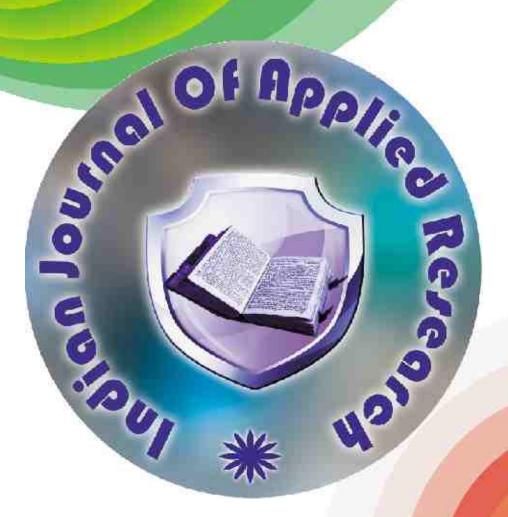
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# **Research Paper**

# **Education**



# Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA): A Boon to Tribal Women

\* Dr. Sherly Thomas

\* Associate Professor, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, Coimbatore

#### ABSTRACT

In a country like India, productive employment is central to poverty reduction strategy and to bring about economic equality in the society. There are estimates that over 90 percent of working women are involved in the informal sector. The National Rural Employment Scheme (NREGS) is an important strategy in the current economic content of global economic crisis and national economic slowdown, where raising aggregate demand is a major task for the government. NREGA is the first ever law internationally, that guarantees wage employment at an unprecedented scale. The primary objective of the act is augmenting wage employment. With this background a study on MNREGA was undertaken in a tribal area. The study revealed that MNREGA had been beneficial to the women in improving the livelihood.

# Keywords: Employment, Programme, Tribal, Global, Scheme

#### Introduction

omen in India work and contribute to the economy in many ways. There are estimates that over 90 percent of working women are involved in the informal sector. The National Rural Employment Scheme (NREGS) is an important strategy in the current economic content of global economic crisis and national economic slowdown. NREGA is the first ever law internationally, that guarantees wage employment at an unprecedented scale. The primary objective of the act is augmenting wage employment. The choice of works suggested in the act addresses causes of chronic poverty like drought, deforestation and soil erosions, so that the process of employment generation is maintained on a sustainable basis. The MGNREGP provides an indispensable lifeline to the poverty stricken rural masses.

There are a series of safeguards mandated by the act. Muster rolls are supposed to be maintained at the worksite and displayed at the GP office. Payments are to be made in public in front of all the labourers, with the details of attendance and wages being read aloud from the muster rolls, so as to reduce the risk of fudged entries being made. Job cards are intended to act as a record kept with the labourers themselves of the wages they have received and the number of days they have worked. Through these there has been an attempt to create a new model of accountability in public works, eliminating corruption through the vigilance of workers themselves.

#### **MGNREGS** in Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu is a leading state which has implemented this scheme and it has benefited a number of rural folks. This scheme has been renamed as Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). There were several community assets that were created and the generation of employment enhanced the development of community in various ways. Provisions of employment on a regular basis improved the economic and social status of the workers

MGNREGS has given people a right to work, to reestablish the dignity of labour to ensure people's economic and

democratic rights and entitlements to create labour intensive infrastructure and assets and to build the human resources base of our country. MGNREGS has made for the first time the power elite to recognize the people's right to fight endemic hunger and poverty with dignity accepting that their labour will be the foundation for infrastructure and economic growth. It has provided a unique opportunity to people from rural India to earn their own income without any discrimination of caste or gender. Most remarkable feature of MGNREGS is that it pays women the same as men, something that was virtually unimaginable in rural India.

#### Objectives of the Study

- To examine the socio-economic profile of the selected women involved in MGNREGP.
- To explore the benefits derived after joining the employment scheme.
- To suggest the measures to overcome the loopholes to make it more feasible to women.

# Methodology

Panampatti is one of the active work sites, and all the women who were involved in the MGNREGP are taken into considerations (76). Information was collected through a well structured questionnaire. Since the introduction of MGNREGP women are actively involved in various kinds of work and they do not get time to work on their own land. So during free or leisure time they work in their land.

# Socio-Economic Profile of the Women

Among the total sample size of 76 women, 78.5 women were Hindus and the rest of them belonged to other community. The marital status reveals that 86.8 percent of them were married and one was unmarried. There were nine widows among the selected groups. Sixty eight women lived in their own house while eight lived in rented house. With regard to source of lighting, 9.5 percent of the women had electricity while the rest of them used kerosene.

#### Age Classification

Women who were working under this scheme were grouped into different age classification as depicted below

Table-1: Age of the Respondents

Age (in years)	Number Stating	Percentage
20-40	46	61
40-60	26	34
Above 60	4	5
Total	76	100

Sources: Field Survey

Among the selected sample 61% belonged to young group; i.e. in the age group of 20-40 years. Around 34 % were in the age group of 40-60 years and there were only five percent who were above the age of above 60. It revealed that even the women in the senior age group were employed in this programme. It is the poverty that was prevailing in these families which forced them to work.

Table 2: Education level of the Respondents

Education Level	Number Stating	Percentage
Elementary	15	19.7
Primary	28	36.8
High school	5	6.6
Higher secondary	4	5.3
Illiterates	24	31.6
Total	76	100

Sources: Field Survey

It is a sorry state of affair to note that, inspite of the development that had taken place there are a good number of women who are illiterates. The adult education system which was in vogue few years ago could be restarted on a vigorous ground so that they could be educated.

#### Participation in NREGP

NREGP is a programme iniated by the government to provide employment for the poor and marginalized in rural areas. The major focus of this study is to probe into several issues relating to women employed in NREGP from the specific rural area. Among the 76 women selected for the study there were nine women, where two family members were enrolled in NREGS and the rest 67 women, they were the only one involved in this programme. The scheme stipulates only 100 days of employment in a year. With respect to the number of days these women have been employed under this programme, it points out that there was a variation in this aspect. The table below brings out the number of days of employment of the selected women.

Table 3: Days of Employment

	-	
Days Worked	Number Stating	Percentage
100-200	7	9.2
200-300	57	75
300-400	12	15.8
Above 400	0	0
Total	76	100

Sources: Field Survey

There were 12 women who had already put in 300-400 days of employment. Further 57 women (75%) had been employed for a period of 200-300 days working in various types of jobs like road construction, tank cleaning or any other kind of public work programme. Only seven women had worked for 100-200 days during the past few years. They were the new comers. While we examined their willingness to work in far off places 61.8 % answered in the affirmative, where as the rest 38 % were not willing to take up employment in far off places. For the latter group, the family situations do not permit them to leave their houses and go and work away from their homes. However all of them agree that their standard of living has improved. The ways through which it had improved their condition is given in the following table

Table 4: Pointers Indicating Improvement in the Standard of Living of Sample Women

<u> </u>		
Indicators	Number Stating	Percentage
Education	27	35.5
Marriage	8	10.5
Saving increase	11	14.5
Consumption increase	30	38.9
Total	76	100

Sources: Field Survey

Around 35% of the women reported that they were able to educate their children because of the increase in income. This shows that there are many in our country who cannot educate their children due to paucity of funds. There were cases where boys and girls even before the age of 8 or 10 going for work and getting pittance or some time the elder children look after the younger one at home and allowing the mother to go for work.

Determinants of Monthly Expenditure

To determine the influence of selected variables on monthly expenditure of the respondents, multiple regression analysis was used. The explanatory variables included in the analysis were age of the respondents (A), years of schooling of the respondents (EDU), willing at work (WW) and Debt (D).

Table 5 : Determinants of Monthly Expenditure of NREGA Women Workers

Variables	Partial Regression	Standard	T value	Sig
	Coefficient	Error		
Age	0.460	.111	0.412	0.043**
Education	117	.057	-2.058	.682*
Willing at work	0.428	.032	0.301	0.016**
Debt	.522	.393	1.277	0.000**

Source: field survey

\*and \*\* significant at 1 percent and 5 percent level

 $R^2 = 0.54$ 

The  $R^{2}$  value of 0.54 indicates that the fit was good that is, 54 percent of the variations in monthly expenditure were explained by age, education, willing at work and debt. The partial regression co-efficient of age , willing at work and debt , was positive influence on monthly expenditure that is one unit change in these variables would bring the values .460, .428 and .522 respectively. The t values of age, willing at work and debt are found to be significant. The t value of education is found to be in significant.

Only 34.5 percent of the women are not interested to continue with this work. Women also constitute one-third of the world's wage-labour force and one-fourth of the industrial labour force. Much of women's work both within and outside the home is unpaid and therefore not counted. Nearly half of the population wanted an increase in the wage. An increase in the facilities provided at the work spot and reduction in working time was demanded by 6.6% of the sample. Around 22% of the women wanted to have more number of working days, so that they can earn a little more money.

#### Conclusion

MGNREGS is one of the largest social safety net which provides gainful employments to millions of household. It is a milestone programmes that is sure to bring manifold blessing to the teeming millions of poor people in our country. It not only provides employment guarantee to the poor women and it also empowers them by giving equal rights for both men and women. Though there are certain shortfalls in the extension and implementation of the programme. The authorities at regular intervals should foster the effective functioning of the schemes. Every effort should be taken to strengthen such schemes. MGNREGS signals a possible reshaping of sate priorities in India through a democratic to provide livelihood opportunities for the rural poor.

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