

A study to analyze the women employment generated through Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Gurantee Scheme in Anand district, Gujarat state

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■ **ABSTRACT :** The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (here after referred to as MGNREGA or Scheme), enacted by the Central Government of India in September 2005, provides a legal guarantee of one hundred days of employment per year in unskilled works to each rural household. Although livelihood security for rural households is its main objective, it also envisages the creation and maintenance of rural infrastructure, with a significant focus on agriculture (GOI, 2005). The scheme was initially implemented in February 2006 in the poorest 200 districts, termed the 'Phase 1' districts; it was extended to another 130 'Phase 2' districts in April 2007 and in April 2008 it was implemented in the remaining 'Phase 3' districts as well. Women in Indian society represent a totally deprived lot. Their empowerment has a great potential in leading the country to spectacular development. The emerging issues and challenges in rural India also compel us to adopt a pragmatic support system to empower the women. MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) and its implementation support this agenda through facilitating the essential processes of entrepreneurship, capacity building, education, health and hygiene etc. especially by involving the women folk of the rural India. The achievement of inclusive growth and overall development is highly dependent on the gender equality and prosperity of women in the rural society. The present paper has made an attempt to study the participation of women through MNREGA in various states of India and also in districts of Anand. The highest employment status amongst women in terms of person days can be seen in Kerela. When we consider the total employment status of Anand district through MNREGA, a total of 62, 213 person days employment is generated, out of which the share of women stands at 48.10 per cent. The highest employment status amongst women in terms of person days can be seen in Anand district with 69.98 per cent.

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Empowerment refers to increasing strength of individuals or communities in the different spheres of life such as economic, political, social, spiritual etc. It also refers to instilling confidence in people in their own capacities (Savaiah and Jayraj, 2014).

Women Empowerment essentially refers to empowering women to change power relations between them and men in their favour. Women in general and women in developing countries in particular are observed to be lagging behind men in the different spheres of life such as, labour and employment, health and nutrition, education and skills, asset ownership, political and social participation etc., with the result that power of decision making in the multiple spheres of life lies more with men than with women, on the economic front, women own no/low assets as compared to men. This restricts their access to credit, to technology, to markets and to upward mobility. Women also have lower status in the field of labour and employment, as compared to men, reflected in their low participation, poor occupation diversification, low employment status, low wages etc. Women have lower mobility in the labour market and have overall poorer prospects for upward mobility in the labour market and in the economy, on the human development front, women are observed to be lagging behind men in literacy and overall educational achievements, health status including morbidity and mortality and overall human development. Human and gender development indices in developing countries show this very clearly. In addition, women also lag behind in leadership and political participation, in enjoying autonomy and freedom as well as in socio-cultural participation. This manifestation of gender inequalities in the different spheres of life is however, a cause as well as a result of unequal power relations between men and women. Women are lagging because they do not possess power to change their inferior status and they do not have power to change their status because they lag behind in most inputs needed to change power (Hirway, 2011).

There is a need to break this vicious circle to empower women and to enable them to take their own decisions. Multiple strategies have been suggested to break this circle and to empower women. A major strategy is to give them asset ownership, such as land, other productive assets or housing. Right to a productive asset tends to improve women's bargaining power within the household as well as outside the household in the

main stream economy. Apart from allowing women a say in decision making within the household, ownership of assets improves women's access to credit, to skill/training, to markets etc and to developmental opportunity. Participation is another major strategy to help women to acquire power. It could be political participation (through voting, contesting and winning elections at different levels), economic participation (in the labour market through employment, skill training, finance and marketing) and social participation (in major social and cultural institutions through membership and through holding positions of decision making) or participation in other spheres. Participation is likely to help women in being active members of the society and economy, in acquiring positions of decision makers. It also helps them in acquiring confidence in their own capabilities. Human development, through improving human capabilities of women as well as through ensuring basic needs and primary services/ infrastructure is another important approach that can empower women and change the power relations in favour of women. It helps human capital formation among women, improves their productivity and reduces their vulnerability through improved health and nutrition. Basic infrastructure can reduce women's drudgery and can improve quality of their life, opening new opportunities for them. Mobilization of women to acquire collective strength for improved bargaining in the economy and society is also known to be an important strategy for empowerment of women. Collective strength of women challenges their subordinate status and inferior power and removes certain critical barriers to empowerment, such as diffidence, isolation and feeling of powerlessness. It helps women to acquire confidence and self-esteem (Hirway, 2011).

MGNREGA (Mahatama Gandhi National Rural Employment Act):

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was passed by Indian parliament in 2005 and the scheme (each state was expected to design its own scheme based in the National Guidelines) designed under the Act was implemented in 200 districts on India in February 2006. The coverage of the Act was expanded gradually and since 2008-09 MGNREGA covers the entire rural India. As is well known, MGNREGA provides a legal guarantee of 100 days of wage employment at the

minimum wage rate (prevailing in the concerned state) to every rural household living in rural India. The main objectives of MGNREGA are to guarantee 100 days of work at the legal minimum wages to each household that demands work in rural India, to generate productive assets in the community and thereby enhance livelihoods of people and to empower (Gram) Panchayats and Gram Sabha by ensuring their participation in the planning and implementation of MGNREGA and thereby strengthen decentralized democracy. It is to be noted that MGNREGA is not designed with the objective of promoting gender equality. As far as women’s role in MGNREGA is concerned, MGNREGA offers 33 per cent employment to women, guarantees child care facility at the worksite and provides scope to women to participate in planning and implementation of MGNREGA and in conducting social audit as members of Gram Sabha and of Gram Panchayat. Apart from these, there is no direct focus on women’s empowerment or gender equality under MGNREGA. It is argued that one cannot load too many objectives on MGNREGA as that will diffuse its main focus. In spite of the absence of any direct focus on gender equality, MGNREGA seems to have

benefited women in multiple ways. In fact, a large number of studies have shown that women have benefited from MGNREGA in many ways (Khera and Nayak, 2009; Pankaj and Tankha, 2010; Sudarshan, 2009 and Rao, 2008). These studies have shown that women have participated in MGNREGA on a large scale in most states in India; have received equal wages with men and earned incomes of their own; single women households and female –headed households have particularly benefited by MGNREGA as it provided them minimum incomes and food security and participating women in general are frequently feeling empowered as they have now some say in decision making (Beg *et al.*, 2014).

■ RESEARCH METHODS

This study is based on secondary data which has been collected from the relevant literature consisting of research studies, magazines, journals, reviews, information collected from the government website *i.e.* www.nrega.nic.in and publications by various academic organizations, management experts and researchers. The present paper has made an attempt to study the participation of women in MGNREGA in various states of

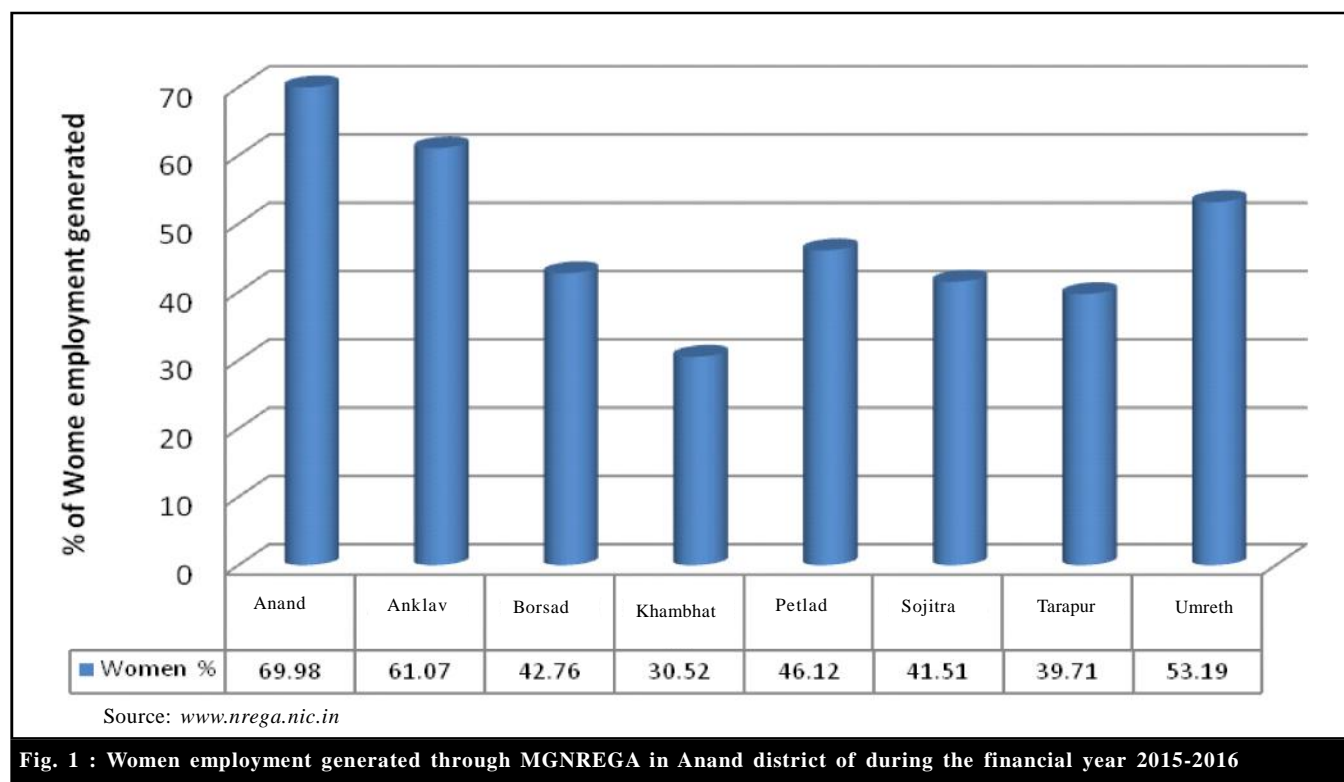


Fig. 1 : Women employment generated through MGNREGA in Anand district of during the financial year 2015-2016

India and also in Anand district.

Women employment through MGNREGA:

Presently, the MNREGA is being implemented in the all rural districts of the country. MGNREGA has resulted into major financial inclusion where in bank/post office accounts have been opened for the families getting employment. Ministry has advised all the states to

ensure payment of wages fully through the accounts. Table 1 presents the data relating to women employment through MGNREGs in different States of India. The below table displayed the effective participation of women in the employment generated through MGNREGA. The first highest employment status amongst women in terms of person days can be seen in Kerala *i.e.* 91.38 per cent while the another state of India *i.e.* Tamil Nadu which

Table 1: Women employment generated through MGNREGA in various states during the financial year 2015-2016

Sr. No.	States	Total (person days in Lakhs)	Women (person days in Lakhs)	Women participation (%)
1.	Odisha	625.71	234.49	37.48
2.	Rajasthan	1861.25	1294.86	69.57
3.	Chhattisgarh	690.27	335.75	48.64
4.	Jharkhand	460.92	150.60	32.67
5.	Madhya Pradesh	1045.93	532.59	42.02
6.	Tripura	503.03	253.60	50.14
7.	Maharashtra	544.98	239.24	43.90
8.	Gujarat	146.79	68.05	46.36
9.	West Bengal	2034.26	948.64	46.63
10.	Kerala	604.29	552.19	91.38
11.	Karnataka	392.00	184.56	47.08
12.	Bihar	504.96	207.07	41.01
13.	Mizoram	88.87	32.52	36.59
14.	Haryana	40.51	18.30	45.17
15.	Himachal Pradesh	153.34	97.58	63.64
16.	Uttar Pradesh	1281.69	373.58	29.15
17.	Nagaland	169.77	53.15	31.31
18.	Assam	359.48	118.31	32.91
19.	Uttarakhand	148.72	74.10	49.83
20.	Meghalaya	116.05	50.23	43.28
21.	Punjab	107.81	62.78	58.23
22.	Tamil Nadu	2832.58	2406.68	84.96
23.	Sikkim	30.42	14.65	48.16
24.	Manipur	47.74	18.89	39.57
25.	Jammu and Kashmir	153.96	37.46	24.33
26.	Goa	0.87	0.67	77.01
27.	Arunachal Pradesh	42.23	13.35	31.61
28.	Lakshadweep	0.02	0.01	50.00
29.	Andaman and Nicobar	0.47	0.28	17.62
30.	Puducherry	5.00	3.26	16.06
31.	Andhra Pradesh	0.00	0.00	0
32.	Telangana	1073.69	623.22	45.46
Total		16067.61	8946.13	55.68

Source: www.nrega.nic.in

was second highest women employment generated (84.96%), Goa (77.01%) and the third highest women employment generated was Rajasthan (69.57%). The lowest women employment generated in India was Andamand and Nicobar 17.62 per cent followed by Puducherry, Jammu and Kashamir *i.e.* 24.33 per cent and Uttar Pradesh *i.e.* 29.1 per cent have to initiate more efforts to increase the ratio of women employment through MGNREGA. The below data was discovered for the financial year 2015-2016.

Table 1 presents the employment status of MGNREGA and women employment through MGNREGS in different districts of Anand. The highest women employment in terms of person days provided in Anand district was 69.96 per cent while 61.07 per cent of women employment was generated in Ankhalav which was second highest women employment participation in Anand district. Moreover, the lowest women participation in Anand district was found in Khambhat *i.e.* 30.52 per cent. When we consider the total employment status of Anand district through MGNREGA, a total of 62,213 person days employment is generated, out of which the share of women stands at 48.10 per cent. This clearly indicate that rural women of Anand district are in the process of improving their quality of life by joining the wage workforce of MGNREGA which can in turn enhance the developmental activities at the village level itself empowering rural women economically.

Conclusion:

MGNREGA is an Act that aims to strengthen the women employment by enforcing that about 33 per cent of total work force should be women and also that there will be equal wages for men and women. It is playing a substantial role in creating employment for women thereby, leading to greater independence and self-respect among women. The present paper has made an attempt to study the participation of women employment through MNREGA in various states of India and also in districts of Anand. The highest employment status amongst women in terms of person days can be seen in Kerala. When we consider the total employment status of Anand district

through MNREGA, a total of ,78, 626 Lakhs person days employment is generated, out of which the share of women stands at 43.96 per cent. The highest employment status amongst women in terms of person days can be seen in Anand *i.e.* 69.98 per cent.

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