

## IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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### ABSTRACT

MGNREGA is the first effort in the world to provide legal guarantee for the right to work and covers all the districts in the country. It also marks a paradigm shift from all previous wage employment programs implemented by the Indian government. It aims at making rural development such as water conservation, irrigation facilities, rural connectivity etc. by providing employment to the local people. MGNREGA ensures equal wages for both men and women and it also ensure fix reservation for women workers out of total employed workers. MGNREGA, thus by providing equal employment opportunities at equal wages for both men and women is laying a foundation for women to be more independent and possess better self-esteem. Present paper attempted to study the MGNREGA's contribution in Women's socio-economic empowerment especially in Madhya Pradesh State. The study also tried to assess the status of others states in women empowerment through the MGNREGA.

*Keywords: MGNREGA, Women Empowerment, Employment, Government Scheme, India.*

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## INTRODUCTION

MGNREGA is one of the most progressive legislations enacted after the independence. It is a unique experiment conducted by Government of India for the empowerment of both rural population as well as women. It provides employment to a large number of unemployed people who are below poverty line. MGNREGA is the first legal act which enforces right to work. MGNREGA also helps in fulfilling other basic rights such as right to life, right to food, and right to education by providing employment.

MGNREGS greatly contributed in the women empowerment especially in rural women empowerment by ensuring that the stark inequalities between men and women in rural areas that persisted in terms of employment opportunities and wage rates is no longer exist. MGNREGA ensures equal wages for both men and women and it also ensure fix reservation for women workers out of total employed workers. MGNREGA, thus by providing equal employment opportunities at equal wages for both men and women is laying a foundation for women to be more independent and possess better self-esteem. In the year 2007-08, 40% of the total employment was given to the women employees and in the first four months of the year 2008-09, the percentage of women workers reached to 50 percent, which itself shows the impact of this scheme. It indicates that the MGNREGS had significantly empowering women. For this very reason, the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) carried out a survey to assess the role of MGNREGS in women empowerment. The study conducted by NFIW was aimed to assess the tangible benefits that women have received from the MGNREGA over a period of two years and to explore the possibilities for further improvements which can be introduced to make MGNREGA aimed to support poor unemployed people of the country, it especially more effective and responsive to the needs of women, particularly given its extension to all of rural India from the year 2008. Vijayakumar and Thomas (2008) found in their study that the schemes had a significant positive effect on rural wages and it is far effective and successful than the previous employment guarantee schemes in India.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF MGNREGA IN INDIA

Public Works Programme (PWP) as defined by Narayanan (2008) defined as “all activities which entail payment of wage (in cash or in kind) by the state, or by an agent acting on behalf of the state in return for a provision of labour, in order to: i) enhance employment; and ii) produce an asset (either physical or social) with the overall objective of promoting social protection for participants” MGNREGA is that kind of Public Work Programme (PWP) in which government enhance the employment. It is large scale government employment programme which is responsible for chronic and sustained levels of elevated employment. Under this type of PWP, state acts as an employer aiming to raise aggregate employment on a sustained basis. Apart from this PWP some other PWPs are also there like, i) single short-term episode of employment which provide a ‘risk coping’ or protective forms of social protection; ii) programme in which the government promote the labour intensification of national infrastructure spending with main objective of developing assets via using labour usage; and iii) other programmes in which various medium of employment are generated by the government through promoting on site work experience and training programmes for the unemployed people.

MGNREGS has evolved into its present shape by building on the past experiences in designing and executing schemes providing employment. The phase I of MGNREGA was implemented in February 2006 in 200 most backward districts and started from a district of Andhra Pradesh. The phase II was introduced in 2007-08 in 130 more districts. In the remaining 285 rural districts MGNREGA phase III was introduced in Apr.' 2008. These three phases covered whole nation under this programme which was expected to benefit the entire community by providing employment; raising agricultural productivity and increasing natural resource base, particularly water.

MGNREGA is the unique policy in the world which is offered by the Indian government to provide legal guarantee for the right to work and covers all the districts in the country. It also marks a miracle shift from all previous wage employment programs implemented by the government to a new orbit. Some of the selected feature of the MGNREGA are (as given in the official report released by the government);

1. It provides legal guarantee of wage employment to all the peoples who are unemployed.
2. There is legal mandate providing employment in a given time limit i.e. 15 days from the application.
3. The Act is framed to offer an incentive structure to all the states for providing employment as 90% of the cost will be bear by the centre government.
4. It is demand driven with extensive inbuilt transparency. There are village level community institutions to monitor the complete process.
5. The annual report of MGNREGA is presented by the Central Government to the Parliament. All the states are also required to present their MGNREGA annual report to the Legislature.

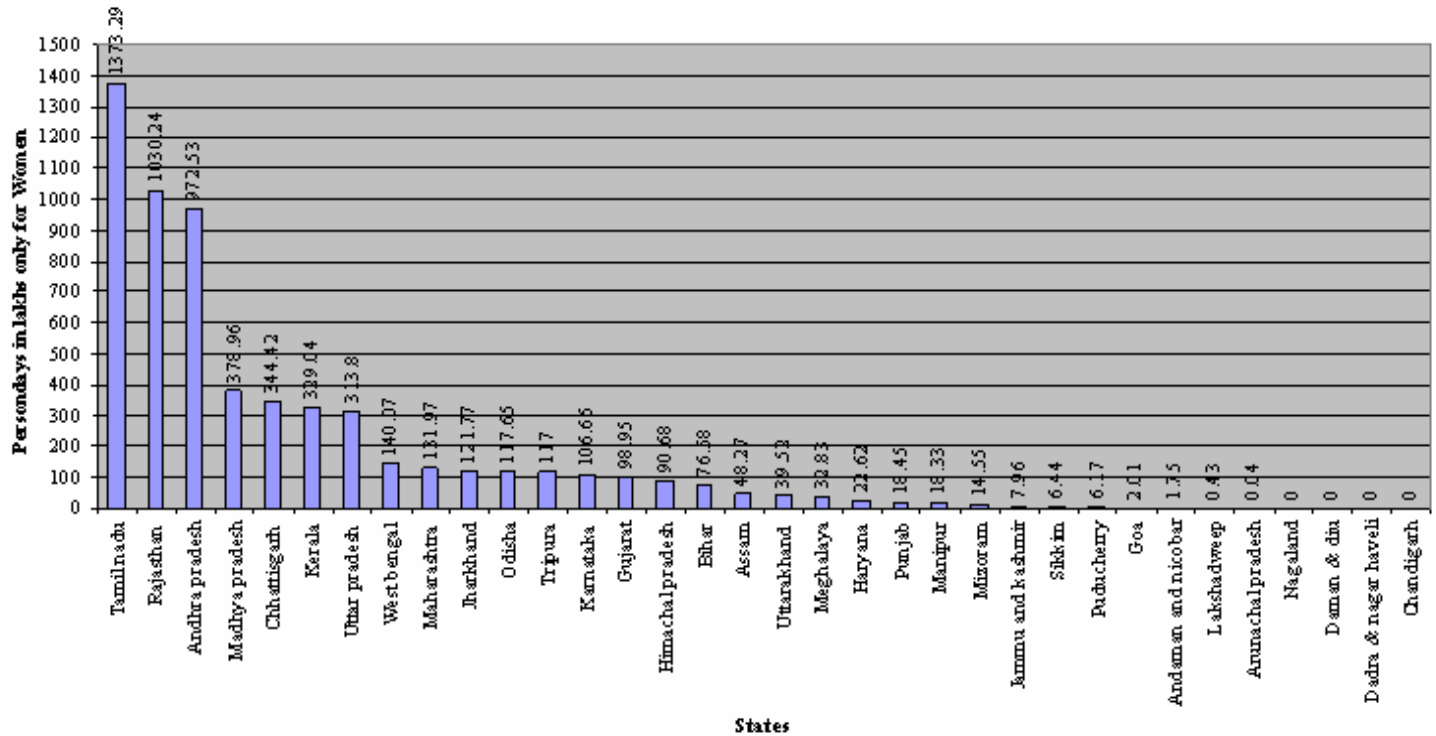
### AIMS AND PROVISIONS

This scheme helps the rural people to increase their social and economic level. As mentioned earlier also, in this scheme there is 33% reservation for women and it was expected that around 40% of the benefit of this employment scheme would go to women and it would helps women to increase their socio economic standard.

MGNREGA aims at making rural development such as water conservation, irrigation facilities, rural connectivity etc. by providing employment to the local people. Thus it can make rural population self-employed as well as self-dependent. It also has transparency to avoid corruption by displaying the official documents regarding the job cards etc. on the panchayat office. The transparency is not only for the government but also for the benefited employees, as they can also see their wages in their job cards. Moreover, the role of contractors has been totally removed so the workers get their actual wages and there is no intermediary between the government and employee. As per the provision made in the MGNREGA, it is compulsory for the state government to provide employment to any worker within 15 days of his/her submission of application otherwise government has to give the unemployment allowances to all such unemployed applicants. If the employment provided by MGNREGA is not local (i.e. within 5 km) the worker is entitled to get 10% wages extra.

Thus MGNREGA can accomplish the following objectives:

FIGURE 1: STATE WISE IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF MGNREGA FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2011-12



1. Provide atleast 100 days employment to all unemployed rural people.
2. Men-women wage parity and up liftment of the disadvantaged communities ( such as SC, ST, etc).
3. Developing self-dependent rural areas.

Present paper attempted to study the MGNREGA’s contribution in Women’s socio-economic empowerment especially in Madhya Pradesh State. The study also tried to assess the status of others states in women empowerment. For the study data was collected through various reports issued by the states, government’s official websites etc.

### MGNREGA AND ITS CONTRIBUTION IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is one of the most effective employment scheme enacted since independence. It is developed by the government on national level for the betterment of the rural region by generating employment. At the beginning it was enforced in some most backward district, and latter on increase the district to 600. In this scheme the government offers the guaranteed employment for 100 days in a year at the level of minimum wages of the states.

The Figure 1 depicted the state wise implementation status of MGNREGS in various states for the financial year 2011-12. The table shows that Tamil Nadu’s performance in MGNREGS is very good in terms of providing employment to women and is contributing maximum as compared to other states. Tamil Nadu secured first position among the states in women’s empowerment with a contribution of 23.03 percent during the last year (www.nrega.nic.in).

Rajasthan comes next in the list with contribution of 17.28 percent followed by Andhra Pradesh with contribution percentage of 16.31 percent and Madhya Pradesh with contribution percentage of 6.36 percent with other states such as Dadar and Nagar Haveli, Nagaland, Daman and Diu and Chandigarh not contributing at all.

Although, Madhya Pradesh stands fourth in the list when it comes to providing employment to women through MGNREGS but the contribution percentage is still very low as compared to Tamil Nadu and other two states. MP provided only 378.96 lakhs persondays for women employees, whereas Tamil Nadu provided 1373.29 lakh persondays for women employees, which shows the amount of improvement required by MP for the upliftment of Women through MGNREGA.

### SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN MP THROUGH MGNREGA

The Table 1 shows the total employment generated under the MGNREGA during the Year 2011-2012 in the Madhya Pradesh. In phase I district, number of registered household are 4,731,524 with number of persons registered 15,665,992. Out of 4,731,524 household, employment demanded was 1,439,789 households for 3,007,963 persons, but was indeed offered to 1,481,084 households and was successfully provided to 1,471,223 households with 3,095,184 persons working for 47,415,058 person days. Number of persons registered for wages are 423,181 with 45,761 families completing 100 days of employment.

Similarly, in phase II district, number of registered household are 2,845,771 with number of persons registered 8,983,653. Out of 2,845,771 household, employment demanded was 647,832 households for 1,362,781 persons, but was indeed offered to 694,811 households and was successfully provided to 692,218 households with 1,434,820 persons working for 24,322,603 person days. Number of persons registered for wages are 223,714 with 21920 families completing 100 days of employment.

TABLE 1: EMPLOYMENT GENERATED DURING THE YEAR 2011-2012 STATE : MADHYA PRADESH (Figures in Thousands)

District	No. of Registered		Job Card Issued	Employment demanded		Employment Provided			No. of filled Muster Roll	No. of Families Completed 100 days	On Going works
	Household	Persons		Household	Persons	Household	Persons	Personadays			
Phase I	4,731.52	15,665.99	4,730.55	1,439.79	3,007.96	1,471.22	3,095.18	47,415.06	423.18	45.76	442.74
Phase II	2,845.77	8,983.65	2,842.44	647.83	1,362.78	692.22	1,434.82	24,322.60	223.71	21.92	148.81
Phase III	4,185.16	12,079.58	4,184.55	602.58	1,190.99	623.24	1,229.29	21,454.96	178.46	16.56	135.95
Grand Total	11,762.46	36,729.22	11,757.54	2,690.20	5,561.73	2,786.68	5,759.29	93,192.62	825.35	84.24	727.51

Source: www.nrega.nic.in

In phase III district, number of registered household are 4,185,163 with number of persons registered 12,079,579. Out of 4,185,163 household, employment demanded was 602,579 households for 1,190,986 persons, but was indeed offered to 623,737 households and was successfully provided to 623,238 households with 1,229,289 persons working for 21,454,960 person days. Number of persons registered for wages were 178,459 with 16,562 families completing 100 days of employment. The table given above clearly indicates that from phase I to

Phase II there is significant difference in the total no. of registered, job card issued, employment demanded, employment provided, no. of filled muster roll, no. of families completed 100 days and on going works. Over the period 2011-12, around 84,243 numbers of families completed 100 days of employment and benefited with this scheme.

Work Category	Worker Employed			Persondays [in Lakh]			Amount earned during current financial year [in Lakh]			Amount earned during previous financial year but paid in current year (In Lakhs)	
	Women	Women %	Men	Women	% of Women	Men	Women	Women %	Men	Women	Men
Rural Connectivity	921,507.00	43.7	1,185,609.00	117	42.2	160	13,944.20	42	19,239.70	1,188.20	1,658.40
Water Conservation And Water Harvesting	1,013,777.00	45.3	1,225,302.00	130.6	44.4	164	15,242.00	44.3	19,198.60	1,051.50	1,440.50
Renovation of Traditional Water	109,117.00	45.1	132,860.00	12.3	44.4	15.4	1,442.10	44.3	1,816.80	82.9	109.9
Flood Control	13,721.00	42.1	18,847.00	1.4	40.8	2	167.3	40.7	243.9	7.8	10.7
Drought Proofing	177,482.00	40.5	260,552.00	17.9	36.8	30.7	2,107.20	36.6	3,644.50	171.3	292.4
Irrigation Canals	19,206.00	46.3	22,286.00	2.3	46.7	2.6	263.3	46.7	300.9	11.5	12.9
Irrigation Facilities To SC/ST/IAY/LR	417,220.00	42.6	562,409.00	58.3	41.1	83.4	6,720.10	41	9,679.20	346.5	522.4
Land development	427,267.00	44.2	538,700.00	44.7	43.2	58.9	5,243.00	43	6,941.80	501.9	643.6
Other works	38,187.00	42	52,791.00	3.4	39.7	5.2	399.8	39.5	611.3	22.2	39.8
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3,137,484.00</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>3,999,356.00</b>	<b>387.8</b>	<b>42.6</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>45,528.90</b>	<b>42.5</b>	<b>61,676.70</b>	<b>3,383.60</b>	<b>4,730.60</b>

Source: [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

Table 2 given above provides detailed information for the financial year 2011-12 as well brief information for the amount earned during previous financial year but paid in current year under the various categories of the works. During the year 2011-12, 59.82 Crore women were benefited through MGNREGS. Basically MGNREGA has varieties of work for which it provides employment to the rural including rain water harvesting, land development, village connectivity etc. As the table shows that in the year 2011-12, women employees marked 44% presence in all the categories of the work offered under the MGNREGS in MP. Against total 39,99,356 number of total employment, women employees were more than 31.37 lakhs, it shows that the government has achieved its target in which there was minimum 40% of the benefits were expected especially for the women.

Although, the number of persondays for women are less as compare to men, which show comparatively less productivity. In case of earning also women employees earned around 45,528 lakhs rupees during the last financial year which is around 42% of the total payment released by the government on account of MGNREGS. As the table, total 120.88 Crore persondays have been provided during the year 2011-12 out of which 27.4 Crore (22.67%) and 20.69 (17.12%) persondays were provided to the SCs and STs respectively which also resulted equality in communities. Government figures indicate that in MP, more than the 33% women who has participated in the MGNREGS and received the benefit. MGNREGA emerged the women's identity.

## CONCLUSION

In MGNREGS, women directly get their income from the government which create a higher degree of economic independence among them implying empowerment and financial inclusion. Women empowerment was one of the main aims of MGNREGA. Women contribution in the household income increased their confidence. Studies indicates that employed women feel more confident than unemployed women and assertive about their space in the public sphere. A study conducted by Banerjee and Saha (2010) found that rural people felt the MGNREGA has brought a remarkable change in their villages as well as in their own lives. And one of main reason of this change is nothing but the availability of employment within their village which increase their purchasing power as well generates community assets. Although there is fix reservation for the women employees in MGNREGA but for more effective women participation, it is needed to go beyond the initial gender related provisions. Presently women are not having direct access to MGNREGA earning because they are having joint bank accounts, even accounts are in the name of male member, there should be a provision for separate bank account in all the states as in Tamil Nadu, men and women have separate job cards and separate bank accounts. MGNREGA allows 100 days employment for every household, and male member of the family claim this opportunity first. It is required to move from the household entitlement of 100 days to individual entitlements, which will assure women 100 days of work in their own right, without having to negotiate within the household.

For empowering the women through MGNREGS, it also require to pay attention to ensure greater participation of women not only labourers but also in MGNREGA worksite management and staff appointment etc. as well in as spheres e. g. participatory planning through participation in gram sabhas, social audits etc. These measures can simultaneously help in socio-economic empowerment of the women as well improve the implementation of MGNREGA.

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### Website:

[www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)