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## Women Participation in MGNREGA programme: A Comparative Study between Under Developed and More Developed Districts in Karnataka State

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### **Abstract:**

*The Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Act-2005 is a social safety net for rural poor from poverty by providing 100 days guaranteed job for each household in financial year, the act also assured the minimum and equal wage for rural people. Sustainable revenue enhances the higher level of life pattern, economic sustainability, competence building in diverse motivation to achieve socio-economic needs and capital investment. Rule makers assumed that increased human resources investment results in increased national income as well as growth of employment market in the country.*

*The programme ensures 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of its job to the women; thereby rural women can participate and contribute to the national development. Hence, it is important to analyse the role of MGNREGA programme in the empowerment of women in two different regions with different characteristics. The present study is a sincere attempt to understand and analyse the women participation in both under developed and more developed districts.*

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**Keywords: Women, Rural, Beneficiaries, Participation, MGNREGA.**

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### **Methodology:**

Present study conducted in five villages of Bhanapur gram panchayat in Koppal district and four villages of Ugarkhod Gram Panchayat in Belagavi district of Karnataka state. Total 400 samples were collected 200 from each district were selected. Both primary and secondary data is used for the study interview schedule procedure was followed for collation primary data.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

1. To understand the operational mechanism of MGNREGA for women beneficiaries.
2. To compare the level of women participation in MGNREGA programme in both the districts.
3. Suggestions for policy implications for better performance of the scheme in different regions of the country.

**Introduction:**

The women accepted men win psychosomatic concept seen even in modern era. During 21<sup>st</sup> century it is observed that Indian women cannot take decision on their own without consulting their husbands or fathers therefore, women in rural India do not have control over household productive activity such as agriculture and allied works besides, domestic works etc. Rural women usually contribute to the farming deeds such as harvesting, storage of farm products, cattle feeding, preparation of land for sowing, and other works related to agriculture. However, the decision making authority is being controlled by the male members of the family.

It is noted that rural India is enriched with both natural and human resource besides India comprise 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the total world's population. Creation of employment is a greater challenge in India which can be useful to meet the gap of unemployment. The government also repeatedly redesigned various employment creation programmes for poverty alleviation and unemployment from time to time in rural India. The evaluative studies on development programmes show that, the performance of the programmes are proved as major components in the life of rural beneficiaries including women beneficiaries which upgraded them to attain better results in their life.

MGNREGA is the first programme in India that has guaranteed to provide the legal right to work. Though the main aim of the Act is to generate employment in

rural areas, apart from this, there are several secondary benefits lies in the Act in the form of women empowerment. Hence, the present study compares empowerment of women beneficiaries and their problems and attitude under MGNREGA Programme. The study also tries to explore the relationship between empowerment of women beneficiaries with independent variables of MGNREGA Programme.

The study contributing to understanding the MGNREGA programme and seeks to provide necessary assistance for the success of the programme in both Belagavi and Koppal districts of Karnataka state and rest of the parts of the state as well as it is in the country in the interest of women beneficiaries.

**The supporting provisions of the Act for Women Participation:**

Many important provisions are created under MGNREG Act such as equal wages for men and women and 33.33 percent stipulated works are allotted for women labourers which show that the act supports women for their presence in rural India. Many studies have established that MGNREGA is a successful programme run by Government of India (GoI) with respect to empowering the women and marginalized others across many states including Karnataka in India. The supporting provisions of the Act for women empowerment are:

- The act requires 1/3rd of the labourers engaged in a particular area to be women beneficiaries.

- The 100 days of employment are sure even to women and equal wages are provided to both men and women.
- The act requires a local care and monitoring committee to be formed consisting of members from the locality or nearest village, in which SC/STs women are also participated. Importance is given to women for contribution in social audits.
- Single women and old age women are mandatory to be given work within 5 km of their residence as per the act.
- The act provides support for child-care at work and has also mentioned the guidelines of facilities at worksite which should be convenient.
- Single women are also considered as family and work is given to them which help the divorced and widowed women to be self-reliant and sovereign.
- Individual bank/post office accounts must be opened by the women to whom their payment will be made available.
- This gives them a control over their income.
- As per the guidelines of the MGNREGA, at least 50 percent of the supervisors at the worksite must be women; and
- The act promises that lactating mothers and pregnant women (at least up to 8 months before their delivery and after 10 months of

delivery) are given work which does not require much effort and also provides that the worksites should be nearer to their houses.

### **Women Related Provisions under MGNREGA Act:**

These very provisions of the Act some way have become very helpful for women in escalating their magnitude of empowerment:

- The Act is inclusive in nature. It specifies that a minimum of one-third of the employees of the scheme are to be women who have registered and demanded employment under the programme.
- The Act is also femininity sensitive. It provides that there shall be no inequity solely on the ground of gender in providing employment and equal pay between men and women have also been a major incentive for women.
- The MGNREGA programme in India is an sculpt of important safety nets for women beneficiaries, allowing childcare amenities to be provided on work place and made provisions for work within the jurisdiction to the respective GramaPanchayat.
- MGNREGA is seen to be a policy response of the Government of India to a condition of poverty and discrimination.

**Issues associated with Women Participation in MGNREGA:**

- Non-availability of Child Care Facilities: One of the key shortcomings of the Act is non-availability of proper crèche facilities at the work site even though the guidelines of MGNREGA include this provision.
- Various studies have shown that, women remain worried about their children while they are working at MGNREGA worksite even some women do not go for MGNREGA works due to non availability of child care facilities non-availability of proper child care facilities at work place.
- Low level of understanding: In many states women participation is low because of low level of knowledge about the process and entitlements of the programme.
- Nature of Work: Most of the studies reveal that nature of work is also not supportive for women workers. In most of the projects selected being associated to rural connectivity and renovation of local water bodies involving earth work requiring application of physical force, male employees were preferred to women workers; and
- Meagre Worksite Facilities: MGNREGA resources have been allocated for the provision of safe drinking water, resting place and first aid.

**Implementation of MGNREGA in Karnataka State:**

The MGNREGA programme implemented in three phases in Karnataka state. Bidar, Raichur, Kalaburgi, Chitradurga and Davarangere are the five districts where the scheme is applied on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 in the second phase MGNREGA has been extended to another six districts they are Kodagu, Shimoga, Belagavi, Chikkamagalur, Hassan and Bellari, later in 2008 the programme incorporated the remaining seventeen districts of the state, thus the scheme is extended to entire Karnataka state by implementing the third phase.

**The major works carried out in Karnataka under MGNREGA programme:**

- Drought proofing (Afforestation and Tree plantation)
- Water conservation and water harvesting
- Micro and Macro level of Irrigation and canal work
- Extension of irrigation facility to land owned by households belongs to Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes.
- Renovation of traditional water bodies including desalting of tanks and ponds
- Land development
- Control over and safeguard works including drainage in water logged areas.

- The village connectivity provides all climatic access; and
- All other works which are notified by central government in consultation with
- State government.

**Table 1: Women Participation in Karnataka under MGNREGA programme**

| Women employed             | Women Person days out of Total (%) |         |         |         |         |                   |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------------------|
|                            | 2016-17                            | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 |                   |
| India                      | 56.16                              | 53.53   | 54.59   | 55.01   | 52.7    | All               |
| Karnataka                  | 47.21                              | 47.13   | 48.59   | 49.1    | 49.08   | State             |
| Belagavi                   | 48.41                              | 46.63   | 49.05   | 51.88   | 51.56   | Belagavi District |
| Bylahongal (block)         | 44.74                              | 46.6    | 47.22   | -       | -       |                   |
| Kittur (block)             | -                                  | -       | -       | 47.66   | 46.83   |                   |
| Ugarkhod (Grama Panchayat) | 45.44                              | 43.99   | 48.04   | 47.32   | 44.33   |                   |
| Koppal                     | 48.67                              | 48.83   | 49.9    | 50.01   | 49.37   | Koppal district   |
| Yelaburga (block)          | 46.72                              | 49.13   | 49.12   | 47.46   | -       |                   |
| Kukanoor (block)           | -                                  | -       | -       | -       | 46.9    |                   |
| Bhanapur (Grama Panchayat) | 48.82                              | 48.18   | 53.67   | 51      | 46.63   |                   |

(Source: Ministry of Rural Development Government of India-2020)

The women participation in MGNREGA Programme was observed from 2016-17 to 2020-21 the participation level of women in MGNREGA programme is found to be satisfied, more than 50% of women workers participated in India. Whereas in Karnataka women are below 50% for all the given financial years which is lower than national average.

The Belagavi district registered 50% of women participation which is much better than state performance related to the study area Ugarkhod Grama Panchayat of Bylahongal now Kittur

taluka it is again less than 50% which below national average.

The women participation level in MGNREGA programme in Koppal district and Bhanapur Grama Panchayat of Yelaburga now Kukanoor Taluka show positive progress during 2018-19 and 2019-20 which is much better than the study area of Belagavi district.

The results depicted that the women workers belong to Ugarkhod Grama Panchayat have enough economic source instead of MGNREGA works in and around their residence compared to Bhanapur Grama Panchayat.

The present study tries to compare the participation level of women beneficiaries and helps to find out the constraints and suggestions to effective policy implications of the programme. The findings of the study would be of adequate empirical utility to the policy makers, administrators, academicians and personnel in the field of rural development programmes to explore the lacunae and implement the programme more efficiently specially for women beneficiaries.

Though many studies have been conducted on women empowerment, the comparative study of women participation under MGNREGA between two districts Koppal (Under Developed District-UDD) and Belagavi (More Developed District-MDD) remained under-researched hence, the present research aims to fill this gap.

The study contributing to understand the MGNREGA programme and seeks to provide necessary assistance for the success of the programme in both Belagavi and Koppal districts of Karnataka state and rest of the parts of the state as well as it is in the country in the interest of women beneficiaries.

The Act proved to be an instrument towards women empowerment in turn majority of the women workers are also taking part in this scheme (Rajalakshmi, V 2015). Most significant feature of MGNREGA is that, it pays women the same as men something that was virtually indescribable in rural India. However, some States have registered high percentage of women workers reaching in the scheme whereas others have registered

a very low percentage of women taking benefits under the MGNREGA Programme.

### **Suggestions to enhance policy implications as perceived by woman beneficiaries of MGNREGA programme:**

Based on entire study outcomes the suggestions are made towards policy implications towards better performance and effective management of MGNREGA Programme and similar government programmes in woman empowerment. The outcome of comparative study conducted in two differed districts in Karnataka state registered opposite results so, it is useful for policymakers to modify programme for UDD and MDD type of regions.

### **Conclusion:**

The implications of the present study made it clear that the progress of MGNREGA Programme in empowering rural women greatly varies with the regions development disparity. It is observed that women beneficiaries struggling hard in MGNREGA works due to financial constraints in their family without care of their health. So, the administration can make such a provision/amendment where the MGNREGA women beneficiaries will be paid sick period salary amount to their account. This would be useful for women beneficiaries on humanitarian grounds which encourage and inspires the other women to take active participation in the scheme. Empowering rural women and

achieving the goals of MGNREGA Programme to become gender sensitized and gender inclusive programme.

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