

An Actual Appraisal of MGNREGA's Influence on Women's Socio-economic Development

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Abstract

The study focuses on the objectives of MNREGA and key themes related to women's participation, employment, empowerment, and social outcomes. MNREGA has made a significant contribution to the economic development of women. Women participating in the program have experienced increased household income, increased financial independence, and reduced poverty. MNREGA has played an important role in promoting the economic and social development of women. MNREGA has empowered women by providing them with economic independence and better social recognition. This research paper uses an analytical and descriptive style, utilizing secondary data sources from published reports, books, articles, annual reports, MNREGA website, and committee reports.

The participation of women in MNREGA has declined by 2.24 percentage points compared to last year, with active workers dropping from 13.34 crore to 52.46 percent in the first five months of 2020. The national average decline is 2.24 percent, with Andhra Pradesh experiencing the highest decline at 3.5%. However, women's participation in poor and rich populated states is low, with only 13.4% of working-age women receiving money for their work. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme has improved women's access to the formal banking system. This study focuses on research impact and potential areas for future study, aiming to encourage young researchers to take the research questions seriously.

Keywords: Socio, Economic, Development, Employment, Empowered, Women and Rural

Introduction

Women constitute 48 percent of India's total population, but the contribution of women to the country's labour force is much less than the population. According to a World Bank report released in 2017, only 27 percent of working women in India are women. According to the 2011 census, the number of women workers in India is approximately 14 crore, 98 lakh. Out of this, 12 crore 18 lakh women work in rural areas and approximately 2 crore 80 lakh women work in urban areas. Of the 12 crore 18 lakh women working in rural areas, about 97.4 percent work in the agricultural sector. According to the census data of 2011, the share of women among the total workers available in the country was around 25.51 percent. However, the figures for 2011 are slightly better than those of 2001 because the participation of women workers in 2001 was around 22.27 percent (Mehta, et al., 2019).

A major reason behind the weak statistics of women workers is considered to be the lack of social security during work. According to the standards of the International Labour Organization, there are many important dimensions of social security, such as health, illness, old age, unemployment, any disability while in employment, support for the family, and facilities related to childbirth and maternity. Every country takes into account its interests. It provides such facilities to the workers for their betterment. Our country has also

made many such schemes for women workers on international standards, considering the important role of women workers in its national interest (Lokesha, et al., 2017).

To employ women in rural areas and for the economic and social development of women, under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, the Central Government has taken the initiative to provide work opportunities to women in rural areas for 100 days in a year, but In the year 2004-05, 28.2 percent women worked under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme. This figure had come down to only 21.7 percent in 2011-12. The participation rate of rural women in MNREGA in the financial year 2021-22 has been 54.54%. According to this scheme, the government has made important efforts to provide employment security to unemployed women (Mazumdar, et al., 2023).

Women Labour Participation in India:-

According to the recent report 2017-18 released by the Ministry of Statistics on employment, for the first time after seven decades of independence in the country, the share of urban women in jobs has become more than that of men. A total of 52.1 percent of women and 45.7 percent of men are working in cities, but in rural areas, women are still less employed than men. However, over the last several years their share has doubled and has reached from 5.5 percent to 10.5 percent. Among urban working women, 52.1 percent are employed, 34.7 percent are self-employed and 13.1 percent are temporary workers. Earlier, in the sixth survey conducted in 2011-12, the percentage of urban employed women was 42.8 and the same numbers of women were self-employed and 14.3 percent were temporary workers. A closer look shows that the situation has changed in the last several years and the number of self-employed and temporary Women's participation in labour has decreased, while their participation in jobs has increased by about 10 percent (Anitha, et al., 2019).

The situation of female labor force participation in India is problematic. The female participation rate has declined from 34.1 percent in 2019-2000 to 27.2 percent in 2021-2022, while a wide gender gap in the participation rate also persists. Apart from this, there remains a wide gap between urban and rural share. The participation rate of rural women has decreased from 26.5 percent in the year 2019-2000 to 25.3 percent in the year 2021-2022. Whereas during the same period, the participation rate of urban women increased from 14.6 percent to 15.5 percent. There has been no overall change in the female labor force participation rate which was estimated at 22.5 percent (for all age groups), which was 23.3 percent in the year 2019-2000. In this context, the female labor force participation rate in rural areas. There is a continuous declining trend in urban areas, while a slight increase is seen in urban areas (Khuntia, et al., 2019).

Under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGA), women's families have been given the right to 100 days of guaranteed employment during a financial year. If more than one woman in a family wants to work. So they can be employed (together or at different times) but the total entitlement of the female family will be 100 days.

To register, all adult female family members can apply for work. For registration, they must fulfill the following conditions.

1. The woman should be a resident, local means that the applicant should live within the Gram Panchayat.
2. The woman should be willing to do unskilled physical work.
3. The women should apply as a family to the local Gram Panchayat.

Job Card:-

Every registered female family will be issued an employment card by the Gram Panchayat. It is very important to issue employment cards on time. It is an important legal document that helps maintain transparency and protect wages from fraud. Employment cards should be issued to women immediately after confirmation of the registration application, i.e. within 15 days of the application (Ministry of Rural Development of India, New Delhi).

Work and wage payment:-

There is a provision in the MNREGA scheme that one-third of the work distribution will be among women. Women working in MNREGA should be given work near home in any case. According to the plan, such work will be done under the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. If the work is given outside 5 km, they will be given 10 percent additional wages. In case the workplace is outside, women will be given work as close to the village as possible.

1. Water conservation and water conservation
2. Tree plantation and forest conservation to prevent drought
3. Irrigation canal (including major and minor irrigation works)
4. Provision of irrigation facilities for the lands of Scheduled Castes and Tribes, families benefiting from land reforms or Indira Awas Yojana;
5. Drainage of silt from reservoirs for renewal of traditional water sources
6. Land Development
7. Flood control and relief works (including provision of drains in water-logged areas)
8. Laying a wide network of roads in villages (building roads to reach every village in every season)

Every woman working under the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme will be given a wage fixed by the State Government under the provisions of the Minimum Wage Act, 1948 for Agricultural Labourers. Women and men workers will be given equal wages and the provisions of the Equal Labour Act, of 1976 will be fully followed. Payment will be made within 7 days of the week in which the work is done (Hyslop, et al., 2023).

Unemployment allowance:-

If the women labourers who have applied for employment under the MNREGA scheme do not get employment even after 15 days of the date from which they want to work, then the state government will have to pay the application as per the rate prescribed in the Act. Unemployment allowance will have to be given to women. For the first 30 days, this allowance is one-third of the wages. And then it is halved. Unemployment allowance will also be paid in the same way as wages are paid. An important suggestion is that unemployment allowance should be paid every week at the Gram Panchayat level on the day of 'Employment Guarantee Day' (Kumar, et al., 2021).

1. Review of Literature :

A review of literature helps in acquiring detailed knowledge about the topic. Rather it provides a list of information. And also does critical study. There are many studies related to Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. Some studies are being mentioned here.

MNREGA provides employment and livelihood security to rural households, especially women, reduces poverty, and empowers them in rural areas (Balaton-Chrimes, S. and Patnaik, K, S., 2021). Along with the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, the MGNREGA program is a major social protection initiative in India that focuses on empowering women and reducing poverty in rural

areas (Reddy, Ricart, and Cadman, T., 2020). There has been significant regional variation in the quality and effectiveness of MGNREGA implementation (Page, L. and Pande, R., 2018). Given the importance of non-farm income for rural households, MGNREGA is designed to increase local employment options and reduce youth migration from rural areas (Bisht, S., I. et al., 2022). Despite its successes in reducing poverty and empowering women, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) in India has faced criticism for its implementation. Corruption, financial theft, discrepancies in performance, and asset sustainability are among the problems that underline the need for additional reforms (Chopra, D., 2019). The MGNREGA program in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh has improved the social status and financial stability of women, but despite increased participation of vulnerable populations, increasing their self-worth and decision-making abilities, participation remains limited (Sharma et al., 2020). Women have been economically and socially empowered through MNREGA but there is a lack of awareness about the provisions of the Act. Therefore the government has appointed observers in Vellore district of Tamil Nadu for better results of the scheme. To increase awareness about MNREGA, the government will have to run awareness programs (Raja, et al., 2018). .

2. Objectives :

The administration faces many problems at every stage of the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA). Improving the living standards of women in particular is a challenging task. According to the 2011 census, India's population is 121.06 crores. And the number of women in this was 48.5%. In 2022, India ranked 135th out of 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index as the most vulnerable. Keeping in mind the problems of women, this study has tried to work on the following objectives in this research paper:-

1. Study of factors affecting women's participation in MNREGA.
2. Analysis of the impact of MNREGA on the socio-economic empowerment of women.

MNREGA.

3. Methodology and Experimentation::

The style of this research paper will be analytical and descriptive. This research paper is based on secondary data sources. Secondary data has been collected through published reports, books, articles, annual reports of the Government of India, the Ministry of Rural Development, New Delhi, the official website of MNREGA, and reports of various committees and local government bodies.

The participation rate of women in the labour force the ratio of women in the working population and the unemployment rate among rural women of different age groups can be seen in Table No. 1.

Table - 1

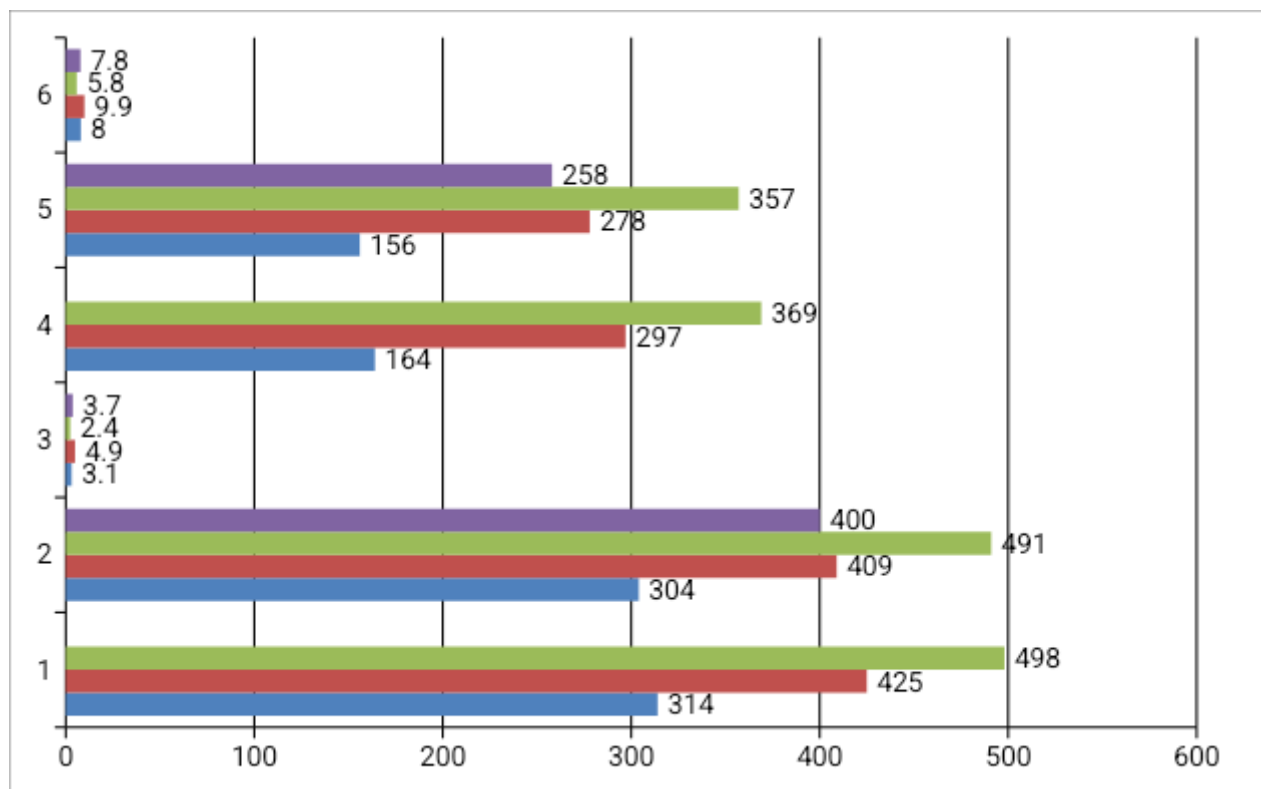
Labour Force Particepation Rate (LFPR) Women Participation Rate (WPR) and Unemployment Rate (UR) among Rural Women of Different Age Groups.

	2021-2022			2022-2023		
AGE	LFPR	WPR	UR	LFPR	WPR	UR
15-19	314	304	3.1	164	156	8
20-24	425	409	4.9	297	278	9.9
25-29	498	491	2.4	369	357	5.8
15-29	0	400	3.7	0	258	7.8

Source: NSSO Survey on Employment and Unemployment 2022-23

Figure - 1

Labour Force Particepation Rate (LFPR) Women Participation Rate (WPR) and Unemployment Rate (UR) among Rural Women of Different Age Groups.



Source: NSSO Survey on Employment and Unemployment 2022-23

4. Result and Discussion:

In states where poverty is high, it was expected that the share of women working under MNREGA would increase. But the reality is that in states where there is extreme poverty, women's participation in MNREGA is low. On the other hand, in the states where at present the number of women in the total labour force is less, the representation of women in MNREGA has increased surprisingly.

Women are working in greater numbers than men in programs that employ rural areas. Women achieved more than 50 percent employment under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. Since the implementation of this law in 2006, the participation of women in it has been continuously increasing. This is also noteworthy because according to the last national sample survey conducted in 2004-05, the total share of women among the working people in the country was only 28.7 percent.

In the past, too, women's participation in public wage programs had been much higher than expected. 17 major employment programs were implemented between 1970 and 2005. Under the National Rural Employment Programme, Landless Rural Employment Guarantee Programme, Jacamar Rojgar Yojana, and Employment Assurance Scheme implemented in 2000, one-fourth of the total employment was occupied by women. In another scheme, IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Programme), and in the undertaking of training rural youth for employment, the participation of women had reached 45 percent by 2001.

Women's participation in MGNREGA shows unique and often contradictory aspects. The first is that in states where women's participation in the labour force is more or less low, women are taking part in this program in large numbers. Kerala is a state where women constitute only 15 percent of the total labour force. However, 79 percent of the works created under this law are done by women.

Women and Financial Inclusion:-

Economic rights and financial inclusion are vital for women's empowerment and equality. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme has ensured that women are included in the formal banking system. Provisional data from MNREGA MIS also shows that women have access to accounts opened in individual and joint names. Further research is needed to explore the linkages between the formal financial system and formal credit, preferences for formal and informal credit and initial assets by women, as well as changes in decision-making by women within households. For this, women can use a banking system/ATM/passbook. At the overall level, women's participation in the MNREGA scheme is essentially more than 33 percent, as of May 5, 2023, it was 54.86 percent. At the overall level, women's participation in MNREGA scheme is essentially more than 33 percent; by 2023 it was 54.86 percent. This can be seen in Table No. 2.

Table- 2

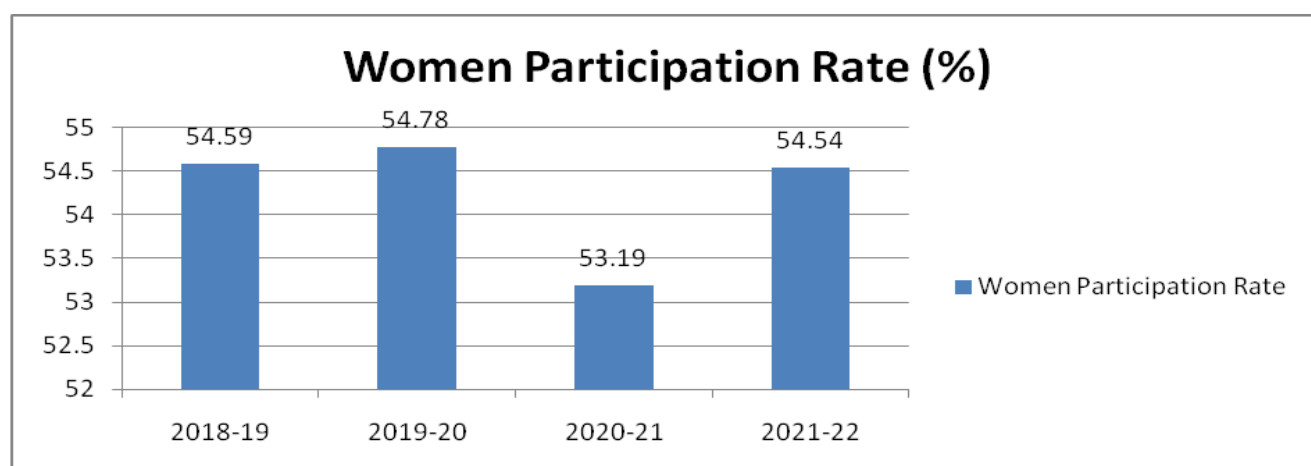
Women's participation as workers in the state from the financial year 2019-20 to the financial year 2021-21 and 2022-23

States	Percentage of Women's Works Day		
	2019-20	2021-22	2022-23
Andhra Pradesh	58.34	58.68	58.72
Arunachal Pradesh	30.27	30.35	30.21
Asaam	26.01	24.75	28.19
Bihar	30.63	34.97	37.17
Chatishgarh	46.93	48.53	49.87
Gujrat	42.86	43.96	43.24
Hariyana	39.86	41.71	41.66
Himachal Pradesh	60.69	62.52	61.04
Jammu and Kasmir	19.88	23.15	25.38
Jharkhand	32.71	31.89	32.06
Karnataka	46.25	46.59	46.86
Kerla	92.99	93.37	92.17
Madhya Pradesh	42.42	42.65	43.22
Maharashtra	44.55	43.69	43.47
Manipur	34.01	35.25	38.27
Meghalaya	41.07	41.62	42.57
Mizoram	26.15	30.20	40.27
Nagalend	26.01	28.93	31.28
Odisha	35.95	33.57	33.79
Panjab	46.36	52.74	57.43
Rajasthan	68.95	67.76	68.26
Sikkim	43.71	44.85	48.18

Tamilnadu	74.15	83.94	85.42
Telanga	--	---	61-07
Tirpura	41.08	47.11	49.36
Uttar Pradesh	19.70	22.17	24.75
Uttarakhand	46.93	44.88	50.56
West Bengol	33.71	35.55	41.37
Andman & Nikobar	45.11	47.18	50.44
Dadar & Nagar Haveli	--	--	--
Daman & Deep	--	--	--
Goya	79.13	75.30	74.88
Lakshydeep	29.55	22.50	36.59
Pudhuchary	84.05	85.65	86.29
Chandigarh	--	--	--

Source: www.mgnrega.nic.in**Table - 3****Women's participation in MNREGA at overall level**

Financial Year	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Female Participation Rate	54.59	54.78	53.19	54.54
Female person-days counted (in crores)	125.12	145.36	206.96	187.38

Source: www.mgnrega.nic.in**Figure -2**Source: www.mgnrega.nic.in

The share of women at different state levels in the country varies from state to state. It is highest in Kerala, Goa, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh also have a high share. In states like Uttar Pradesh, the percentage of women participation is very low. Similar is the situation in North-Eastern states and Jammu and Kashmir.

It is also observed that the sex ratio (Census 2011) and participation of women are quite high in Goa, Tamil Nadu, and Puducherry. The situation at the lower levels is more difficult and in some states the participation rate of women is low. States like Uttar Pradesh have low female literacy rates and Haryana has a very low sex ratio. These provide a fresh picture of the challenges faced by women in these states, including their participation in the work of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

Women's participation in MNREGA during the Covid crisis:-

The latest data regarding women's participation in MNREGA shows that women's participation in MNREGA has increased from 52.82 percent in 2013-14 to 56.16 percent in 2016, but in the latest data, it has declined by 2.24 percentage points as compared to last year. In recent times, there have been about 13.34 crore active MNREGA workers, out of which 6.58 crore i.e. 49 percent are women.

According to the Indian Express report of August 24, 2020, according to official figures, women's participation in MNREGA has come down to 52.46 percent during the first five months of the year 2020. The data shows that during the current financial year 2019 - 2020, more than 183 crore per capita working days have been generated so far against the target of daily work for 280.72 crore people. Overall, 18 states and union territories have recorded a decline in the participation of women among the daily working people during the current financial year 2019 - 2020 and whereas a slight increase has been registered in 14 states. The national average decline in women's participation in MNREGA is 2.24 percent. Andhra Pradesh saw the highest decline of 3.5 percent, last year the participation of women in MNREGA in the state was 60.05 percent, which came down to 56.47 percent this year (Alok, 2020).

After this, a 3.32 percent decline was recorded in West Bengal, 2.62 percent in Telangana, and 2.44 percent in Himachal Pradesh. Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Meghalaya, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Bihar, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, Andaman and Nicobar Islands are other states and union territories, where women's participation in MNREGA has decreased. The states where women's participation has increased include Mizoram, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Gujarat, Kerala, Odisha, Maharashtra, Nagaland, Assam, Karnataka, Pondicherry, Goa, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura.

During the current financial year 2019 - 2020, Kerala has the highest participation of women in one day at 91.38 percent. After this, Pondicherry is 87 percent, Tamil Nadu is 84.32 percent, Goa is 75.75 percent, Rajasthan is 65.35 percent and Himachal Pradesh is 60.31 percent.

Women's participation in MNREGA is the lowest in Jammu and Kashmir at 30.72 percent. After this, it is 33 percent in Uttar Pradesh, 36 percent in Nagaland, 40 percent in Arunachal Pradesh, 40.77 percent in Jharkhand, and 41 percent in Madhya Pradesh (Abhishek, 2021).

Share of female population in MNREGA:-

In 2020-21, the share of women among those working under MNREGA was 54 percent, which is almost the same for the last few years.

When MNREGA was started, 79 percent of women in the state of Kerala worked under MNREGA, which is continuously increasing and reached 96 percent in 2020-21. However, this figure has decreased slightly in 2021-22. In the year 2022, 90.43 percent of women worked under MNREGA. According to the annual report of the Ministry of Rural Development, a total of 9 crore 75 lakh days of work was done under MNREGA in Kerala throughout the year. Out of this, women worked 8 crore 81 lakh days.

After Kerala, Tamil Nadu is the state where women have worked more. A total of 25.76 crore days were worked in Tamil Nadu in 2020-21, of which women's share was 22 crore days. That means the share of women has been 85 percent. Similarly, the same trade continues in Rajasthan too, whereas, in these three states, women's participation in the workforce is low. At the same time, the participation of women in the MNREGA project running in poor and rich populated states is very low. In 2020-21, women's participation in MNREGA in Uttar Pradesh was only 35 percent. However, this share has increased compared to previous years. In the year 2014-15, women's participation in Uttar Pradesh was only 24.41 percent. In Bihar also, the share of women in the year 2020-21 was 51 percent, which is higher in the last few years. Women's participation in Odisha is 41 percent, here also in the previous years; women's participation was less than 30 percent.

Apart from this, it is also clear that when there is a need for workers in MNREGA, it is also the time for paddy cultivation, hence in states where paddy cultivation is more, there is not much participation of women in MNREGA. Such states include Odisha and West Bengal.

In the report of the International Labor Organization (ILO) released in the year 2017, it was clearly stated that although the men working in the project under MNREGA were from poor families, the same cannot be said about the women.

Not only this, PSW survey revealed that the annual income of the family in which men are working in MNREGA was Rs 65901, whereas the annual income of the family in which women are working in MNREGA was Rs 76734. Along with this, only 13.4 percent women of working age get money for their work. It is clear that employment opportunities for women in rural areas are very less; hence if employment is provided to them, they take full advantage of it. (International Labor Organization Survey Report 2022)

5. Conclusion:-

The participation of women in MNREGA has declined by 2.24 percentage points compared to last few years, with the number of active workers dropping from 13.34 crore to 52.46 percent in the first five months of 2020. The national average decline is 2.24 percent, with Andhra Pradesh experiencing the highest decline at 3.5%. The current financial year has generated over 183 crore per capita working days, exceeding the target of daily work for 280.72 crore people.

In 2020-21, 54% of women in Kerala worked under MNREGA, a program that has seen an increase in participation. In Tamil Nadu, women worked more than in Rajasthan, with 85% of the 25.76 crore days worked in 2020-21. However, women's participation in poor and rich populated states is low. In Uttar Pradesh, women's participation was only 35%, while in Bihar, it was 51%. In Odisha, it was 41%. The International Labour Organization (ILO) reported that while men working under MNREGA were from poor families, women were not. A PSW survey revealed that women's annual income was Rs 76734, while men's was Rs 65901. Only 13.4% of women of working age received money for their work. This highlights the limited employment opportunities for women in rural areas.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme has improved women's access to the formal banking system and accounts. However, further research is needed to understand the link between formal financial systems and credit preferences, as well as changes in women's decision-making within households. As of May 5, 2023, women's participation in the scheme reached 54.86 percent.

MNREGA has made a significant impact on the social empowerment of women in rural communities. Through their active participation in MNREGA, women have gained self-confidence, autonomy, and decision-making

capacity. Their social status has improved. Gender-based barriers continue to hinder women's full participation in MNREGA. These deeply rooted social norms, family expectations, and safety concerns limit women's mobility and consequently their ability to take advantage of employment opportunities under the programme. Overcoming these cultural barriers requires comprehensive gender mainstreaming efforts to create an inclusive and supportive environment for women's active participation in MGNREGA. MNREGA is a gender-positive program that promotes women's participation by providing wage parity with men, a separate schedule of wage rates for women, provision of crèche facilities, work sheds for children, and childcare services. A final important point is that this study will have a greater impact on research than policy. Concerning the latter, this devotes a large portion of the article to what this belief will be attractive areas for future study. We hope that young researchers will take the research questions posed by us seriously.

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