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## Research Article

### IMPACT OF MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT- AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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#### ABSTRACT

Generally women are the real victims of poverty and unemployment. Hence any development programme focusing on women assumes greater significance. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme introduced by the Government of India in 2005, provides at least 100 days of demand driven guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural households and appears to be the largest employment guarantee scheme in the world. In its World Development Report 2014, the World Bank termed it a “stellar example of rural development”. Through the scheme provides such an opportunity to women, but it is doubtful whether the social status and welfare of women have been improved much. Hence a study is proposed to examine the real situation of women who enjoyed the benefit under MGNREGA scheme in Peravoor Grama Panchayath of Kannur district of Kerala state. The study is designed as an empirical one based on the survey method and the primary data collected from the respondents on convenient sampling basis. The study shows that economic empowerment index is 2.24 and social empowerment index is 2.09. The scheme provides an opportunity for women to attain social and economic empowerment.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Success of achieving the goal of sustainable development for the country lies at the heart of empowering rural India where 68.8 percent of its population resides. Realizing the significance of rural development since independence, India has adopted a number of innovative strategies and approaches for ensuring the basic right of the rural population<sup>1</sup>. Rural development has witnessed several changes over the years in its emphasis, approaches, strategies and programs. Through Panchayath Raj system, the Government has been implementing a number of programs aimed at ensuring a sustainable and holistic development for rural areas and the trust of these programs remain on all round economic and social transformation in rural India.

Public work programme in India have rationally offered a unique opportunity for women to earn cash income in a context where too often the ability of women to work outside the home is severely constrained by social norms. Public work programme may provide resources to poor women that would enable human capital investment especially for children's education and nutrition apart from improving women's bargaining power within the households. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act Scheme (MGNREGA) is no exception. It is the first ever law,

internationally, that guarantees wage employment at an unprecedented scale. The MGNREGA guarantees at least 100 days of work per year to all rural household in India whose adults are willing to do unskilled manual labour at the statutory minimum wage notified for the programme. The women work force participation under the scheme has surpassed the statutory minimum requirement of 33 percent and the trends indicate an increase in the participation rate at the national level. Since inception, for every year women participation has been around 48 percent. In its design, the MGNREGA perhaps goes further than most public works programme in its over aspiration for women<sup>2</sup>.

Women constitute nearly half of the population of the country and outnumber men in the state of Kerala (census 2011, 1000:1084)<sup>3</sup>. So the development of the state depends upon development of women. Urban women get a variety of opportunity to improve their life style but rural women get lesser opportunities. Therefore Government of India introduced number of welfare programmes for rural people such as Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) in 1993, Distance Education Programme for Women Empowerment in 2000<sup>4</sup> etc.. Among these MGNREGA scheme appears to be one of the important schemes, which provide employment to rural households including women. It involves unskilled manual work which women are best suited.

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### Objectives of the study

1. To understand MGNREGA scheme
2. To examine social and economic empowerment of women in Peravoor Grama Panchayath
3. To study the impact of MGNREGA scheme on the quality of life of women
4. To suggest suitable measures to further strengthening of the project

### Hypothesis

1. Women in Peravoor Grama Panchayath attained social empowerment.
2. Women in Peravoor Grama Panchayath attained economic empowerment.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Diego Maiorano and Chakkradhar Budha (2014)<sup>5</sup> in their study on 'MGNREGA in Andhra Pradesh's tribal area' pointed out that, scheduled tribes are by far the most disadvantaged group in India's society and in most cases they live in very remote area where very little economic activity taken place. The MGNREGA in tribal areas constitute an essential safety net against starvation and destitution particularly during the lean agricultural season.

Sudha Narayanan and Upsalk (2014)<sup>6</sup> have in their study on 'women participation and rationing in the employment guarantee scheme' pointed out that the MGNREGA that guaranties employment of every rural household for 100 days different progressive provision to incentive wise participation of women in the programme.

Planning Commission (2008)<sup>7</sup> conducted a survey in 20 states to study the impact of MGNREGA. The result showed a shift of low income groups (about 50 percent) towards high income category, significant increase in the expenditure on food and non-food items (6 percent) and change in the expenditure pattern, procurement of live stock (68 percent) and house hold articles (42 percent) and initiation of saving for the first time (2 percent) clearing of outstanding loan (1/5<sup>th</sup> of sample households) where some of the positive impacts of MGNREGA on rural households.

Soumya Mohanty (2012)<sup>8</sup> in her Dissertation 'Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and Tribal Livelihoods: A Case Study in Sundargarh District of Odisha' concluded that MGNREGA is considered as a "Silver Bullet" for eradicating rural poverty and unemployment, by way of generating demand for productive labour force in villages. It provides an alternative source of livelihood which will have an impact on reducing migration, restricting child labor, alleviating poverty, and making villages self-sustaining through productive assets creation such as road construction, cleaning up of water tanks, soil and water conservation work, etc. for which it has been considered as the largest anti-poverty programme in the world.

### METHODOLOGY

The study is designed as an empirical one based on the survey method. The samples under this study are taken from Peravoor Grama Panchayath of Kannur district of Kerala state. The study was conducted during the month of March, 2016. Total numbers of samples are 60, selected on convenient sampling

basis. The study is primarily based on the primary data collected from the respondents. A structured questionnaire was prepared to collect information regarding, social status and economic status of women. The secondary data has been collected mainly from various publications of Government of India, Government of Kerala, journals and periodicals and articles in connection with the study. The collected data are, statistically analyzed and interpretations are made.

### Findings

- The data relating to personal profile showing middle aged women are the main beneficiaries of the scheme. Majority of the women (63 percent) of MGNREGA scheme has education below SSLC level. Majority of the respondents are married one. All the respondents maintain saving bank account after registering the scheme and wages are distributed through bank accounts.
- Before registering this scheme, 57 percent of respondents have no monthly income. But the situations have changed after joining the scheme where women have income up to Rs. 5,000. No respondents come under no income category after joining the scheme.
- Before registering the scheme, 70 percent of the respondents have no savings, while after joining the scheme there are no women without savings. Whole of the respondents are aware about MGNREGA scheme on account of publicity of the scheme. Majority (94 percent) of the respondents got information about the scheme from Gramasabha which plays an important role in providing information about Government scheme to the public.
- The present study reveals that 80 percent of the women worker joined the scheme before 2011. Among 60 respondents highest (33 percent) of the women worked between 50 to 150 days between the period of 2009 to 2015.
- Majority of the respondents worked for 50 days and more and the total number of working days was minimum in the year 2014. The scheme is utilized by 47 percent of the respondent for working in their own property.
- MGNREGA scheme is the only source of the income for 57percent of the respondent. Majority (93 percent) of the respondent are of the view that the wage rate fixed by the MGNREGA scheme is reasonable. The study reveals that 73 percent of the respondents agree that there is promptness in payment of wages.
- The study shows that economic empowerment index is 2.24 (based on various economic factors) and in respect of income, savings, bank dealings. Purchasing power and self reliance women showed an improved status. Less empowerment is attained in the case of control over money and standard of living.
- The study reveals that social empowerment index is 2.09 (based on various social factors) and in respect of majority of the factors women attained empowerment. Freedom of mobility, change in social outlook and ability to face challenges are the aspect in which women are yet to attain improvement.

**Suggestions**

- Being a programme that brings about a change in the life of rural women, measures should be taken to strengthen the programme with effective implementation and greater participation.
- The recent wage provided under (MGNREGA) scheme is not sufficient to maintain the daily life, therefore Government should increase the minimum wage.
- MGNREGA scheme guaranties only 100 days work. Since a number of persons depend the scheme, it is needed to increase the working days a minimum of 20 days in a month.
- For considering the future life of the workers introduces a pension scheme to those who work under MGNREGA scheme for at least 3 years continuously.
- Team spirit must be created among the women by making them aware that this scheme is not merely a means of earning something, but for the upliftment of poor people. Cultural programme can be arranged for them to create a feeling of unity.
- Providing financial support to low income group of members and introduction of educational scholarship to the children of members shall be considered. Suitable measures should take to make regular payments.

**Table 1** Personal profile

Category	Variable	No. of respondents	Percentage
Age	Below 30	-	-
	30-40	12	20
	40-50	14	23
	Above 50	34	57
Education	Below 10 <sup>th</sup>	38	63
	SSLC	16	27
	Plus two	4	7
	Above plus two	2	3
Marital status	Married	52	87
	Unmarried	2	3
	Widow	6	10

Source: Field survey

**Table 2** Monthly income and savings before and after joining the scheme

Category	Variable	Before		After	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Monthly income	Nil	35	58	-	-
	Less than 5000	25	42	40	67
	5001-10000	-	-	20	33
	10001-15000	-	-	-	-
	Above 15000	-	-	-	-
	Nil	42	70	-	-
Monthly savings	Less than 2000	16	27	34	57
	2001-4000	2	3	22	37
	4001-6000	-	-	4	6
	Above 6000	-	-	-	-

Source: Field survey

**Table 3** Awareness about the scheme and sources of information

Category	Variable	Number of respondent	Percentage
Awareness about the scheme	Aware	60	100
	Not aware	-	-
Sources of information	Gramasabha	56	94
	Government officials	2	3
	Kudumbasree	2	3

Source: Field survey

**Table 4** Registration of members

Year	Number	Percentage
Up to 2011	48	80
2012	8	14
2013	2	3
2014	2	3
2015	-	-
Total	60	100

Source: Field survey

**Table 5** Number of days worked in 2009-2015

Category	Variable	Number	Percentage
Number of works	Less than 50	2	3
	50-150	20	33
	150-250	14	24
	250-350	8	13
	350 and above	16	27

Source: Field survey

**Table 6** Total number of days of work

Year	Total number of days	Increase / decrease
Before 2011	2618	-
2012	2592	-26
2013	2570	-22
2014	3912	+338
2015	1176	-
Total	12868	-

Source: Field survey

**Table 7** Engagement in other work, reasonable wages and promptness in wages and works in own property

Category	Variable	Number	Percentage
Engagement in other work	Positive	26	43
	negative	34	57
Promptness in receipt of wages	regular	44	73
	irregular	16	27
Reasonable wages received	Received	56	93
	Not received	4	7
Works in own property	Done	26	43
	Not done	34	57

Source: Field survey

**Table 8** Preference of spending

Category	Total score	Rank
Savings	240	1
House hold expenses	212	2
Education	138	3
Entertainment	112	5
Others	120	4

Source: Field survey

**Table 9** Economic status of women

Variable	Weighted score			Total weighted score	Mean score
	Agree	No opinion	disagree		
Income increased	126	32	2	160	2.67
Standard of living increased	24	76	14	144	1.9
Savings increased	78	60	4	142	2.37
Self reliance	48	60	14	122	2.03
Control over money increased	12	68	22	102	1.7
Bank dealings increased	174	4	0	178	2.97
Purchasing power increased	24	92	6	122	2.03
Total					15.67

Source: Field survey

Economic empowerment index = Total of mean score ÷ No. of variables

$$= 15.67 \div 7$$

$$= 2.24$$

The analysis reveals that in respect of all factors having a mean score 2.24 or nearest value to it, women have attained empowerment. In respect of income, savings, bank dealings, self reliance and purchasing power the position of women has improved. And in case of standard of living and control over money only slight improvement has been achieved. Since the mean score of majority of the factors lie near the index the set hypothesis that women attained economic empowerment is accepted.

**Table 10** social status of women

Variable	Weighted score			Total weighted score	Mean score
	Agree	No opinion	disagree		
Decision making	48	60	14	122	2.03
Participation in social events	60	52	14	126	2.1
Ability to express opinion	72	56	8	136	2.27
Involvement in social problem	30	80	10	120	2
Freedom of mobility	18	60	24	102	1.7
Self confidence	78	60	4	142	2.37
Ability to face challenges	12	56	28	96	1.6
Co operation among group members	150	20	0	170	2.83
Changes in social outlook	12	78	22	112	1.87
Total					18.77

Source: Field survey

Social empowerment index = Total mean score ÷ number of variables

$$= 18.77 \div 9$$

$$= 2.09$$

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The analysis shows that in respect of all factor having mean score 2.09 or nearest value to it, women are found to attain social empowerment. As majority of the factor, identified for measuring social advancement show a positive result, the set hypothesis that women attain social empowerment after joining the MGNREGA scheme is accepted. While freedom of mobility, ability to face challenges and changes in social outlook are the factors in which women get less empowerment.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Father of our nation Mahatma Gandhi had a vision that India after its independence should achieve self sufficiency of villages in which everyone would have adequate food, shelter, clothing, proper hygienic and sanitation facilities and every person willing to work is provided with gainful employment. The study reveals that women work force participation under the scheme surpasses the statutory minimum requirement of 33 percent and the trends indicate an increase in the participation rate at the national level, every year women participation has been around 48 percent. The scheme provides an opportunity for women to attain social and economic empowerment. It calls for intervention by authorities to ensure smooth functioning of this programme, free from malpractices and corruption so that it can act as a tool to rejuvenate the unproductive and under productive section of our country in coming years.

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