



## THE ROLE AND EFFICACY OF MGNREGP IN RURAL WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MADAPPALLY BLOCK PANCHAYAT OF KOTTAYAM DISTRICT IN KERALA

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### ABSTRACT

*The initiation and countrywide implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) represents a milestone in social policy and employment creation with its right based approach and focus on livelihood security. The flagship program has benefitted a large number of marginalized rural households by providing them unskilled work and led to prevention of stress migration from rural areas in lean agricultural seasons. The focus of this paper is to find out how far this programme is effective in empowering rural women and also to identify the lacunas if any and suggestions made accordingly.*

**Keywords:** NREGA, NREGS, MGNREGP, WOMEN EMPOWERMENT.

### INTRODUCTION

Women are an integral part of every economy. The all-round development and harmonious growth of the nation would be possible only when women are considered as equal partners in progress with men. Effective empowerment is essential to harness the women labour in the main stream of economic development. As far as rural women are concerned, among the major facets of empowerment, economic empowerment is very important. It means increasing self-reliance among them. The process of empowerment requires transformation of structures of subordination, control over material and intellectual resources, gaining decisions, making authority and reduction of gender inequality. (Abdullah Hadi 1997). This requires that women must recognize their strategic needs, their social position and understand how coercive it is.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), also known as National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, (NREGS) is an Indian legislation enacted on September 5, 2005. In Kerala, it was implemented in February 2, 2006. The NREGA 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 minimum wage. The Ministry of Rural Development (MRD), government of India is monitoring the entire implementation of this scheme in association with State governments.

The goals of MGNREGA are to provide strong safety-net for vulnerable groups by providing a fall-back employment when alternative employment sources are scarce or inadequate. (MoRD 2008). It acts as a growth engine for sustainable development of agriculture economy and empowerment of rural poor through the process of rights-based law and new ways of doing business. It aims to provide a model of governance reform anchored on the principles of transparency and grass-root democracy. There are a number of distinct ways in which MGNREGA is likely to impact poverty, the most direct and obvious way being by providing extra work opportunities and income to the poorest in the rural

areas. (P. Dutta, 2012)

### Importance of MNREGA in Kerala

In Kerala, this act was introduced with an aim of providing employment to the rural people who are unskilled and living below the poverty line, which will improve their purchasing power. It attempts to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor in the society.

### New approaches:

1. The implementation of the programme, the types of works selected, the area, the time required for job were consulted with the farmers, because they are always interested in the new projects which led to the development of the economy.
2. Trained facilitators always discuss the features of this programme with the public, so that it is possible to prepare suitable plan for the same in the Grama Sabha meetings.
3. In Kerala, the implementation of the programme is entirely done through the Grama Panchayat.
4. Along with the services of accredited engineers, engineers of voluntary organizations, engineering college teachers have been used for the effective implementation of this programme.
5. Technical feasibility is provided through technical group.
6. For the implementation of the programme, NREGS Coordinators can be appointed by the Panchayat.
7. Another important feature is that for the implementation of this programme, a prime role is given to kudumbasree mission. Majority of the kudumbasree units consists of families below poverty line. The role of Area Development Societies (ADS) and Communities Development Societies (CDS) in the implementation of this

programme have been clearly discussed. Arrangement of the workers, facilities for the workers and conducting works are the major responsibilities of the ADSs.

8. Importance is given to the rights and privileges of the workers.
9. Wages is made through bank account of the workers, which reduces all types of corruptions.

### ***Norms and conditions***

Adult members of rural households submit their name, age and address with photo to the Gram Panchayat. After making enquiry, the village officer issues a job card. The job card contains the details of the adult members enrolled with his/her photo. After registration, the person can submit an application for work in writing (for at least fourteen days of continuous work) either to Panchayat or to the Programme Officer. The panchayat/programme officer will accept the valid application and issue dated receipt of application, letter providing work will be sent to the applicant and also displayed at panchayat office. The employment will be provided within a radius of 5 km: if it is above 5 km extra wage will be paid. Women will get priority and 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of beneficiaries under the Programme are to be women. Registration of employment seekers is done household-wise. But within registered households' entitlement – for 100 days of employment in a year - the individual members of the household can also apply for work. The work duration shall ordinarily be for at least 14 days continuously, with not more than 6 days per week. Within 15 days of submitting the application or from the day work is demanded, employment will be provided to the applicant.

### ***Allowances other than wages***

If any labourer gets bodily injury during the course of employment at work site, the person is entitled to free medical treatment from the State Government. The concerned State Government shall provide complete treatment, medicines, hospital accommodation without any charge and the injured person will be entitled for daily allowance which shall not be less than 50% of wage rate applicable.

An ex-gratia payment of Rs.25,000 or such amount as may be notified by the Central Government shall be paid to the legal heir of the deceased or to the disabled as the case may be. If the eligible applicant does not get employment within 15 days of the demand for work or the date from which he sought work (date of submitting application), he shall be provided unemployment allowance as per terms and conditions laid down. The rate of unemployment allowance will be 25% of the wage rate for the first 30 days and 50% of the wage rate after that during the financial year subject to the household entitlements of days of employment.

An important objective of the Scheme is to create durable assets and strengthen the livelihood resource base of the rural poor. Work done through contractors is not permissible.

### ***The kind of works permissible under the Programme***

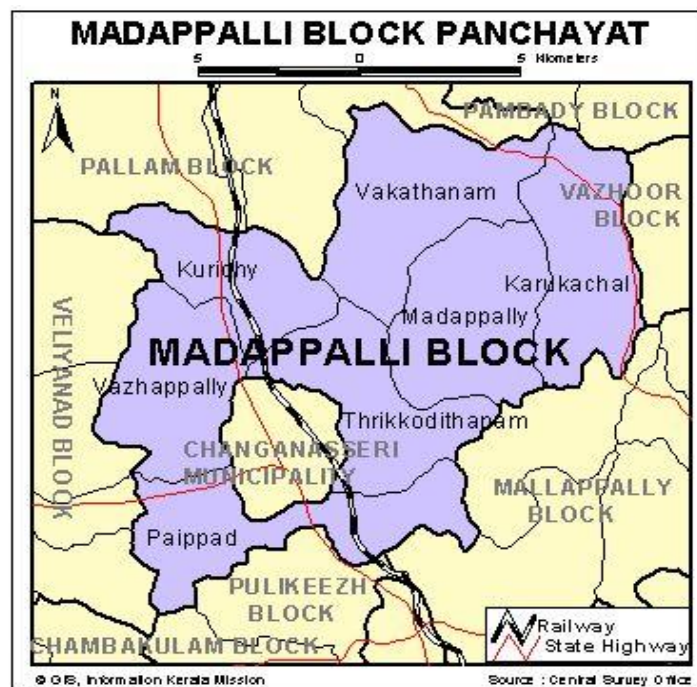
1. Water conservation and water harvesting;
2. Drought proofing, afforestation and tree plantation.

3. Irrigation canals including micro and minor irrigation works;
4. Provision of irrigation facility to land owned by households belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes or to land beneficiaries of land reforms or that of the beneficiaries under the Indira Awas Yojana of the Government of India.
5. Renovation of traditional water bodies including desilting of tanks,
6. Land development,
7. Flood control and protection works including drainage in water logged areas,
8. Rural connectivity to provide all-weather access. The construction of roads may include culverts where necessary, and within the village area culverts may be taken up along with drains.

## ***MNREGA IN MADAPPALLY BLOCK PANCHAYAT***

### ***Profile of the sample area:***

Madappally Block Panchayat is one among the 11 block panchayats of Kottayam District. It has an area of 145.04 km. The total size of the population is 193481, out of which male population is 96158 and female, consists of 97323. The density of population is 1334. The literacy rate 97%, of which male literacy rate is 98% and female literacy rate is 96%. From 2008 to 2011, it constitute seven panchayats, i.e. Karukachal, Kurichy, Madappally, Paippad, Thrickodithanam, Vakathanam, and Vazappally panchayats and from 2011 onwards, two panchayats, i.e. Karukachal and Kurichy were excluded from this block panchayat.



Women constitute half of the rural population, and poverty, ignorance and low economic as well as social status are their most important and serious problems. So it is of utmost important that they have to be brought into the main stream of economic development. Active and fuller participation of the

people in the developmental activities are the need of the hour. To understand such need, our Government has been initiating and implementing a number of women developmental programmes for their empowerment in various fields. Empowerment means to access, control and utilization of the available resources in an effective manner.

From the available sources, it is clear that MGNREGP is very active in Madappally Block Panchayat. The efficacy of this programme can be analysed only through direct interviews and discussions with the respondents. For this purpose a survey of 200 women from five Grama Panchayat have been conducted by using a purposive random sampling technique.

### ***Socio-Economic and Demographic Profile of the respondents***

#### ***(a) Age Composition***

**Table:1 Age wise distribution of the respondents**

<i>Age Groups</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
25-30	15	7.5
30-35	36	13
35-40	40	20
40-45	58	29
45-50	32	16
Above 50	19	9.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Primary survey

The largest number of respondents (29%) belongs to 40-45 categories. They are of the opinion that though their husbands are earning members, it is not enough to meet all of their family needs. So they took the employment card from the Panchayat to supplement their family expenditure. 20% of them have come under the category of 35-40, and 9.5% of them belong to more than fifty years of old.

#### ***(b) Average Family size***

**Table:2 Number of family members**

<i>No. of members</i>	<i>No. of family</i>	<i>Percent</i>
4	160	80
5	12	06
6	18	09
More than 6	10	05
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Primary survey

Majority of the women (80%) belong to nuclear Family. A very few have joint family or in laws.

#### ***c. Caste***

**Table: 3 Caste of the respondents**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
SC	56	28

<i>ST</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Others</i>	<i>130</i>	<i>65</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary survey

From the above table, it is clear that out of the 200 respondents, 130 (65%) belong to general / others, 28% belong to Scheduled Caste (SC), and 7% belong to Scheduled Tribe (ST).

#### ***(d). Education***

**Table :4 Educational qualifications of the Respondents**

<i>Qualification</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>Below SSLC</i>	<i>130</i>	<i>65</i>
<i>SSLC</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>PDC</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Degree</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Diploma</i>	<i>04</i>	<i>2</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary survey

### ***The impact of MGNREGP on Women Empowerment***

After having membership in this programme the respondents were happy to say that this programme is very effective in economic, social, and psychological empowerment of poor women. The impact can be assessed through changes in the annual income, savings, expenditure on food and non-food items, improvement in standard of living and so on. The major purpose of MGNREGP is to create and offer employment to unskilled workers especially to the poor women to improve their standard of living.

#### ***(a) Employment Generated under MGNREGP***

**Table:5. Employment offered to different sections of the people**

<i>Year</i>	<i>SC</i>	<i>ST</i>	<i>OTHERS</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
2008-2009	937	75	4981	5993
2009-2010	1307	84	6442	7833
<b>2010-2011</b>	<b>2149</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>10070</b>	<b>12375</b>
<b>2011-2012</b>	<b>948</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>6804</b>	<b>7786</b>
2012-2013	1136	40	8853	10029
2013-2014	1225	42	8844	10111

2014=2015	1323	45	8764	10132
2015=2016	1220	34	9854	11108

Source: Poverty alleviation unit, district panchayat, kottayam

The most of the respondents (65%) have the educational qualification of below SSLC. They are of the opinion that since they have low qualification and lack of technical skills, it is difficult for them to find out any other job. 20% of them have the qualification of SSLC. Through NREGA, these poor women got employment, since it is meant for the unskilled workers. Few of them are degree (5%) and diploma (2%) holders. They say that though they are qualified, they were not able to find some other forms of work due to financial and family matters. From the table 5, it is revealed that a good number of SC, ST, and others got employment through NREGA. The number has been increased from 2008 to 2016.

### (c) Annual Income

**Table:6 Annual Income (Rs)**

Income Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below Rs.30000	150	75
Rs.30000-Rs.40000	38	20
Rs.40000-Rs.50000	6	3
Rs.50000-Rs.60000	4	2
Above Rs.60000	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Primary Survey

The annual family income is an important factor responsible for the poor women to participate in this programme. Majority of the women (75%) are belongs to BPL category. And their annual income is below 30,000. 20% have annual income ranges between Rs.30000-Rs.40000. Only five of them have income above Rs.50000. They say this much of income is not enough to meet their family requirements. Because of increasing day today household expenditure and at the same time majority of them have only one earning member at their home. But after getting employment through NREGA, the women were able to manage their family expenditure. They support their husbands in day today chores.

**(c) Savings:** Since most of the women are the members of kudumbasree units or any other SHGs, they have weekly savings. It ranges between Rs.25 to Rs.50. Before joining the NREGP, sometimes, it is difficult for them to save even such a small amount in the ayalkkootams. But after getting work through the NREGP, they were able to save more amount in the SHGs and also they used to save a small amount in the post office or any other bank to meet their future financial requirements.

### (d) Increase in the expenditure on food and non- food items:

Though their family income is not enough to meet their daily requirement, their expenditure on food and non food items have keep on increasing day by day. Many a times they face financial crisis. Under such situation, they used to borrow money from the money lenders, friends or even they pawn or sell their

ornaments. Since majority of them have lower educational qualification, and financial problems were not able to get any form of work or start a micro enterprise. But getting employment through MGNREGP, all of them are happy to say that most of their family crises were solved. Now they were able to spend a good amount on food and non-food items without borrowing from others.

### (e) Better education for the children

After getting employment through NREGA, majority of the respondents are of the opinion that there has been great change with regard to the education of their children. They could afford to provide better study materials, tuition facilities, better transportation facilities and a few could even send their children for higher studies like engineering, nursing, MBA and so on.

**(f) Social mobility:** Through the NREGP, the social movement of the women were improved. Of course they got more mobility while they took membership in the kudumbasree/SHGs units. Through this programme, the rural women become more active and they have voice at their home and in most of the families, the decisions were taken jointly by the husbands and the wives. Thus the women have a dominant place at their home, equal to their spouse. This is mainly because of their economic empowerment.

### (g) Self confidence

Through active participation in kudumbasree units and in NREGP, there is an improvement in their self confidence. Majority of them (55%) say that their self confidence level have been changed to a great extent.

**Table:7 Improvement in Self confidence**

Category	Not at all	To a limited extent	To a great extent	Total
SC	2	35	18	55
ST	2	6	7	15
OTHERS	0	45	85	130
<b>Total</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: primary survey

### (h) Communication skill

Improvement in communication skill is a significant factor in one's empowerment. 66% of the women are of the opinion that their communication skill have been improved to a limited extent. At the same time 28% feel such improvement to a great extent, which shows their psychological empowerment.

**Table:8. Improvement in communication skill**

Category	Not at all	To a limited	To a great extent	Total
SC	5	40	10	55
ST	2	12	01	15
OTHERS	5	80	45	130
Total	12	132	56	200
Percentage (%)	6	66	28	100

Source: primary survey

### (i) Feeling of oneness

Above all, the entire respondents were greatly admiring the fact that through working together, there is a great feeling of oneness among all the members. Even they share their day to day happenings to each other. Some say that which will reduce their mental tensions and frustrations.

### Drawbacks of the programme

Though this programme benefited to a large number of families in rural and urban areas, it has certain lacunas. Some of them are:

- Lack of proper monitoring of the programme: In many areas, the work have been carried out under the supervision of the concerned supervisor and the mate. But many a time it lacks proper monitoring. In one site or work place there are more than 30 women were in number. A few were do their work with honesty, but some may hide from their work. Any way they will get their daily wages. This tendency and attitude of the workers have to be changed.
- In the first stage of work, major works may be road cleaning, minor irrigation works, etc and at the second stage, leveling and cleaning of work site of land owners having labour card and possesses more than ten cents to acres of land were carried out. But such types of work does not lead to the over all development of the locality.
- At present, in the third stage of work, the works can be carried out like road maintenance, road re-tarring, construction of roads below three meters, shelters for cattle, contour bunding etc. But the panchayat authority is not ready to take all such activities due to lack of fund from the central and the state governments.

### Conclusion and Suggestions

For the implementation of this programme, though the complete freedom is given to the gramapanchayat, the panchayat have to follow all the instructions of the Central Authority. They should take all types of works, which is environmental friendly that will benefit to the local area. So the panchayat, block

panchayat and the zilla panchayat will actively take over such works, since the Central government is very active and they are ready to spend any amount of money for the development of the overall growth of the economy. Though this programme is benefited to a large number of households in madappally block panchayat, still there are certain problems. The major problem is lack of monitoring and evaluation of this programme. At the same time few women are of the opinion that though this programme offers 100 days of work, they failed to get work for the entire time period and some time, they fail to get their wages timely. Thus, continuous monitoring and evaluation is very essential for the success of this type of programme. Follow up programme is the need of the hour. The effectiveness of this programme also depends upon the active participation of the local people.

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