



# IMPACT OF MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT (MGNREGA) ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: A CASE STUDY OF MON DISTRICT OF NAGALAND

**Aomatsung**

Research Scholar, Department of Economics, Nagaland University,  
H.Q:-Lumami, Nagaland, India.

## ABSTRACT

### KEYWORDS:

*MGNREGA, income-consumption, level of empowerment,*

*Women play a pivotal role for the upliftment of family, society and the country as a whole. When women are supported to empower politically, socially and economically the whole society benefitted and the families are healthier. Therefore, it is essential to empower women. The present study was undertaken with the objectives 1) To study the socio-economic of women beneficiaries 2) To study the impact of women empowerment through MGNREGA 3) To suggest policies and measures for more effective implementation of MGNREGA based on the findings of the field study. It was found that majority of women workers (27.5%) were under the age group 31-40 years, majority 33.75% were attended elementary school, 12.5% women respondents had attended the local audit done every year once, MGNREGA lead to employment of women beneficiaries and consequently have increase in income and consumption level. Now, Women workers become moderately independent in earnings and support the families. The Act appears to be quite meaningful and powerful for rural development in general and women empowerment in particular for the entire nation.*

## INTRODUCTION

To attend a healthy family, society and the Country as whole and sustainable economic growth the role of Women cannot be denied. The whole society benefitted and the families are healthier as when women are encouraged to politically, socially and economically empower. Therefore, empowerment of women is essential to have a vibrant society.

The term Empowerment connotes a process through which people realize in themselves their full potentials and achieve control over their own life. It ensures people the freedom to make choices and accept responsibilities; valuing self and thereby, is a helping process in the development of people's self-esteem. Kabeer (1999) defines empowerment as 'the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them.' Now a day it is generally seen that women are not lagging behind of man and play a very important role in making their family financially independence (Kabita Borah, Rimjihim Bordoloi, 2014). Therefore, Economic empowerment is very important because only women who earn for their livelihood can challenge social and gender relation and bring in gender equality.

Majority of the women constitute from rural areas is chronically poor. To skip from the poverty and vulnerability of women's lives, the Central Government implements many developmental programs. One such women friendly program

is MGNREGA which was implemented from 2006 onwards. Without any bias to gender, MGNREGA is providing employment and open an avenue to earn income to rural people of India which is worth commendable. The most notable features of MGNREGA is that it promises to equal wages irrespective of gender, which is not mentioned in any other schemes that is implemented so far.

Presently, the MGNREGA is being implemented in full swing in all the rural districts of India. In India, in spite of given some special provisions for women participation and women welfare in various rural development schemes implemented so far, almost in all schemes commonly found is gender biasness. MGNREGA is also not an exception in this matter. It is found that almost in all the study villages of both districts women participation is low compared to male counterpart in various MGNREGA activities. In all the villages male participant were dominant where 66.67% male and 33.33% were female at an average in every sample villages of both the districts

## METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

For the present study only primary data is used. A well prepared questionnaire and interview scheduled is used to collect primary data. The study is conducted in Mon District of Nagaland. A total of 80 women beneficiaries were selected at random. Altogether 8 villages under Mon RD Blocks i.e, Chui, Goching, Sheanghah Chingnyu, Sheanghah Wamsa,

Chenwetnyu, Chenmoho, Wakching and Tanhai were selected owing to better accessibility of data. The data collection is done during the period 2015-2016.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study is undertaken with the following objectives.

1. To study the socio-economic of women beneficiaries.
2. To study the impact of women empowerment through MGNREGA.
3. To suggest policies and measures for more effective implementation of MGNREGA based on the findings of the field study.

### RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Women in the northern state of Nagaland traditionally enjoyed a high social position, within their family as well as in their community. A strong prevalence of patriarchy has ensured that they are not just kept away from key decision-making, but they are barred from inheriting ancestral assets like land and other properties.

Naga rural women are chiefly responsible for keeping the state's agrarian economy going, since the menfolk migrate

in large number to nearby town and city in search of better paying works. Yet, they do not have any ownership rights over the land till date.

Agriculture being the main occupation of the Nagas, from the time of hunting- gathering and warfare period to the modern Naga society, women have always worked more than imagined. From traditional time, while men engaged themselves to hunting and warfare, women work in the field as well as managed all the household chores.

Women have been a carrier of identity through the art of weaving skill, and her enormous agricultural work. From traditional time to the present women have been playing a major role in the building civilization and in making a modern society.

### 1.SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF WOMEN RESPONDENTS

#### 1.1, Age composition of women.

While surveying 10 women respondents each from 8 villages of Mon districts, certain age structure have been studied and shown below in table 1.

**Table.1, Age composition of women beneficiaries.**

Age	No. of female respondent	Percentage (%)
Below 30	16	20.0
31-40	22	27.5
41-50	21	26.25
51-60	9	11.25
61 and above	2	2.5
Total	80	100

Source:Field survey,2015-16.

The table 1, reveal the age composition of women respondents in the selected villages of Mon district. It is vivid from the table that there are 16 respondents in below 30years, 22 respondents in between 31-40 years, 21 respondents in between 41-50 years, 9 respondents in between 51-60 years and only 2 respondents in above 61 years. It is inferred that the combined percentage (86.25%) of

respondents falls below the age of 50 years which is the prime age for productive activities. These rural women could contribute productively to the upliftment of rural economy.

#### 1.2, Educational status of women.

From the field study it is found out the women respondents' educational qualification which is shown below in table 2.

**Table. 2, Educational status of women beneficiaries.**

Educational	Numbers	
	Female	Percentage (%)
illiterate	23	28.75
Primary	20	25.0
Elementary	27	33.75
Secondary	10	12.5
Hr. sec/P.U	Nil	nil
others	Nil	Nil
Total	80	100

Source: Field survey,2015-16.

It is evident from the table2.that majority of the respondents were Elementary school educated (33.75%) followed by illiterate (28.75%), primary educated (25.0%) and Secondary school educated (12.5%). These reflect the poor socio-economic status of women workers to avail better education. No doubt, irrespective of educational qualification women workers were benefitted through MGNREGA.(table.2).

#### 1.3, Marital status of women.

From the field study it is found that irrespective of social status women workers were benefitted which is shown below.

**Table. 3, Marital status of women workers under MGNREGA program.**

Category	Numbers	Percentage
Live with husband	75	93.75
Widow	5	6.25
Unmarried	Nil	100

Source: Field survey,2015-16.

A look into the table.3, has reveal that 93.75% were married women who were lived with her husband and 6.25% were widows. A single/ widow who is the only life bread earners in the families were benefitted. Before MGNREGA cash flow to those single women was very hard as women were hired for work rarely. However, by working under MGNREGA the cash flow is possible at least in certain

amount in the hands of this group. No doubt, couple women workers also benefitted same as single women.

**1.4, Type of works.**

Categories of works undertaken by women workers under MGNREGA in the sample villages in the study area are shown below.

**Table 4.Typeof works given to women beneficiaries.**

Works	Numbers	Percentage
	Female	
Carry stone, mud, water and cement and sand	60	75
Serving tea and cooking	12	15
Cleaning of drainage	20	25
Cleaning of village	20	25
All the above	48	60

Source: Field survey,2015-16.

Table.4. Shows the types of works given were recorded from the respondent’s response. Table 4, Shows that majority of respondents (75%) were involve in carrying stone and mud while in constructing road (soiling)and cement and sand while in constructing of footstep and protection wall in the village. Since works were undertaken in community based, some of the women (12%) were assigned to serve tea and cooking food for the workers. Women were also given the work of cleaning village (25%) and cleaning of drainage (20%). When asked about type of work they have involved, 48 respondents claimed that they have work in carrying stone

and mud, serving tea and cooked and cleaning of village and drainage. It is therefore inferred that major works undertaken were road construction inside the particular village jurisdictions. All these works done on community based oriented undertaken. Workwas done under the supervision of village council and Village Development Board at the village level.

**1.5, Source of income of women worker.**

While conducting field survey, the earnings of the women worker were found out from the sources given in the table below.

**Table.5,Source of Earnings of women workers.**

Sources	Numbers	Percentage
Sale of agricultural products	37	46.25
Sale of firewood/ working in other field for wages	15	18.75
Business	7	8.75
Solely from MGNREGA	21	26.25
Total	80	100

Source: Field survey,2015-16.

The Table. 5,show the sources of earning of women worker. It revealed that majority of the respondents (46.25%) were drawn their income from agricultural sector by selling its products either in roadside of its village or bringing to town. It is found from the field survey, women from the villages of Chui and Goching carry firewood in basket on her back by foot to reach the town and fetch an amount of Rs.200 per basket. It was found that time to time women rarely go for wages in other field as when available. A small numbers of women (8.75%) do business like small shop, livestock, etc. For some of the respondents MGNREGA was an additional income. It was revealed that 21 respondents solely drawn their income from MGNREGA works. They were mostly

housewives who look after the children and manage household activities and help their husband in the field. They don’t go either business or sale agricultural products or wages but solely go for MGNREGA to earn cash. No doubt, women who were engaged in other activities also go for MGNREGA work and earn a good amount of wages.

**1.6,Nature of MGNREGA work and contentment.**

While asked about the nature of work and contentment of work, the following were the responses got from women beneficiaries as shown below in table.

**Table 6. Difficulties in work under MGNREGA program.**

Responses	Numbers	Percentage
Yes	61	76.25
No	19	23.75
Total	80	100

Source: Field survey, 2015-16.

The table 6, reveal that 76.25% respondents felt discontent in works given to them under MGNREGA. There was no difference in work and wages under MGNREGA between men and women as per the respondents. As mentioned earlier work under MGNREGA done in community, women were allowing to work along with the male irrespective of nature of work. Women do hard works along with the men. Many of the women said that they were suffered with body pain and headache after the daylong work. Some of the women workers claim that works under MGNREGA should be relaxed for women and should give less hard work especially for manual work. No doubt, women workers were happy to work under job card as it strengthen the community level

participation irrespective of gender and learned mutual respect to one another. Before MGNREGA women don't go for community works but now women are encourage involving in community work under MGNREGA. The participation of women in community work has achieved one of the basic features of MGNREGA to strengthen women at grass root level.

## **2. IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT.**

### **2.1, Attending social audit:**

While conducting survey, asking about attended social audit at village level the following responses were got from the respondents.

**Table 7. Attendance in social audit of women at the village level under MGNREGA program under Mon district.**

Responses	Numbers	Percentage
Yes	10	12.5
No	70	87.5
Total	80	100

Source: Field survey, 2015-16.

It was experienced during the field survey that only 10 respondents were attended in social audit which is conducting once every year. It is found that every year local audit at the village is conducting. It is found that a committee comprised of 5 members was selected by the Village council which includes VDB secretary, youth leader, council member, women leader, and church leader. The women beneficiaries who had attended the social audit are found to be women leader in the villages. (table.7).

### **2.2, Income-consumption effect:**

All the respondents of the women beneficiaries have claimed that by working under MGNREGA program have enhance their income. Women beneficiaries feel somehow happy with the implementation of MGNREGA as they could earn additional income that helps in the family's expenditure. Another important point that emerged from the survey is that women workers were, by and large, receiving their wages in person, rather than through husband or bank. Thus, MGNREGA has created a sense of feeling of independence in earning for the rural women in particular and family in general. A good number of women responded that MGNREGA income is mostly spent on food expenses. A small number of women said that the increase in income from MGNREGA work, helped atleast to meet their home/household needs when there is no way out. A good number of women workers said that wages from MGNREGA help in paying tuition fees for the children. A small number of women who were old age above 60years said that wages from MGNREGA were use on health expenses.

### **2.3, Impact on Education:**

It is found out from the field study that MGNREGA income has assist in schooling of the children. Many of the women workers have reported that before MGNREGA their children were studied in Government School as they cannot afford the monthly fees in private school. But by working under MGNREGA they can send their children to private school. Some of the respondent said that they could send their children to take tuition as the parent could not teach at home.

### **2.4, Impact on Community level participation:**

At Pre-joining MGNREGA women were not allowed to participate in the village meeting. But with the coming of MGNREGA women were allowing to participate in the meeting and given a chance to express their opinion for the welfare of the villagers under the MGNREGA program. Women workers said that two women from womenfolk in the village represents in the VDBs which is the implementing agency of MGNREGA program in the villages. MGNREGA has given an opportunity to women to show their skill and capability as when they work together. They learned mutual respect among one another. The participations of women in social audit at village which is conducting once or twice in every year is plausible and worth mentioning under MGNREGA program in the sample district.

### **2.5, Opinion on Women empowerment from women respondent:**

From the field survey, taking 80 women beneficiaries, 10 each from 8 villages as sample, the levels of empowered responses are shown below.

**Table 8. Level of women empowerment through MGNREGA program.**

Mon district	
Responses	Numbers
Yes	13 (16.25)
No/less	17 (21.25)
To some extent	49 (61.25)
Total	80 (100)

Source: Field Survey, 2015-16. Figures in parenthesis show percentage to total.

Table 8. Shows that majority of the women beneficiaries (61.25%) said that they were empowered through MGNREGA to some extent. On the other hand, 21.25% women respondents claimed that they were not or less empowered while 16.25% of women workers felt that they were empowered through MGNREGA program.

There was empowerment of women socially and economically as the earning of the women enhanced the status of their family. Women were also politically empowered due to their participation in the decision making process under the scheme as per the beneficiary survey conducted in 8 villages covering 33.33% women participants.

### 3. The following are the suggestions put forward based on the field experiences for an effective implementation of MGNREGA in the sample district.

- It is suggested that awareness campaign at the village level should be given to general public and women in particular.
- It is also suggested that there should not be delay in payment of the wages under this scheme because it can affect to the smooth implementation of work.
- A separate cell for women beneficiaries should be created to ensure their effective participation in MGNREGA scheme.
- It is suggested that grievance redressed and social cells should be set up at the village level and suggestions be taken from the general public.
- A provision should be included in the principle guidelines of the MGNREGA that Nature of the work to be decided by the women at the state level to boost up more employment for women beneficiaries and to tackle local development challenges and priorities, so that it could deliver better outcomes.
- Women needs are very different and physically weaker than the male which MGNREGA works command only manual labour, majority of the women respondent suggested that a separate fund should be earmark to do their own befitting works in the village.

### CONCLUSION

The field survey has shown that there is quite high level of potential for MGNREGA for socio-economic empowerment of women and reasonable (moderate) political empowerment too. MGNREGA lead to employment of women beneficiaries and consequently have increase in income and consumption level. Now, Women workers become moderately independent in earnings and support the families. The Act appears to be quite meaningful and powerful for rural development in general and women empowerment in particular for the entire nation. The problem lies not in the Act, but in its defective implementation and lack of proper

monitoring. Involvement of political, delayed in wage payment, lack of transparency etc. need to be strictly controlled. The prospects of the MGNREGA for rural development and women empowerment are quite bright provided it is properly executed.

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