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## IMPACT OF MGNREGS ON WOMEN WORKERS – A STUDY IN GUNTUR DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

**Madhavi Kukkala**

Research Scholar

Department of Sociology & Social Work

Acharya Nagarjuna University

### Introduction

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) aims at enhancing the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing hundred days of wage-employment in a financial year to a rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Empowering rural women is one of the objectives of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. One third of all employment is reserved for women and there is a provision for equal wages to men and women, provision for child care facilities at the worksite, which are three important provisions for women in the Act.

In Andhra Pradesh, as on 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2021, all the 13 districts in the State are covered by the Scheme comprising of 661 Mandals and 12,936 Gram Panchayats in 47,167 habitations. Total number of job cards issued in the State are 68,07,796. Out of 78,40,222 persons for whom wage employment is provided under the scheme during 2020-21, 36,45,806 are men (46.50 per cent) and 41,94,416 are women (53.50 per cent). Cumulative number of person days generated in the State since inception is 270,22,77,767. Average Wage rate per day per person in the State is Rs.229.27 during 2021-21.

### Review of Literature

The study made by Raghav Gaiha et al. (2008) focused on participation in the NREG programme of different socio-economic groups and the determinants of the participation of these groups. It is found that nearly one third of the households participated in this scheme. Large segments of highly disadvantaged groups such as the ST, the landless and labour households are found to be participated in it. About one-fifth of the households only found to be worked for about 100 days during 2007. Further, the landless and labour households participated for long durations.

Yanyan Liu and Christopher B Barrett (2013) opined that the MGNREGS offers equal wage rates to women and men for the same work and makes payment directly to individual workers. In principle, this should lead to greater gender equity, especially because women face lower wages and worse employment prospects in the private labour market in India.

Bhagirathi Panda (2015) found that 89% of the sample respondents admitted that MGNREGS had empowered women in their society, while 90% of them disclosed that MGNREGS had reduced the school dropout rate, and 72% confirmed to improvement in health status because of MGNREGS. It is concluded that the issues of corruption, distortions, malpractices in MGNREGS, particularly at the grass-roots level (Gram Sabha), reflect the fact that our local institutions are yet to mature to take care of the imperatives of sustainable development.

The study conducted by Himanshu et al. (2015) finds that the decline in performance of MGNREGS in Rajasthan is not entirely due to the lack of demand. Instead, the supply-driven top-down nature of the programme has led to a “discouraged worker” syndrome with workers showing disinterest in demanding work and passively waiting for availability of NREGS work. It is suggested that strengthening the demand-based nature of the NREGS may reduce the need for rationing. Further, it is suggested that simple temporal tracking of NREGS outcomes at the village level along with proper recording of demand through the Management Information System may well help detect discrimination within panchayats.

Saibol Ghosh (2017) examined the impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme on financial inclusion by utilising household-level data. The study finds that the MGNREGS has improved financial access.

Karishma Yasmin and Srinivas (2020) made an attempt to examine the impact of the MGNREGS on livelihood of the rural people. The study finds that the MGNREGS has resulted in contributing significantly to sustainable lives of the beneficiaries through enhancement of socio-economic status by creating valuable assets.



## Objectives and Methodology

The present study has made an attempt to examine the impact of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) on women workers. The study has examined the effect of MGNREGS on sample women workers in terms of impact on purchasing power, savings, change in working days, impact on migration and empowerment of women.

The study is based on primary data. Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh is selected for the present study. The data is collected using interview schedule. Multi-stage random sampling method is used to select the sample. At the first stage, four Mandals are selected from each of the four revenue divisions of the Guntur District. At the next stage, four villages are selected from each selected Mandal. From each selected Village, 30 women workers participating in the MGNREGS are selected. Thus, a total of 16 villages comprising 480 respondents are selected. After collecting the data, tables are drawn. Frequency tables are drawn to analyze the data.

## Data analysis

### Impact on Purchasing Power

An attempt is made to examine the impact of the MGNREGS on enhancing purchasing power. Distribution of the sample respondents by their opinion on impact of MGNREGS on enhancing their purchasing power is given in Table – 1. It is revealed from the table that significant improvement in purchasing power post MGNREGS is reported by around 37 per cent of the sample respondents, while around 29 per cent of the sample respondents had expressed considerable improvement. Marginal improvement in purchasing power due to MGNREGS is stated by around 35 per cent of the sample respondents.

**Table – 1**  
**Impact of MGNREGS on Enhancing Purchasing Power**

Purchasing power	Number of respondents	Percentage
Significantly improved	175	36.50
Considerably improved	138	28.80
Marginally improved	167	34.80
Total	480	100.00

Source: Computed from the Primary Data.

### Savings

Sample women workers are asked to state whether MGNREGS has enabled them to make some savings. Distribution of the sample respondents by their opinion on having savings out of the MGNREGS earnings is shown in Table – 2. It became evident from the table that one third of the sample respondents agreed that the MGNREGS has enabled the sample respondents to have some savings, while around 32 per cent of the sample respondents are strongly agreed to the said statement. By and large, nearly one fourth of the sample respondents are neutral to the statement. On the contrary, negligible percentage of the sample respondents are disagreed to the statement (5 per cent), while another about 5 per cent of the sample respondents are strongly disagreed to the statement.

**Table – 2**  
**Impact of MGNREGS in Allowing Women to Make Some Savings**

Opinion	Number of respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	151	31.50
Agree	160	33.30
Neutral	117	24.40
Disagree	24	5.00
Strongly disagree	28	5.80
Total	480	100.00

Source: Computed from the Primary Data.

### Change in working days

An attempt is made in the present study to examine whether the MGNREGS had resulted in change in working days. Distribution of the sample respondents by the impact of the MGNREGS on change in total number of working days in a year is given in Table – 3. It is obvious from the study that significant percentage of the sample respondents reported no change in the total number of their working days in a year pre and post MGNREGS (44.40 per cent) on the whole. Of the sample surveyed, about 26 per cent of the sample respondents opined that working days in a year are significantly reduced after participating in the MGNREGS, while around 21 per cent of the sample respondents expressed that working days are marginally reduced in view of the MGNREGS. No response is received from around 9 per cent of the sample respondents. Thus, the study shows that despite participation in the



MGNREGS, certain workers are attending their work as usual in addition to the employment under the MGNREGS since the employment under the scheme is found to be mostly being offered during non-agricultural season.

**Table – 3**  
**Change in The Total Number of Working Days of Sample Women in a year after Participating in the MGNREGS**

Change in working days	Number of respondents	Percentage
No change	213	44.40
Marginally reduced	99	20.60
Significantly reduced	126	26.30
No response	42	8.80
Total	480	100.00

Source: Computed from the Primary Data.

#### Impact on migration

One of the objectives of the MGNREGS is the arrest of migration of workers in search of employment. Sample respondents are asked to state impact of the MGNREGS in arresting migration. Distribution of the sample respondents by impact of the MGNREGS in arresting migration is depicted in Table – 4. It can be deduced from the table that the MGNREGS has resulted in reducing migration in the opinion of huge chunk of the sample respondents (91.30 per cent), while merely around 9 per cent of the sample respondents reported short distance migration to neighbouring areas even after the MGNREGS.

**Table – 4**  
**Impact of MGNREGS in Arresting Distress Migration from Village**

Opinion	Number of respondents	Percentage
Reduced	438	91.30
Short distance Village migration to neighbouring areas	4	8.80
Total	480	100.00

Source: Computed from the Primary Data.

#### Impact on empowerment of women

Sample respondents are asked to state their opinion on impact of MGNREGS on empowerment of women. Distribution of the sample respondents by their opinion on impact of the MGNREGS on empowerment is presented in Table – 5. It became evident from the table that significant percentage of the sample respondents are agreed that the MGNREGS has resulted in empowerment of women (47.30 per cent), while around 38 per cent of the sample respondents are strongly agreed to the said statement. On the other hand, merely about 10 per cent of the sample respondents are disagreed to the statement that the MGNREGS has resulted in empowerment of women, while nearly 5 per cent of the sample respondents are strongly disagreed to the said statement.

**Table – 5**  
**Opinion of the Sample Respondents on Empowerment of Women**

Opinion	Number of respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	181	37.70
Agree	227	47.30
Disagree	50	10.40
Strongly disagree	22	4.60
Total	480	100.00

Source: Computed from the Primary Data.

#### Conclusion

The present study has made an attempt to examine the impact of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) on women workers. The study has examined the effect of MGNREGS on sample women workers in terms of impact on purchasing power, savings, change in working days, impact on migration and empowerment of women. The study finds just little over one third of the sample respondents reported significant improvement in their purchasing power due to participation in MGNREGS. Majority of the sample respondents are of the opinion that the MGNREGS has enabled them to make some savings. There is no change in the total employment days attended in addition to the MGNREGS even after participation in the scheme in the case of about two fifths of the sample respondents. The MGNREGS has resulted in reducing migration in the opinion of largest



percentage of the sample respondents. Most of the sample respondents are of the opinion that the MGNREGS has resulted in empowerment of women.

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