the UPA government with the twin objectives of rural employment and rural development. The immediate objectives of the NREGA is to improve the purchasing ability of the rural poor as well as to provide better facilities of life to them through the completion of various public works that are carried out under the scheme.

What is truly remarkable about the scheme is that it has the potential to touch the thousands of millions of lives in rural India and thus change the socio- economic development of this country.

However, NREGS has the potential to bring in some relief to the condition of women in rural India. Longer duration of work or 100 days at least as guaranteed under the act and some measures to sensitize and involve women may lead to a remarkable change in the lives of women as it has happened in many other parts of the country. So far, NREGS has become means of self reliance in true sense and an instrument of empowerment of rural women in India.<sup>1</sup>

In the recent past woman contribution plays an important role for the development of rural economy in India. To ensure the above target, Government of India has given more attention to MGNREGA programme.

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The main objective of the MGNREGA is to provide a steady source of income and livelihood security for the poor, the vulnerable and marginalized groups. It has great impact on poverty and inclusive growth. Overall evidence shows that it does provide basic income assurance to a large number of beneficiaries.<sup>2</sup>

The MGNREGA play a significant role in empowering rural women in India. This scheme become a beacon in the empowerment of the rural women and contributed women to be economically independent and self reliant by creating job opportunity through MGNREGA.

In the present paper an attempt has been made to study on role of MGNREGA in the empowerment of rural women in Tamil Nadu. Primary data was collected from a field survey covering 50 respondents in Salem District. Secondary data was collected from books, journals, articles, government reports and other documents.

#### Main Features of a Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

- ❖ The focus of the scheme will be on works related to water conservation water harvesting, land development, flood control, drought proofing and rural connectivity etc.
- ❖ An important objective of the scheme shall be creation of durable assets and strengthening the livelihood resource base of the rural poor.
- ❖ Under no circumstances the labourers shall be paid wages less than the prevailing wage rate.
- ❖ As the rural employment guarantee scheme urges for labour intensive work, 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 forty percent of the total project costs.
- ❖ For implementation of the projects under the scheme, in no case contractors will be engaged.
- ❖ As far as practicable, machines shall not be used in implementation of the works.
- ❖ Transparency and accountability at all level of implementation shall be ensured.
- ❖ Provisions for regular inspection and supervision of works shall be made to ensure proper quality of work and payment of wages in equivalent with the quality and quantity of work done.
- ❖ All accounts and records (including muster rolls) relating to the scheme shall be made available for public scrutiny. A copy or relevant extracts of them may be made available on payment, if demanded.<sup>3</sup>

#### Methodology

In the present article both descriptive and analytical method applied to study on role of MGNREGA in empowering rural women in Tamil Nadu. Interview method also used to collect data from 50 workers under MGNREGA scheme.

#### Study area

This study conducted survey in Rajapalayam village of Veerapandi panchayat union in Salem district

#### Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

Women's empowerment is a process in which women gain share of control over resources - materials human and intellectual like knowledge, information, ideas and financial resources like money and access to money and control over decision-making in the home community, society and nation under do again 'power'. According to the report of Government of India, "empowerment means moving from your position of enforced powerlessness to one of power".<sup>4</sup>

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was enacted in September 2005. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme was initially implemented with effect from 2.2.2006 onwards in six notified districts of Tamil Nadu (in Phase I). It was extended to 4 districts (in Phase II) from 1.4.2007 onwards and to the remaining 20 districts, including Salem District (in Phase III) with effect from 1.4.2008 onwards.<sup>5</sup>

**Table1.1 Number of Respondent Classified By Education**

S.No	Education	No.of. Response	Percentage%
1	Primary	34	68
2	Secondary	01	02
3	H.S.L.C	12	24

4	Higher Secondary	03	06
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

Education is closely linked to employment. As higher level of education are often associated with better employment opportunities than lower level of education, Out of 50 respondents 34 respondents were studied up to primary level, 12 respondents in the present studies HSLC, 3% of the respondents have higher secondary qualification and only 1 percentage belongs to secondary level education.

**Table1.2 Number of Respondent Classified By Age**

S.No	Age	No.of. Respondence	Percentage%
1	18-30	02	04
2	31-40	09	18
3	41-50	12	24
4	51-60	11	22
5	61above	16	32
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

Classification of age is being considered an important factor for receiving employment opportunity under MGNREGA. MGNREGA is one of the major programme getting workers from various age groups. In this present study female workers between age group of 18 to 30, 31 to 40, 41 to 50, 51 to 60, 61 and above are categorized. The table shows that out of 50 MGNREGA female workers two workers belongs to age group of 18 to 13, while majority of 16 are found to age group of 61 and above. Nine women workers were found to age group of 31 to 40, 12 were being to age group between 41- 50. Eleven respondents belong to the age group of 51 to 60.

**Table1.3 Number of Respondent Classified By Caste**

S.No	Caste	No.of. Respondence	Percentage%
1	BC	16	32
2	SC	15	30
3	ST	00	00
4	MBC	19	38
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

Caste composition of the respondents is indicative of the representation various categories of caste in our society. In this present study three categories of caste are identified and presented in the table no 1,3. Analysis of data on caste of the respondents reveals that 19 percentages of workers belongs to MBC and 16 and 15 percentages of the workers belongs to BC and SC categories respectively.

**Table1.4 Number of Respondent Know about the participation in Gram Sabha Meeting and Awareness on Social Audit**

S.No	Gram Sabha And Social Audit Meeting	No.of. Response	Percentage%
1	Yes	50	100
2	No	00	00
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

With regard to participation in gram sabha meeting and awareness on social audit, it is observed that out of 50 workers are concerned, all the respondents attended Gram Sabha meeting and have awareness about social audit report that being submitted in the gram sabha meeting.

**Table1.5 Number of Respondent Classified By Monthly Income**

S.No	Monthly Income	No.of. Response	Percentage%
1	Up to3000	20	40
2	3001-5000	27	54
3	5001-10000	03	06
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

Under NREGA an assessment of the family income of the respondents one of the important factor to access economical aspects of the women in the family. The above table shows that 20% of the responds blank to the income group of below 3,000 while 27 % of respondents belong to the income group 3000 to 5000. The lowest number of respondents i.e.3% of respondents were found income group between 5001 to 10,000.

**Table1.6 Number of Respondent Classified by the Distance of Worksite**

S.No	Distance of Worksite	No.of. Response	Percentage%
1	Within5Km	47	94
2	Beyond5Km	03	06
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

Here, it is worth mentioning that as per NREGA guidelines, women and aged persons should be given preference to work in nearest place to their residence. The above table shows that out of 50 respondents 47 respondents who have worked within 5 Km from their residence. Only 3% of respondents who have worked beyond distance of 5 Km.

As per NREGA guidelines those workers going beyond 5 Km are eligible to get transport allowances.

**Table1.7**

**Number of Respondent Classified By Job Card Holders**

S.No	Job Card Holders	No.of. Response	Percentage%
1	Yes	50	100
2	No	00	00
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

As far as job card is concerned NREGA workers said that mostly they have acquired job card from Panchayat office. Above table shows that every respondents have acquired job card to ensure there working days.

**Table1.8 Number of Respondent Classified by Working Place Attendance**

S.No	Working Place Attendance	No.of. Response	Percentage%
1	Yes	50	100
2	No	00	00
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

With regard to attendance of MGNREGA workers, it is mandatory to take attendance in the worksites. Table 1.8 shows that 50 respondents agreed that every working day attendance have been taken at worksites.

**Table1.9 Number of Respondent Classified by Years of Experience under MGNREGA**

S.No	Years Of Experience Under MGNREGA	No.of. Response	Percentage%
1	1-5Years	23	46
2	6-10Years	08	16
3	11-15Years	13	26
4	16above	06	12
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

As far as year of working experience is concerned out of 50 respondents 23 workers belongs to 1 to 5 years of experience. In the category of 6 to 10 years of experience 8 respondents worked and thirteen respondents belongs to 11 to 15 years of experience. Only 6 respondents worked above 16 years.

**2. CONCLUSION**

One of the objectives of the MGNREGA is to bridge the gap in the social fabric of our rural society, for that NREGA intends to include various Marginalized sections within the ambit of this scheme such Marginalized section not only include women but also aged, physically disabled and scheduled caste and scheduled tribal population.

Through there are many marginalized people working under MGNREGA scheme but this article focuses on only 50 women workers for the analysis.

In this present paper attempt has been made “The study on role of MGNREGA in empowering rural women in Tamil Nadu” for the purpose of assessment of empowerment of rural women, 50 respondents selected in Rajapalayam panchayat in

Veerapandi Panchayat union Salem district.

There are various aspects like social empowerment, economic employment, educational improvement, political and cultural employment of women. In this paper main focuses given to economical, educational and political employment of women and MGNREGA. As far as education factor is concerned out of 50 respondents 34 women workers were studied up to primary level only 3% are belongs to Higher Secondary level.

With regard to age majority of the workers come in the age category of 6% above and only two women workers belongs to age group between 18 to 30. As far as caste factor is concerned 16 respondents belongs to MBC community 15 women workers come under SC category and 19 workers belongs to MBC community.

As far as political participation concerned 50 respondents said that it is mandatory to participate in Gram Sabha meeting and all the respondents aware about social audit report regarding work undertaken in Panchayat area.

As far as income 27 respondents receiving wage between 3001 to 5000. 20 respondents gaining income below 3000 and only three respondents receiving salary 5000 to 10000. As far as distance concerned out of 50 respondents 47 workers are getting within 5 km of their resident. With regard to job card attendance with work place all the 50 respondents are the having job card and there data that maintained at work place.

With regard to working experience out of 50 workers 23 respondents having experience between 1 to 5 years 13 respondents belongs to working experience between 11 to 15 years. Interesting there are 6 respondents having experience above 16 years.

The main objectives of women empowerment is to make women as economically strong women to participate in the decision making process of political institutions. As far as present study is concerned MGNREGA scheme educationally woman are not empowered through economically, politically empowered under MGNREGA scheme.

To sum up, to empower rural women in India MGNREGA playing a pivotal role in empowering women. The participation of women in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has been significant and transformative. Some key points highlighting MGNREGA Worker's involvement in their participation in MGNREGA scheme.

- **High Participation Rates:** Women have consistently made up a substantial proportion of the workforce under MGNREGA. In many states, their participation exceeds 50%, and in some cases, it is as high as 80%.
- **Economic Empowerment:** MGNREGA provides a source of income for women in rural areas, which enhances their financial independence and contributes to the overall household economy.
- **Social Benefits:** The program promotes gender equality by offering equal wages to men and women.
- **Worksite Facilities:** MGNREGA mandates the provision of facilities such as crèches, drinking water, and shade at worksites.
- **Challenges:** Despite the positive impact, there are challenges such as delayed payments, the physical nature of work, and limited awareness about the program among some women. Addressing these issues is crucial for enhancing women's participation further.

Overall, MGNREGA has played a vital role in empowering the socio- economic status of women in rural India.

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