

# SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND ADDITIONAL IMPACTS OF MGNREGP IN TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT

M. Sujitha <sup>1</sup>, Dr. Goldagrace Duraisingh <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Reg.No: 20211281032002 Department of Economics Sarah Tucker College (Autonomous), Perumalpuram, Tirunelveli – 627 007 Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli – 627 012, India

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Economics Sarah Tucker College (Autonomous), Perumalpuram, Tirunelveli – 627 007 Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli – 627 012, India



DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i6.2024.5613](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i6.2024.5613)

**Funding:** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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## ABSTRACT

The Government of India's flagship program, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), aims to improve socioeconomic circumstances and livelihoods by giving rural households wage employment. This study assesses the socioeconomic, empowering, and developmental effects of MGNREGP in Tamil Nadu's Tirunelveli district. With a focus on the role of women, the study mainly examines how the program has affected rural workers' empowerment, education, health, food security, income levels, and employment creation. But the survey also points out enduring problems including corruption, poor job quality, and problems with how well the plan is being implemented. The study evaluates the effectiveness of the program and offers insights into workers' socioeconomic empowerment using statistical techniques such as percentage analysis, regression analysis, and the Garrett ranking approach. The results indicate that although MGNREGP has made a substantial contribution to empowerment and poverty alleviation, there is still room for development, especially in the areas of transparency, work quality, and the sustainability of rural assets. To maximise the program's efficacy, the report suggests actions like improved training, monitoring, gender-focused legislation, and awareness campaigns. These suggestions are meant to help stakeholders, local government representatives, and legislators increase the effectiveness of MGNREGP in rural areas.

**Keywords:** Employment Participation, Infrastructure Development, Education And Health

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Act was used to create the plan. Compared to the previous wage employment programs, which were allocation-based, it was essentially different. The right-based, demand-driven wage employment program, MGNREGA, offers provisions for salary and benefits. In both situations, there are delays in paying payments for labour completed and a failure to deliver work when requested. The introduction of MGNREGA was intended to increase rural residents' purchasing power. Whether or not they are below the poverty line, it mostly emphasises semi-skilled or unskilled labour for rural Indians. Women make up around one-third of the designated workforce. When the government's planned call centre opens, people can reach them via 1800-345-22-44, which is their toll-free number. On October 2, 2009, it was renamed from the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). The Indian Parliament has unanimously adopted the National Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA).

## **1.1. MGNREGP WORKERS IN INDIA**

The majority of rural residents in India rely on agriculture and related occupations, thus the government has put in place a number of programs to help them advance socially and economically. One such program that clearly raises the economic standing of rural residents across India is the MGNREGP.

### **1.1.1. PERFORMANCE OF NREGA IN INDIA**

The first statute in history to guarantee wage employment on a previously unheard-of scale is NREGA. The Act's main goal is to increase wage employment. Its secondary goal is to improve the management of natural resources by addressing issues such as soil erosion, deforestation, and drought that contribute to chronic poverty and promote sustainable development. Strengthening democracy at the grassroots level and introducing accountability and transparency into governance are two aspects of the result process.

By giving the Panchayati Raj Institutions a crucial role in planning, observing, and carrying out the process, the Act also serves as a major tool for enhancing decentralisation and expanding democracy. The NREGA has several unique features, such as a time-bound employment guarantee and wage payment within 15 to 10 days, an incentive-disincentive structure that encourages State Governments to provide jobs at 90% of the cost of the job being provided being covered by the Centre or paying unemployment benefits at their own expense, and a focus on labour-intensive projects that forbid the use of contractors and machinery. The Act also requires women to participate at a rate of 33%. Implementation trends over the past two years support the Act's primary goal.

## **1.2. MGNREGP IN TAMIL NADU**

On February 2, 2006, Tamil Nadu launched the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. In 2006, six districts (Villupuram, Cuddalore, Nagapattinam, Sivagangai, Tiruvanamalai, and Dindigul) began the scheme's initial phase. 2007 saw the implementation of the scheme's second phase in the districts of Thirunelveli, Thanjavur, Thiruvarur, and Karur. Ariyalur, Dharmapuri, Perambalur, Pudukkottai, Ramanathapuram, Namakkal, Vellore, Tuticorin, Virudhunagar, Salem, Erode, Tiruchirapalli, Kanchepuram, Theni, Thiruvallur, Madurai, Nilgiri, Kanniyakumari, Coimbatore, and Krishnagiri were the remaining 20 districts where the scheme was introduced starting on 1.4.08 (DRDA, 2008). Since October 2009, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme has operated under the name Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. To date, Tamil Nadu has spent `2,939 crore and 19 lakhs under this plan (The Hindu, 2007). Tamil Nadu has already spent more than `1,200 crore this year on pay for recipients of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), and the state may spend more than `2,000 crore in 2009–2010. This would be twice as much as the 990 crore spent the previous year. 30 lakh households have participated in 16 crore mandays in the state, with the majority of the payments being paid out in cash. Tamil Nadu has expressed disapproval of the idea, but the Centre is adamant that it will only disburse funding for the project if wage payments are done exclusively through bank or post office accounts. The State Government believes that by opposing the concept of making bank payments mandatory, it is acting legally. K Ashok Vardhan Shetty, the Rural Development Secretary, notes that this is precisely what we are doing ([www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in), 2015). 22 districts from 13 states out of 612 were recognised by the central government in 2007–2008 for their outstanding scheme implementation.

## **1.3. MGNREGP IN TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT**

With a wage of ~167 per day for both males and females in 2014-2015, the MGNREG Program was implemented in every block in the Tirunelveli district with the goal of giving rural and unskilled labourers a job and income for at least 100 days a year. Additionally, it builds rural assets like roads and supports agriculture by deepening ponds and tanks and fortifying the perimeter of irrigation structures. Therefore, by boosting crop and irrigation intensity, the program not only provides direct employment but also indirect jobs. It is encouraging to see that Kuruvikulam and Manur have given work to 86 and 80 percent of households in the district, respectively. Since both blocks are lacking in industry and agriculture, creating jobs is important to reducing poverty. Only 29% of Keelapavoor has more irrigation capabilities, thus households there are given agricultural work. To promote human development, the MGNREG program in the block still needs to be executed with complete sincerity and seriousness. It should be mentioned that MGNREGP employees

have an effect on women's work participation rates. For instance, Kuruvikulam, which has given jobs under the MGNREGP to 86% of registered households, is ranked first. It also holds the top spot in terms of overall worker involvement rate, which is 57%, and labour participation rate for females, which is 52%.

## 2. LITERATURE SURVEY

Sadhana Gupta (2017) studied "Level of awareness on Socio-economic profile of rural women in Faizabad district" in the Milkipur block of Faizabad district (U.P.). A random sample of 120 women—60 beneficiaries and 60 nonbeneficiaries—was selected. Results showed that 43.33% of beneficiaries and 38.33% of non-beneficiaries had good category awareness. 11 of 18 variables studied—education, housing pattern, occupation, annual income, social participation, material possession, extension contact, economic motivation, risk orientation, scientific orientation, and awareness—showed significant differences between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries women.

In "Awareness about the major workers-related provisions under MGNREGS: A study of Kadwa block in Katihar district, Bihar," Md.Shahadat Hussain (2017) analysed The study's main goal is to assess workers' awareness of MGNREGS's major provisions on worker rights and entitlements and their awareness elements. MGNREGS deals with large amounts of public money, hence the public must be informed of its provisions, particularly workers' rights. Mass understanding of the plan and worker rights and entitlements is needed. The researcher found that these methods will increase openness, public knowledge, and worker rights, ensuring they get their dues. These strategies will achieve rural poverty and misery reduction goals. These will ensure effective scheme execution coupled with MGNREGS, establishing long-term sustainable assets in the public benefit.

M. SelvaKumar (2018) examined "Awareness of Beneficiaries about Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in Virudhunagar District - Application of Sign Test." The Indian government passed MGNREGA on August 5, 2005. The Act aims to improve rural livelihood security by guaranteeing at least 100 days of pay employment per year to households whose adult members agree to conduct unskilled manual work. Social safety, livelihood security, and democratic empowerment make MGNREGA a potent tool for inclusive growth in rural India. It aims to reduce income inequality.

## 3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The impact of MGNREGP in the Tirunelveli district has been the main subject of this study. It will investigate how MGNREGP affects socioeconomic, employment, empowerment, health, and awareness factors, among other things. This study would undoubtedly help us comprehend and analyse the rise in employment and income, decrease in poverty, and improvement in living standards that the entire MGNREGP program is implementing in the Tirunelveli district. The influence of MGNREGP employees in the Tirunelveli district is the subject of this study. It aids government officials in comprehending the socioeconomic makeup of MGNREGP employees in the research region and in taking the appropriate actions to partially address their issues. By analysing the social issues faced by MGNREGP employees, this study will help policymakers, government representatives, social workers, and well-wishers take the appropriate actions to improve the current situation of MGNREGP employees in the study region. Additionally, this study examines the effects of MGNREGP employees' financial difficulties on the government's ability to provide the region with the funding and programs it needs. Government representatives in the research area will also benefit from this study by being able to take the required actions to fix the flaws. Additionally, it will enable them to take preventative actions and maintain amicable relations with MGNREGP employees in the future. Better understanding of the schemes' implementation and the issues faced by MGNREGP employees allows for the development of the appropriate solutions to help the program achieve its goals. The study's findings will aid in comprehending the issues that arose during the project's execution. It will undoubtedly aid in the development of better future policies and plans.

## 4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In India's rural areas, there are sufficient surplus labourers. Numerous initiatives are carried out in rural regions to produce employment and capital formation. This makes it possible to raise the household's level of living. The researcher's expertise of the MGNREGP has been enhanced by studying the specifics of numerous programs. Every rural household has the opportunity to work 100 days a year thanks to the 18 MGNREGP. In order to improve their level of

living in the nation, rural households will be able to receive wage rates thanks to this. Employment is used to distribute income, and the wage rate is still high. Although several academics have conducted studies on MGNREGP, the most of them are limited to economic aspects and are not thorough, according to the literature review that was conducted. The implementation features of MGNREGP have received very little attention in research. In relation to MGNREGP, the social issues are not given enough attention. The current study has taken the initiative to talk about the MGNREGP's implementation and effects in a Tirunelveli district hamlet that is primarily inhabited by impoverished people.

## 5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Finding out how well the MGNREGS are performing in the research area is the main goal of the investigation.

Examining the sociodemographic traits of MGNREGP employees in the research area, studying an overview of MGNREGP in Tamil Nadu's Tirunelveli district, and assessing the program's economic impact in the Tirunelveli district are the particular goals.

To raise awareness and track the effects of MGNREGP employment in the study region.

To comprehend the effects of MGNREGP empowerment and health in the study area; and to recommend appropriate actions for the scheme's successful execution.

## 6. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

The present study attempts to test the following hypotheses in line with the objectives mentioned above.

There is no significant increase in income of the sample households after moving to MGNREG program 20

The family income of the MGNREGP workers is determined by the family size, number of earning members, level of education, dependency ratio and number of working days in the study area.

There is no significant increase in expenditure of the sample households after moving to non-farm sector employment.

The income, savings, borrowings of the respondents before joining MGNREGP does differ significantly from those of the respondents after joining MGNREGP.

Saving is the main determining variable to cross the poverty line in the study area

## 7. METHODOLOGY

### 7.1. DATA COLLECTION

Both primary and secondary data served as the foundation for this investigation. The MGNREGP employees in the chosen six blocks—Alangulam, Kuruvikulam, Manur, Melaneelithanallur, Nanguneri, and Sankarankovil—were the direct source of primary data. A set of 29 questions about the influence of MGNREGP employees was included in the interview schedule, which was created in order to collect data from the employees through in-person interviews. To choose the MGNREGP employees, a random sample technique was employed. Although there were a few open-ended questions to capture people's thoughts and recommendations, the agenda was mostly made up of closed-ended questions. The data was gathered from the MGNREGP members using a pre-tested interview plan. Sufficient care was taken to ensure that the information was accurate. The Statistical Department, Tirunelveli district DRDA Office, numerous books, journals, articles, newspapers, and the internet were the sources of the secondary data.

### 7.2. TOOLS FOR ANALYSIS

Following the fieldwork, the data was meticulously examined and revised to guarantee accuracy, consistency, and comprehensiveness. In order to make inferences about the state of development at the local level, the data was analysed using statistical techniques such as percentage, average, multiple linear regressions, Garrett Ranking Techniques, and factor analysis. On the basis of the data analysis, recommendations and conclusions were drawn.

### 7.3. IMPACT OF MGNREGP

| Opinion                                                      | Strongly<br>Agree | Agree | Indifferent | Disagree | Strongly<br>Disagree | Total |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------------|----------|----------------------|-------|
| MGNREGP enhances food security                               | 8                 | 18    | 14          | 22       | 38                   | 100   |
| NREGA provided some protection against extreme poverty       | 10                | 20    | 15          | 35       | 20                   | 100   |
| NREGA helped to reduce the distress migration                | 12                | 18    | 12          | 18       | 40                   | 100   |
| NREGA helped to reduce indebtedness                          | 10                | 30    | 35          | 13       | 12                   | 100   |
| NREGA gave greater economic independence to women            | 10                | 49    | 16          | 10       | 15                   | 100   |
| NREGA generated better purchasing power in the local economy | 10                | 51    | 20          | 12       | 7                    | 100   |
| NREGA has increased the local wage rate                      | 30                | 18    | 12          | 20       | 20                   | 100   |
| NREGA has improved the scope of the children to go to school | 42                | 40    | 8           | 4        | 6                    | 100   |
| The quality of NREGA work is satisfactory                    | 4                 | 27    | 13          | 33       | 23                   | 100   |
| Zero corruption exists in NREGA work                         | 2                 | 8     | 11          | 30       | 49                   | 100   |
| Improvement in roads and communication due to NREGA work     | 17                | 40    | 3           | 20       | 20                   | 100   |
| NREGA work has improved the water level                      | 16                | 42    | 3           | 21       | 18                   | 100   |

According to Table 5.18, just 26% of them concur that the program improves food security, and 47% think it is unable to offer some protection against extreme poverty. The fact that over 48% of respondents believe it can lessen distressed migration and 32% believe it can lessen rural debt is definitely positive. Approximately 59% of respondents supported the initiative because they believed it had given women more economic independence. Sixty-one percent of respondents thought the program may increase purchasing power, while nearly eighty-one percent thought the program was to blame for the increased cost and local wage rate. It is also evident that 82% of the MGNREGP workers who responded believe the program has increased the number of children who can attend school. However, they are all aware of the corruption in MGNREGP activities and think that the job is of unsatisfactory quality. However, because the program places more emphasis on water body conservation, 57% and 58% of respondents, respectively, think that roads and communications—that is, rural connection and water level—have improved.

### 7.4. SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

Respondents are asked to rank the elements that have been linked to workers' social empowerment. To determine which elements have the most influence, the "Garrett ranking technique" is employed.

Table: 5.19 – Social Empowerment of MGNREGP Workers

| Factors                                                   | MeanScore | Rank |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------|
| Recognized by the Society to join MGNREGP                 | 62.71     | I    |
| Solving the Family Problems                               | 55.31     | VII  |
| Increase in Family Contribution                           | 61.56     | II   |
| Increase in Social Contribution                           | 58.14     | III  |
| Pride of Membership                                       | 55.41     | VI   |
| Increase in the level of participation in Social Function | 56.89     | V    |
| Membership in Organization                                | 57.12     | IV   |

It is evident from Table 5.19 that the highest ranking for worker empowerment, at 62.71 percent, is social recognition following enrolment in MGNREGS. The second-ranking component, employee empowerment, is significantly impacted by increases in family contribution, scoring 61.56 percent. Another element that significantly affects worker empowerment is the rise in social contributions, which stands at 58.14 percent. It has achieved the third position.

Organisational membership, increased social function involvement, and pride in membership are also significant determinants in worker empowerment; they rank fourth at 57.12%, fifth at 56.89%, and sixth at 55.41%, respectively. Resolving family issues has an impact on employees' empowerment as well, ranking eighth at 55.31 percent. The study concludes that the MGNREGP are accepted by society, which is a positive indication of social empowerment.

## 7.5. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Economic position is the second crucial element in worker empowerment. One of the key components of economic development is worker empowerment. Because empowering workers will significantly alter society, an analysis is conducted to determine the prospects for MGNREGP employees.

**Table: 5.20 – Economic Empowerment of Workers**

| Factors                                                | Mean Score | Rank |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------------|------|
| Average Annual Income                                  | 59.22      | III  |
| Average Contribution of other members to Family Income | 57.21      | VI   |
| Average level of Education                             | 55.71      | VIII |
| Income Spent on Food Consumption                       | 60.55      | I    |
| Average Assets Possession                              | 55.02      | IX   |
| Average Assets of the Enterprises                      | 60.04      | II   |
| Average Facilities Aailed in Life                      | 56.48      | VII  |
| Average Working Hours per day                          | 58.23      | IV   |
| Average Savings                                        | 57.84      | V    |

Table 5.20 indicates that the primary economic element is higher income spent on food consumption, which ranks first at 60.55 percent. The second component is the 60.04 percent growth in the average assets of the businesses. In order of rank, the third component is the rise in the average yearly income (59.22%), followed by the average working hours per day, average savings, and the average contribution of other family members to the family income (58.23%), fifth (57.84%), and sixth (57.21%).

## 8. FINDINGS

Based on the data analysis and observations from the study, the following key findings were made:

### 1) Socio-Economic Impact of MGNREGP

- The Tirunelveli district's rural workers' economic situation has improved thanks in large part to the MGNREGP. With 48% of workers reporting a decrease in migration, the majority of respondents said the program increased their purchasing power and assisted in lowering distress migration.
- 81% of the respondents acknowledged that the MGNREGP has resulted in a higher local wage rate, indicating that the program has raised the wage rate in the area.
- Although just 26% of respondents agreed that MGNREGP greatly promotes food security, indicating space for improvement, the scheme also appears to have a positive influence on food security.
- The MGNREGP has greatly increased women's economic independence; 59% of respondents concur that the program has helped women become more economically independent.
- The labour-intensive aspect of the MGNREGP was also said to have directly benefited the workers by raising local wage rates.
- Check dam construction and tank deepening have had a favourable influence on water conservation; 58% of respondents said that MGNREGP initiatives had enhanced water levels.

## **2) Social Empowerment**

- Workers have gained social empowerment as a result of the MGNREGP, particularly through social recognition. Social recognition of MGNREGP employees was ranked as the most socially empowered factor, followed by social and familial contributions.
- The workers' social status also improved as a result of their greater engagement in social events and sense of pride in their membership.
- Rural communities' social fabric was strengthened in large part by participation in social events and membership in local organisations.

## **3) Economic Empowerment**

- The increase in income spent on food consumption was ranked as the most important economic outcome by 60.55% of respondents, making it the most significant economic empowerment component.
- Another important aspect was the accumulation of assets, with average enterprise assets coming in second. This implies that the program is helping rural households create assets.
- Workers' average savings have gone up, suggesting that MGNREGP could lessen rural areas' susceptibility to economic shocks.
- However, since they scored lower on the economic empowerment scale, characteristics like education level and asset possession still require improvement.

## **4) Health and Education**

- According to 82% of respondents, the MGNREGP has enhanced children's opportunities to attend school, suggesting that it has had a favourable effect on their education. Households' improved income and social empowerment may be directly responsible for this.
- Although not specifically mentioned, it can be assumed that the program's advantages will indirectly improve health issues. The general health of the workers and their families is probably going to improve as a result of the higher income and better food security.
- Even while the program has been effective in creating jobs and empowering people, corruption inside it is still a big worry. A sizable percentage of respondents (49%) concurred that MGNREGP operations are corrupt.
- 56% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the assertion that the job quality is satisfactory, indicating that some respondents had an unfavourable opinion of the quality of work completed under the scheme.
- Despite these obstacles, the MGNREGP has significantly improved rural infrastructure, including as roads and water bodies; 57% of employees say that roads and communication have improved, while 58% say that water levels have increased.

# **9. SUGGESTIONS**

## **Enhancing Transparency and Reducing Corruption**

- To guarantee transparency in wage payments and work quality, the government should concentrate on putting in place more robust monitoring systems. The amount of corruption may be decreased by setting up an online portal for monitoring payments and job progress.

## **Improvement in Work Quality**

- Better worker training is crucial to raising the calibre of work completed under MGNREGP. Workers' skill development and ensuring that the work being done satisfies quality standards can be the main goals of this training.
- The quality of work might also be improved by hiring technicians to supervise the projects and stepping up oversight at the local level.

## **Women's Empowerment**

- Even though women are now more economically independent, the MGNREGP should be designed and implemented with additional gender-sensitive efforts to further empower women. Incentives or quotas tailored to women-led initiatives could increase their involvement even more.

#### **Increased Focus on Education and Health**

- Targeted programs like scholarships for MGNREGP employees' children should be implemented to better capitalise on the program's educational benefits.
- To enhance general health outcomes in rural areas, health insurance programs for MGNREGP employees and their families could be investigated.

#### **Sustainability of Rural Assets**

- The sustainability of the assets is crucial because MGNREGP is focused on building infrastructure like roads, water bodies, and irrigation facilities. Preserving these assets through community involvement and routine maintenance programs would help ensure their long-term usefulness.

#### **Awareness Campaigns**

- Employees should be made aware of their rights and advantages under the MGNREGP through awareness initiatives. Raising awareness will lessen middlemen's exploitation and enable workers to seek their rights on time.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

In Tirunelveli district, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) has had a major influence, especially in terms of creating jobs, empowering people economically, and uplifting society. Millions of rural labourers, particularly women, have found jobs thanks to the initiative, which has also helped to strengthen social security and infrastructure. But for MGNREGS to reach its full potential, problems with corruption, the calibre of the work, and ineffective administration must be resolved. By emphasising women's empowerment, quality control, and transparency, the program can significantly improve the socioeconomic circumstances in rural India. Although MGNREGS is accomplishing its goals in many places, the analysis shows that there is still opportunity for improvement in terms of implementation effectiveness and overall influence on rural development. The results can help policymakers develop plans to increase MGNREGP's effectiveness and reach in Tirunelveli district and other areas.

## **CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

None.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

None.

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