

Performance of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA): A review of women employment

*Shefali Goyal, # Dr. Dhananjoy Datta

*Research Scholar, #Associate Professor & Coordinator, Faculty of Management Studies

ICFAI University Tripura, Agartala, India.

*shefali.goyal@ibsindia.org, #dhananjoy.datta@iutripura.edu.in

Abstract - National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005, later renamed as “Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act” (MGNREGA) is an Act which guarantees the “right to work” in rural India. MGNREGA in its framework has provisions for creation of durable rural assets with the Panchayats as the nodal agency for providing job cards. The Act has employment norms and gender sensitive provisions to ensure participation of rural women workers. Now, MGNREGA has completed well over a decade of existence so it is important to understand how far MGNREGA has become successful in creating sustainable assets through employment generation. In this paper an attempt has been made to study the performance of MGNREGA with regard to asset creation and employment generation especially for women in rural areas in the last five years. Interestingly, about seventy percent of the expenditure of the total outlay has been on wages which has increased the employment opportunities but the link with asset creation differs significantly across states. The study found evidences of significant employment generation for women in most states but in some states which need improvement. The constraints in implementation, both technical and administrative were found to be responsible for this variation in women employment & asset creation.

Keywords: MGNREGA, women, employment generation, asset creation

I. INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), also known as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS) is an Indian legislation enacted on August 25, 2005. MGNREGA provides a legal guarantee for one hundred days of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work at the statutory wage rate. It was first of its kind commitment by a Government to the rural poor to enable them to demand wage without loss of dignity. A Scheme of this nature has few parallels world over. In 2002 a scheme of job creation, Plan Jefes y de Hogar was introduced in Argentina. It was a step to revive the economy with the focus on municipal areas. It covered a wide range of activities like community service, health, childcare, education and self-employment. But by 2006 the Scheme was primarily an employment insurance and welfare program. In contrast MGNREGA, in its conception itself was more complex with the objectives of increasing wage employment and strengthening natural resource management through works that addressed causes of chronic poverty like drought, deforestation and soil erosion. The Ministry of Rural Development (MRD),

Government of India was made responsible for implementation of this scheme in association with state governments. The scheme was introduced in 200 districts in the financial year 2006-07 with total budget outlay of Rs.11300crores. An additional 130 districts were covered during the financial year 2007-08 with an increased budget allocation of Rs.12000 crores. As per the initial target, MGNREGA was to be expanded countrywide gradually over a period of five years. However, due to the increased demand to bring the whole nation under its safety net, the Scheme was extended to the remaining 285 rural districts of India with effect from April 1, 2008 in Phase III with allocation of Rs.30000crores. So in FY 2008-09 MGNREGA covered 34 States and Union Territories, 614 Districts, 6,096 Blocks and 2.65 lakhs Gram Panchayats. Furthermore in the financial year 2015-16 the scheme was extended to cover 648 Districts, 6,849 Blocks and 2,50, 441 Gram Panchayats. In the financial year 2020-21 (as on 27/05/20) the scheme covered 95 % of the district of the country. A look at the employment figures indicated that Phase - I districts showed higher levels of employment than Phase - II districts. This could be attributed not only to the foundations that the districts had laid in the preceding years but also to the higher demand for employment in these districts as compared to those covered in Phase - II and

Phase - III of MGNREGA implementation. It is important to note that districts covered in Phase-I were the poorest and least developed districts of the country.

MGNREGA implementation in India in FY 2020-21

Total No. of Districts	693
Total No. of Blocks	6,933
Total No. of GPs	2,65,080
Job Card	
Total No. of Job Cards issued[In Cr]	13.84
Total No. of	26.95
Total No. of Active Job Cards[In Cr]	7.77
Total No. of Active Workers[In Cr]	11.93
SC workers under active workers (%)	19.1
ST workers under active workers (%)	16.31

Source: <http://www.mgnrega.nic.in> as on 27.05.2020

II. RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

The restrictive nature of work and a wage rate lower than the minimum wage rate were some factors which were making MGNREGA lose its relevance until the COVID 19 pandemic came in the picture. After April 2020, the demand for work under MGNREGA has seen a rising trend. In May, 2020 people from urban areas started returning to their homes in rural India in the wake of lifting of curbs related to lockdown then over 36 million households sought work under the scheme. More than 40 million households asked for work in the first 25 days of June whereas the average monthly demand for work between 2012-13 and 2019-20 was 21.5 million households. In April, 2020 there was the lowest recorded demand for work since 2013-14 at 12.8 million. This reduced demand could be attributed to the lockdown which forced the jobless migrant workers to stay put in urban areas. The increase in demand in the recent months is a reflection of the current employment situation in rural India as male workers turn to MGNREGA only in times of acute crisis. Interestingly in at least 26 states, more households have demanded work in the first 25 days of June alone than the average of the past seven years (2013-14 to 2019-20). The sharpest spike was in case of Karnataka (225 % more than the average) and the demand for work least doubled in 10 other states. Furthermore in June, 2020 about 57% of the demand came from four states - Uttar Pradesh (6.2 million), Rajasthan (5.3 million), Andhra Pradesh (4.4 million), Tamil Nadu (4.1 million) and West Bengal (3.5 million). This was similar to the case in May 2020 when Uttar Pradesh registered the maximum demand (5.5 million), followed by Andhra (4.2 million), Rajasthan (4.1 million), Tamil Nadu (2.6 million) and West Bengal (2.6 million). The features to attract workers were the mandate of payment of wages within a fortnight of work, the insurance & disability benefits under Janashree Bima Yojana and health coverage under Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana. Considering this numerous states are looking to increase the

work opportunities in asset creation under MGNREGA. The point of interest is can this increase in asset creation and employment generation result in an increase in employment opportunity for rural women workers.

Objective: The objective of this paper is to study the trend in employment generation for women under MGNREGA in the last five years. The paper is an attempt to understand whether employment generation and asset creation under MGNREGA has had an effect on employment generation for women

Methodology: The paper is based on descriptive arguments related to MGNREGA activities in rural India. The secondary data used in the research has been collected from books, research papers, reports, journals, newspaper articles and online databases. Statistical tools like percentage and average are used for the analysis and interpretation of data.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Dreze and Lal (2007) ^[1] studied the employment generation per rural household in MGNREGA in Rajasthan. They found that during 2006-07 the average rural households in six districts where MGNREGA was implemented in Phase 1 in Rajasthan got work for 77 days only. They identified that the main gainers of the programme were households belonging to the disadvantaged section of society and that the share of women workers in MGNREGA employment in Rajasthan was about two third.

Mahapatra (2010) ^[2] identified that there were more women than men who worked under MGNREGA. Women participation had been growing since the inception of the Act in 2006. In Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan, the history of women mobilisation for schemes and campaigns seemed to have contributed to their higher participation. In Rajasthan, the campaign for social audits, in which women played a major role, had contributed to enhanced awareness and increased participation under MGNREGA. The worksites in these states had good facilities for children and women. In Kerala, management of worksites and other logistics for implementation were placed in the hands of women self- help groups under the poverty eradication mission, Kudumbasree.

Murugavel (2009) ^[3] studied the performance of MGNREGA in India. During the first year of implementation (FY 2006-07) in 200 districts, more than 2.10 crore households were engaged in MGNREGA and 90.5 crore person days were generated. In 2007-08, 3.39 crore households were provided employment and 143.59 crore person days were generated in 330 districts. In 2008-09, 4.5 crore households have been provided employment and 215.63 crore person days had been generated across the country. The study found that MGNREGA had been the most successful in Rajasthan. In Rajasthan 64% of the works done was water related, created 77 person days of work per household and women participation of 68%. In a

state like Rajasthan, where women were still not empowered, the scheme provided a stage for women to come forward and assert themselves. The study highlighted that advanced states like Gujarat, Punjab and Maharashtra were missing out on substantial social gains as they were unable to utilise the full potential of the Scheme.

Ramesh and Kumar (2009) ^[4] conducted a study in Karimnagar district of Andhra Pradesh in 2009-10, with a sample size of 500 women beneficiaries of the programme. The study found 2 lakh 63 thousand households were covered which had created 104500 works by utilising 1234 crores of the MGNREGA outlay. The study discovered that 51.6% of the workers were from backward class communities with 46.6% of workers were from Schedule Caste category and the rest were from Schedule Tribe and Other Backward communities. Out of the 670 MGNREGA workers surveyed, 74.62% were women which indicated that women participation was significant.

Dey (2016) ^[5] in his study found that in West Bengal the benefits of MGNREGA in terms of employment availability to the households could not be realised due to low employment generation. The study found that the State's performance in providing 100 days of employment to the households was not satisfactory. In the case of asset generation the excessive work load on Panchayats led to generation of low value assets. The experiences highlight that due to work burden and low participation of people in forum for discussions, the implementing agencies including the gram panchayats preferred to include traditional and easy to execute projects according to their own preference.

Bhargava (2013) ^[6] found that women participation had positively contributed to asset creation leading to economic progress of Ajmer district. The period of study was 2011-12 to 2012-13. Pooled regression analysis was used to assess the asset creation through employment (men days, women days) and contribution in economic progress of the sample unit. The undertaken model satisfied the hypothesis that many productive assets created through employment generation served as positive indicators of economic growth of Ajmer district. The interesting fact observed was that similar to other districts of Rajasthan here too women participation and contribution to economic assets had been dominant.

Srinivas & Pandyaraj (2017) ^[7] attempted to capture the extent to which employment was generated and durable assets were created during the last ten years of implementation of MGNREGS in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The study found that the performance of Andhra Pradesh in terms of providing employment and generating person days to rural households particularly women, SC and ST was significant but they were able to provide 100 days of employment to only 5.5 per cent of the participatory

households. Further, the state Govt. had created substantial number of assets during this one decade of implementation in different categories. However, it was observed that the rate of completion of works was dismal.

Turangi (2018) ^[8] conducted a study to explain the association between employment generation and assets creation in drought-affected regions in Kalaburagi region of Karnataka. The study found that under MGNREGA, employment generation was relatively high in Kalaburagi when compared with state and national level. Work completion rate had increased from 44 % to 79 % in the first three years and declined drastically thereafter. This work completion was relatively better in the works related to rural connectivity, water conservation and rural sanitation. During 2006-17, just 13 % of works were completed out of total undertaken works. The study highlighted that correlation between employment generation and work completion rate was too weak and assets creation was also unsatisfactory.

IV. PERFORMANCE OF MGNREGA

Though MGNREGA has been successful in gathering some significant achievements to its credit yet the performance of MGNREGA has not been uniform on all performance parameters and in all states across the country. In some states and on some indicators, it has performed above potential, while in others, it has been found lacking in many respects. There have been some revisions in the act yet there exist many areas where there is need for action. The tables give a statistical account of the performance of MGNREGA across different parameters and across different segments of population. Asset creation and utilization of allocated funds have been considered as an indicator to measure the success of MGNREGA.

MGNREGA completed ten years of implementation on 2nd February 2016 so a look at the achievements is vital. Since its inception, the expenditure has amounted to Rs. 3,13,844.55 crore and out of this 71% has been spent on wage payments to workers. Of the workers, the percentage of Scheduled Caste workers has consistently been about 20% and percentage of Scheduled Tribe workers has been about 17%. A total of 1,980.01 crore person days have been generated, out of which the percentage worked by women has steadily increased and has been much above the statutory minimum of 33%. Sustainable assets have been created linked to conservation of natural resources and overall development of Gram Panchayats. More than 65% of the works taken up under the programme have been linked to agriculture and allied activities.

A look at the progress report of implementation of MGNREGA indicates that FY 2020-2021 (till 24/05/2020) saw 1.73 crore household been provided employment.

Table 1: Progress Report of Implementation of MGNREGA in India

Progress	FY2020-21*	FY2019-20	FY2018- 19	FY2017-18	FY2016-17
Approved Labour Budget[In Cr]	280.76	276.76	256.56	231.31	220.9274
Person days Generated so far[In Cr]	25.43	265.35	267.96	233.74	235.6458
% of Total Labour Budget	9.06	95.88	104.44	101.05	106.66
% per Proportionate Labour Budget	41.57	0	0	0	0
SC persondays % as of total person days	19.75	19.74	20.77	21.56	21.32
ST persondays % as of total person days	20.39	18.29	17.42	17.49	17.62
Women Persondays out of Total (%)	50.37	54.68	54.59	53.53	56.16
Average days of employment provided per Household	14.66	48.39	50.88	45.69	46
Average Wage rate per day per person(Rs.)	200.95	182.09	179.13	169.44	161.65
Total No of HHs completed 100 Days of Wage Employment	2821	4060346	5259502	2955152	3991202
Total Households Worked[In Cr]	1.73	5.48	5.27	5.12	5.1224
Total Individuals Worked[In Cr]	2.39	7.89	7.77	7.59	7.6696

Source: <http://www.mgnrega.nic.in>

*as on 24.05.2020

The total household which were employed under MGNREGA was 5.48 crores in FY 2019-20. MGNREGA has seen high work participation from marginalized groups like SCs 21.56% in FY 2017-2018 and STs 20.39% in FY 2019-20. Women's participation was above the statutory limit and increased steadily year after year indicating the inclusion of underemployed and unemployed women into the workforce. This could also be attributed to the availability of work in the village itself and a wage rate equal to men. The requirement of minimum one - third of the beneficiaries to be women ensured adequate demand side pull for participation of women in MGNREGA. The national average indicated that women participation saw marginal decline from 56.16 % in 2016-17 to 53.56 % in 2017-18 and then a slight increase to 54.59% in 2018-19. In FY 2020- 2021 (till 27/05/20) MGNREGA saw 50.37 % work participation from women and this dip could be attributed to the pandemic and lockdown . The migrant labour from urban centres moved to villages and men needed gainful employment so they became the active workers on the job cards in rural India. It is a known fact that only when men find more lucrative jobs that women get the chance to join the MGNREGA workforce.

Table 2: Financial Performance of MGNREGA (FY 2016-17 to FY 2020-21)

Financial Progress	FY2020-21*	FY2019-20	FY2018- 19	FY2017-18	FY2016-17
Total Central release (in Cr)	25,129.82	71,248.77	62,125.07	55,659.93	47,411.72
Total Availability (in Cr)	27,090.11	75,738.67	69,228.68	64,985.89	57,386.67
Total Exp (in Cr)	14,007.71	67,983.03	69,618.59	63,649.48	58,062.92
Percentage utilisation	51.71	89.76	100.56	97.94	101.18
Wages (in Cr)	6,633.6 (47.35%)	48,817.48 (71.08%)	47,172.55 (67.75 %)	43,128.49 (67.75 %)	40,750.72 (70.18%)
Material & skilled wages (in Cr)	6,983.58	15,961.78	19,465.87	18,100.68	14,428.24

Source: <http://www.mgnrega.nic.in>

*as on 27. 05.2020

Note: Figures in the parentheses are the percentages (researcher's own analysis)

MGNREGA in FY 2020-21 (reported till 27/05/2020) saw a central release of Rs. 25,129.82 crore and expenditure on wages till date was Rs. 6,633.6 crore. In FY 2019-2020, Rs. 48,817.48 crore (71.8% of the total expenditure) was spent on wages. MGNREGA performance in terms of financial performance indicated that the allocation of central government and expenditure on wages increased every year due to induction of more districts as well as increasing demand of MGNREGA

work. The proportion of wages of the total cost has not seen a significant shift as there exist little scope for the nature of work required under MGNREGA in some district.

Since the national picture is not the best piece of evidence to make any assessment regarding the functioning of the MGNREGA so a look at the state level is vital. The extent of asset creation and number of workers, days of employment and the coverage of social groups like SC, ST and women are the ready indicators considered here.

ASSET CREATION

MGNREGA was not only about transferring cash to people in rural India but also about creating durable assets that will ultimately lead to improvement to life of the poor in rural India so a state wise analysis of asset created needs to be considered.

Table 3: Value of Asset created till May , 2020

Sl. No.	State/UT	Assets Created*	% of Total Assets**
1	ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR	2,675	0.01
2	ANDHRA PRADESH	65,12,944	13.09
3	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	16,892	0.03
4	ASSAM	4,42,291	0.89
5	BIHAR	14,70,017	2.95
6	CHHATTISGARH	21,41,683	4.30
7	GOA	1,991	0.00
8	GUJARAT	9,98,114	2.01
9	HARYANA	1,28,563	0.26
10	HIMACHAL PRADESH	5,87,583	1.18
11	JAMMU AND KASHMIR	4,72,335	0.95
12	JHARKHAND	17,11,252	3.44
13	KARNATAKA	31,66,570	6.36
14	KERALA	15,90,339	3.20
15	LAKSHADWEEP	19	0.00
16	MADHYA PRADESH	45,51,880	9.15
17	MAHARASHTRA	16,29,877	3.27
18	MANIPUR	54,698	0.11
19	MEGHALAYA	1,62,751	0.33
20	MIZORAM	99,473	0.20
21	NAGALAND	76,946	0.15
22	ODISHA	22,59,104	4.54
23	PUDUCHERRY	5,329	0.01
24	PUNJAB	1,60,820	0.32
25	RAJASTHAN	19,77,698	3.97
26	SIKKIM	38,840	0.08
27	TAMIL NADU	27,17,414	5.46
28	TELANGANA	37,90,367	7.62
29	TRIPURA	9,55,384	1.92
30	UTTAR PRADESH	63,81,885	12.82
31	UTTARAKHAND	5,17,700	1.04
32	WEST BENGAL	51,49,600	10.35
	Total	4,97,73,034	

Source: <http://www.mgnrega.nic.in>

*as on 27. 05.2020

** researcher's own analysis

In the FY 2020-21 (reported till 27/05/2020) Rs.4.98 cr worth of asset had been created under the scheme in rural India. Though this may not indicate the correct picture as it covers a few months yet it reflects the states which lead and lag in asset creation. Most of the asset creation had taken place in Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh & Telangana. The states which have seen the lowest assets creation till date were Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram.

PERSON DAY GENERATED

Till date (29/05/2020) Rs. 37.17 crore person day generation of work has taken place in FY2020-21 to benefit Rs. 2.16 crore households. 59 % of person days generated in FY 2019 -20 were in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh. In the FY 2019-20 the states of Sikkim, Manipur, Meghalaya, Jammu & Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh 0.94% of the person days were generated.

Table 4 : Person days generated 2019-20

Sl. No.	State/UT	Person days generated*	% of Total Person days**
1	ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR	15,622	0.00
2	ANDHRA PRADESH	5,18,73,280	16.40
3	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	8,98,233	0.28
4	ASSAM	31,34,698	0.99
5	BIHAR	2,08,30,117	6.59
6	CHHATTISGARH	4,60,90,873	14.57
7	DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	0	0.00
8	DAMAN & DIU	0	0.00
9	GOA	6,410	0.00
10	GUJARAT	56,57,988	1.79
11	HARYANA	11,38,514	0.36
12	HIMACHAL PRADESH	12,58,339	0.40
13	JAMMU AND KASHMIR	8,99,901	0.28
14	JHARKHAND	68,62,337	2.17
15	KARNATAKA	1,59,26,065	5.04
16	KERALA	22,08,168	0.70
17	LAKSHADWEEP	0	0.00
18	MADHYA PRADESH	2,93,49,429	9.28
19	MAHARASHTRA	76,26,923	2.41
20	MANIPUR	4,08,171	0.13
21	MEGHALAYA	6,72,141	0.21
22	MIZORAM	10,55,468	0.33
23	NAGALAND	15,73,546	0.50
24	ODISHA	1,61,33,450	5.10
25	PUDUCHERRY	1,74,849	0.06
26	PUNJAB	9,31,789	0.29
27	RAJASTHAN	2,59,37,158	8.20
28	SIKKIM	1,22,505	0.04
29	TAMIL NADU	69,59,015	2.20
30	TELANGANA	0	0.00
31	TRIPURA	31,04,317	0.98
32	UTTAR PRADESH	3,41,12,936	10.79

33	UTTARAKHAND	18,26,599	0.58
34	WEST BENGAL	2,94,90,832	9.32
Total		31,62,79,673	

Source: <http://www.mgnrega.nic.in>

*as on 27. 05.2020

** researcher's own analysis

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN MGNREGA

At an aggregate level, the participation of women in the Scheme has surpassed the statutory minimum requirement of 33 %; in FY 2019-2020 alone, women person –days of employment was close to 50%. The percentage of women participation from FY 2016 -2017 up to FY 2020-21 is provided in the Table 5, which highlights an increasing trend in participation of women power in MGNREGA till date of implementation.

Table 5 :Women person day in States & Union Territories

State	No. of districts	Women person day out of the total (%)				
		FY2020-21*	FY2019-20	FY2018- 19	FY2017-18	FY2016-17
Andhra Pradesh	13	56.37	60.03	59.9	59.64	58.24
Arunachal Pradesh	21	35.47	40.47	38.69	36.28	34.1
Assam	32	42.41	41.77	41.08	38.5	36.49
Bihar	38	57.45	55.85	51.76	46.57	43.73
Chhattisgarh	28	50.63	50.7	50.05	49.71	49.31
Gujarat	33	47.19	45.13	44.53	41.74	45.46
Haryana	22	51.2	50.59	50.05	48.64	45.62
Himachal Pradesh	12	55.84	62.75	63.26	61.58	61.8
Jammu & Kashmir	22	27.95	32.9	29.98	28.07	26.85
Jharkhand	24	40.29	41.31	39.22	37.33	35.72
Karnataka	30	50.19	49.09	48.59	47.13	47.21
Kerala	14	92.23	89.8	90.41	90.76	91.08
Madhya Pradesh	51	42.54	38.11	36.54	37.37	41.3
Maharashtra	34	43.9	43.41	44.87	45.48	44.86
Manipur	9	44.74	48.99	47.41	44.82	41.74
Meghalaya	11	54.98	50.51	50.15	46.8	44.28
Mizoram	8	43.9	40.21	37.95	33.93	35.76
Nagaland	11	36.76	35.63	31.56	28.76	29.68
Odisha	30	44.35	43.29	41.99	41.86	39.82
Punjab	22	48.61	58.79	60.73	62.66	59.97
Rajasthan	33	66.02	67.32	66.07	65.34	67.03
Sikkim	4	48.44	51.07	50.93	48.05	47.87
Tamil Nadu	31	85.75	86.31	85.4	85.68	85.68
Tripura	8	47.22	47.03	46.19	47.05	49.05

Uttar Pradesh	75	33.3	34.24	35.28	35.11	33.19
Uttarakhand	13	57.12	56.61	55.15	54.46	53.96
West Bengal	23	45.54	47.86	48.12	47.59	46.52
Andaman & Nicobar	3	56.74	59.54	63.58	59.61	55.79
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	1	0	0	0	0	0
Daman & Diu	2	0	0	0	0	0
Goa	2	77.05	75.59	71.05	78.69	77.79
Lakshadweep	1	0	11.39	37.42	20.16	0
Puducherry	2	86.21	86.78	87.65	86.34	85.79
Chandigarh	2	0	0	0	22.67	37.71
Telangana	30	0	61.52	62.8	61.46	59.9

Source: <http://www.mgnrega.nic.in>

*as on 27.05.2020

The large inter-state variation in women participation has remained an issue for further analysis. In FY 2019-20, Kerala ranked the highest in female participation rate at 92 %, followed by Tamil Nadu, Goa and Rajasthan with 85.75 %, 77.05 % and 66.02 % respectively. One state below the required 33 % was Jammu & Kashmir. Some of the states like Uttar Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland Jharkhand, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram Maharashtra and Odisha were above the stipulated level but below the national average. The state of West Bengal was marginally better with 45.54 % women person days in FY 2019-20. The southern states, like Kerala and Tamil Nadu, show a relatively higher rate of women participation in MGNREGA as compared to their overall work participation in all recorded works. Among the northern and some eastern states, however the pattern has been different. Here proportionately fewer women seem to have worked in the scheme than in other rural work; Rajasthan being the only exception. Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir were especially marked with significant gaps, where women participation in MGNREGA was particularly low. Some of the possible reasons for a high rate of women participation in the scheme in the southern states could be the acceptance of women participation by their culture in the labour force, influence of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and support by institutions at the state and local government to promoting female participation in MGNREGA. (Dreze And Khera, (2011)^[9]; Ghosh, (2009)^[10]; Bonner, K., Et al , (2012)^[11])

In some poor states lack of awareness coupled with a high supply of labour force and limited availability of work opportunities have forced women to compete with men for employment, and the latter were usually favoured for manual labour. However, in places where the market wages are higher than MGNREGA, only women seek employment under the Scheme while the men undertake jobs in the market. Non availability of worksite facilities such as crèches turned out to be a huge disincentive for women. Sometimes the very nature of the work and the exacting productivity norms limit the participation of the women. Additionally, the work hours under the scheme make it difficult to balance with their housework such as collecting water, wood, grass for livestock. (Sundarshan,2011)^[12]

ACTIVE WORKERS UNDER MGNREGA

Active workers are any individuals of household who has worked any one day in any one of the last three financial years or in the current financial year. The Scheme under the Act had 11.94 crore active workers in FY2020-21 (till 29.05.2020). In the FY 2019-20 the national average of the active workers to the total workers was 43.2% . In FY 2019-20 almost 12% of the active workers of the total active workers were from the state of West Bengal.

Table 6: Active worker in FY 2019-20

Sl. No.	State/UT	Active Workers*	Total Workers*	Active workers as % total workers
1	ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR	13,423	52,284	25.67
2	ANDHRA PRADESH	83,98,494	1,79,22,078	46.86
3	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	2,27,351	4,59,127	49.52
4	ASSAM	43,96,562	89,21,940	49.28

5	BIHAR	63,05,603	2,60,90,552	24.17
6	CHHATTISGARH	67,29,974	94,52,728	71.2
7	DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	0	25,927	0
8	GOA	7,557	47,918	15.77
9	GUJARAT	25,30,618	91,94,967	27.52
10	HARYANA	6,28,929	17,88,545	35.16
11	HIMACHAL PRADESH	10,65,358	24,09,740	44.21
12	JAMMU AND KASHMIR	15,27,347	22,98,662	66.45
13	JHARKHAND	29,75,720	87,83,700	33.88
14	KARNATAKA	64,55,899	1,50,65,553	42.85
15	KERALA	21,84,352	56,41,020	38.72
16	LAKSHADWEEP	459	16,084	2.85
17	MADHYA PRADESH	95,24,258	1,62,11,104	58.75
18	MAHARASHTRA	54,48,478	2,22,75,589	24.46
19	MANIPUR	6,70,935	10,46,173	64.13
20	MEGHALAYA	8,21,016	11,75,145	69.87
21	MIZORAM	2,00,948	2,19,502	91.55
22	NAGALAND	5,03,322	7,27,273	69.21
23	ODISHA	62,83,926	1,72,36,239	36.46
24	PUDUCHERRY	56,234	1,46,076	38.5
25	PUNJAB	13,49,926	28,21,666	47.84
26	RAJASTHAN	1,08,23,072	2,44,07,210	44.34
27	SIKKIM	90,402	1,34,154	67.39
28	TAMIL NADU	82,78,133	1,23,45,750	67.05
29	TELANGANA	55,79,366	1,19,83,350	46.56
30	TRIPURA	9,17,416	10,81,526	84.83
31	UTTAR PRADESH	1,06,42,920	2,62,26,390	40.58
32	UTTARAKHAND	10,02,611	18,51,675	54.15
33	WEST BENGAL	1,39,14,041	2,86,24,523	48.61
	Total	11,95,54,650	27,66,84,170	43.20

Source: <http://www.mgnrega.nic.in>

*as on 28.05.2020

In the FY2019-20 the states of Mizoram, Tripura, Chhattisgarh, Nagaland and Meghalaya had more than 69 % active workers of the total workers. In the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Bihar, Jharkhand less than 25% of the total workers were active workers whereas in West Bengal there were 48% active workers of the total workers.

TABLE 7 : ACTIVE WOMEN WORKERS (FY 2013-14 TO FY 2020-21)

STATES	2013-14			2014-15			2015-16			2016-17			2017-18			2018-19			2019-20			2020-21		
	TOTAL WORKERS	WOMEN	% OF WOMEN OF TOTAL WORKERS**	TOTAL WORKERS	WOMEN	% OF WOMEN OF TOTAL WORKERS**	TOTAL WORKERS	WOMEN	% OF WOMEN OF TOTAL WORKERS	TOTAL WORKERS	WOMEN	% OF WOMEN OF TOTAL WORKERS	TOTAL WORKERS	WOMEN	% OF WOMEN OF TOTAL WORKERS	TOTAL WORKERS	WOMEN	% OF WOMEN OF TOTAL WORKERS	TOTAL WORKERS	WOMEN	% OF WOMEN OF TOTAL WORKERS	TOTAL WORKERS	WOMEN	% OF WOMEN OF TOTAL WORKERS
ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR	0.18	0.1	55.56	0.18	0.1	55.56	0.18	0.1	55.56	0.18	0.1	55.56	0.18	0.1	55.56	0.13	0.07	53.85	0.13	0.07	53.85	0.13	0.07	53.85
ANDHRA PRADESH	129.7	69.89	53.9	86.59	45.72	52.8	86.63	45.74	52.8	86.63	45.74	52.8	86.58	45.72	52.81	86.58	45.72	52.81	84	44.79	53.32	83.98	44.79	53.33
ARUNACHAL PRADESH	2.43	0.96	39.51	2.43	0.96	39.51	2.43	0.95	39.09	2.42	0.95	39.26	2.42	0.95	39.26	2.27	0.93	40.97	2.27	0.93	40.97	2.27	0.93	40.97
ASSAM	42.6	17.73	41.62	42.6	17.73	41.62	42.63	17.74	41.61	42.67	17.76	41.62	42.67	17.76	41.62	42.67	17.76	41.62	43.97	18.85	42.87	43.97	18.85	42.87

BIHAR	55.68	27.53	49.44	55.68	27.53	49.44	55.74	27.56	49.44	55.79	27.59	49.45	55.79	27.59	49.45	55.79	27.59	49.45	63.06	33.06	52.43	63.06	33.06	52.43
CHHATTISGARH	62.83	30.9	49.18	62.83	30.9	49.18	62.84	30.9	49.17	62.84	30.9	49.17	62.84	30.9	49.17	62.84	30.9	49.17	67.3	33.18	49.3	67.3	33.18	49.3
DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DAMAN & DIU	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
GOA	0.09	0.07	77.78	0.09	0.07	77.78	0.09	0.07	77.78	0.09	0.07	77.78	0.09	0.07	77.78	0.09	0.07	77.78	0.08	0.06	75	0.08	0.06	75
GUJARAT	25.92	11.57	44.62	25.92	11.57	44.62	25.93	11.57	44.62	25.94	11.58	44.64	25.94	11.58	44.64	25.94	11.58	44.64	25.31	11.29	44.61	25.31	11.29	44.61
HARYANA	6.45	3.06	47.44	6.45	3.06	47.44	6.46	3.06	47.37	6.46	3.06	47.37	6.46	3.06	47.37	6.46	3.06	47.37	6.29	3.09	49.13	6.29	3.09	49.13
HIMACHAL PRADESH	10.65	5.99	56.25	10.65	5.99	56.25	10.66	5.99	56.26	10.66	5.99	56.27	10.66	5.99	56.27	10.66	5.99	56.27	10.65	6.05	56.81	10.65	6.05	56.81
JAMMU AND KASHMIR	14.94	4.75	31.79	14.94	4.75	31.79	14.94	4.75	31.79	14.94	4.75	31.79	14.94	4.75	31.79	14.94	4.75	31.79	15.27	5.03	32.94	15.27	5.03	32.94
JHARKHAND	30.86	12.37	40.08	30.86	12.37	40.08	30.88	12.36	40.08	30.88	12.37	40.1	30.88	12.37	40.1	30.88	12.37	40.1	29.76	12.33	41.43	29.76	12.33	41.43
KARNATAKA	67.42	32.48	48.12	67.42	32.48	48.12	67.45	32.48	48.12	67.45	32.48	48.12	67.45	32.48	48.12	67.45	32.48	48.12	64.56	31.34	48.53	64.56	31.34	48.53
KERALA	22.56	18.04	79.96	22.56	18.04	79.96	22.57	18.05	79.97	22.57	18.05	79.98	22.57	18.05	79.98	22.57	18.05	79.98	21.84	17.46	79.95	21.84	17.46	79.95
LAKSHADWEEP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MADHYA PRADESH	92.94	39.24	42.24	92.94	39.24	42.24	92.99	39.25	42.24	93.01	39.28	42.23	93.01	39.27	42.22	93.01	39.27	42.22	95.24	40.06	42.04	95.24	40.06	42.04
MAHARASHTRA	55.45	24.01	43.35	55.45	24.01	43.35	55.47	24.01	43.28	55.49	24.02	43.29	55.49	24.02	43.29	55.49	24.02	43.29	54.48	23.51	43.18	54.48	23.51	43.18
MANIPUR	6.41	2.98	46.49	6.41	2.98	46.49	6.41	2.98	46.49	6.41	2.98	46.49	6.41	2.98	46.49	6.41	2.98	46.49	6.71	3.2	47.69	6.71	3.2	47.69
MEGHALAYA	7.74	4.1	52.97	7.74	4.1	52.97	7.74	4.1	52.97	7.75	4.1	52.97	7.75	4.1	52.97	7.75	4.1	52.97	8.21	4.39	53.47	8.21	4.39	53.47
MIZORAM	1.98	0.78	38.38	1.98	0.78	38.38	1.98	0.78	38.38	1.98	0.78	38.38	1.98	0.78	38.38	1.98	0.78	38.38	2.01	0.89	44.28	2.01	0.89	44.28
NAGALAND	5.23	2.12	40.54	5.23	2.12	40.54	5.24	2.12	40.46	5.23	2.12	40.54	5.23	2.12	40.54	5.23	2.12	40.54	5.03	1.94	38.57	5.03	1.94	38.57
ODISHA	56.54	24.4	43.16	56.54	24.4	43.16	56.56	24.41	43.16	56.57	24.42	43.17	56.57	24.42	43.17	56.57	24.42	43.17	62.85	27.84	44.3	62.85	27.84	44.3
PUDUCHERRY	0.54	0.45	83.33	0.54	0.45	83.33	0.54	0.45	83.33	0.54	0.45	83.33	0.54	0.45	83.33	0.54	0.45	83.33	0.56	0.47	83.93	0.56	0.47	83.93
PUNJAB	12.77	6.97	54.88	12.77	6.97	54.88	12.77	6.97	54.88	12.77	6.97	54.88	12.77	6.97	54.88	12.77	6.97	54.88	13.5	7.41	54.89	13.5	7.41	54.89
RAJASTHAN	10.52	6.089	57.86	10.52	6.089	57.86	10.54	6.096	57.85	10.55	6.1	57.85	10.55	6.1	57.85	10.55	6.1	57.85	10.82	62.53	57.88	10.82	62.53	57.88
SIKKIM	0.94	0.46	48.94	0.94	0.46	48.94	0.94	0.46	48.94	0.94	0.46	48.94	0.94	0.46	48.94	0.94	0.46	48.94	0.9	0.44	48.89	0.9	0.44	48.89
TAMIL NADU	86.15	67.41	78.25	86.15	67.41	78.25	86.18	67.44	78.25	86.18	67.44	78.25	86.18	67.44	78.25	86.18	67.44	78.25	82.78	65.73	79.4	82.78	65.73	79.4
TELANGANA	58.24	32.36	55.54	58.24	32.36	55.54	58.27	32.37	55.55	58.27	32.37	55.55	58.27	32.37	55.55	58.27	32.37	55.55	55.79	31.29	56.01	55.79	31.29	56.01
TRIPURA	9.43	4.49	47.61	9.43	4.49	47.61	9.43	4.49	47.61	9.43	4.49	47.61	9.43	4.49	47.61	9.43	4.49	47.61	9.17	4.38	47.76	9.17	4.38	47.76
UTTAR PRADESH	99.16	35.49	35.76	99.16	35.49	35.76	99.19	35.5	35.73	99.33	35.55	35.73	99.33	35.55	35.73	99.33	35.55	35.73	106.4	37.82	35.54	106.4	37.82	35.54
UTTARAKHAND	9.9	5.39	54.44	9.9	5.38	54.4	9.89	5.38	54.4	9.89	5.38	54.4	9.89	5.38	54.4	9.89	5.38	54.4	10.03	5.51	54.93	10.03	5.51	54.93
WEST BENGAL	13.62	6.192	45.45	13.62	6.192	45.45	13.63	6.195	45.45	13.63	6.197	45.46	13.63	6.197	45.46	13.63	6.197	45.46	13.91	63.76	45.82	13.91	63.76	45.82
TOTAL	1217	608.9	584	1217	608.9	584	1217	608.9	584	1217	608.9	584	1217	608.9	584	1217	608.9	584	1196	598.7	584	1196	598.7	584

Source: <http://www.mgnrega.nic.in>

*as on 27.05.2020

** Researchers own calculation

The proportion of active women workers to the total workers in FY2020-21 for the entire country was 49.89%. Uttar Pradesh had figures which were around 35% and these in terms of active women workers were the lowest figures among the states while the highest active workers as proportion of total women workers was in Kerala at 79%. Interestingly the numbers indicate a slight change year after year but in terms of proportion there was virtually no change which left a question on the implementation of the provisions of the Scheme under the Act.

The official statistics reflects that MGNREGA has been quite successful and well implemented scheme that has been operating but in reality there has been no significant impact on the problems of employment of rural women.

Though it has a positive impact on the participation and earnings of the women beneficiaries, but if we compare the states, we find a wide variation. Thus from the above analysis it can be concluded that the performance of MGNREGA is not full satisfactory. The scheme could not ensure the 100 days job guarantee to the majority of the women job card holders. The problem however, does not lie in the Act, but in its defective implementation and lack of proper monitoring.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

A closer look at the employment generation for women and asset creation indicate that no doubt there has been significant improvement but there is wide variation among

the states. This could be attributed to numerous factors and some steps could be undertaken to ensure an increased participation of women workers.

- A proper administrative and technical support needs to be provided at different levels of implementation to ensure proper creation of durable assets.
- Low level of awareness regarding the scheme has reduced its success rate. So campaigning through street drama, loudspeaker, writing on the wall about MGNREGA could be effective measures to increase awareness.
- The government could consider giving more importance to productive works based on local need which would enable more women to come under the umbrella of MGNREGA.
- The government needs to take strict and immediate steps to curb corruption in implementation of MGNREGA and put into place a system which would ensure no delay in wages disbursement to women beneficiaries.
- The provision of facilities like shade, crèche for children, periods of rest and a first aid box need to be implemented and maintained.
- As a long term measure emphasis should be laid on literacy driven programs as they will not only enable more transparency and accountability in implementation of MGNREGA but also enable rural women workers to involve themselves in other schemes for their empowerment

VI. CONCLUSION

MGNREGA has come as a ray of hope for the rural households as the focus of the scheme is to provide employment in rural areas. But the objective of MGNREGA is employment guarantee linked with the creation of durable and sustainable assets. To achieve this, list of permissible works are clearly stipulated in the Act itself. From the above analysis it can be concluded that the performance of MGNREGA has not been completely satisfactory. The decline in the rate of completion of work has resulted in low level of durable asset creation both in terms of quality and quantity. Employment generation presents a better picture but there too the scheme could not ensure the 100 days job guarantee to the majority of the job card holders. Though MGNREGA has had a positive impact on employment pattern of women as it has increased the number of available opportunities but in some states the presence of women have been less than average. In areas where rural women were traditionally homebound, such as Rajasthan MGNREGA has played a significant role in empowering rural women and curbing gender discrimination. This highlights the fact that the underprivileged cannot be completely marginalized in an elitist political system if the political organization has the willingness to consider their interests. So the area of

concern is with regard to variation in state performance. Some of this variation can be attributed to the flow of resources to individual states as it is dependent on the ability of the states to forecast labour demand and subsequently submit a plan outlining the same. The poorer states with their incapacities to plan could have lower flow of resources making the schemes like MGNREGA regressive. Another reason could be the poor implementation across the country that has happened in the form of lack of child care facility, worksite facility and illegal presence of contractors. Certain initiatives need to be considered so that the valuable gains of the scheme are not lost to poor implementation for the women workers. This is of significance considering the new normal wherein men in rural areas are becoming the active workers so governments will have to undertake measures to safeguard the interest of rural women workers.

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