

Research Article

## Impact of MGNREGP on Women Empowerment among Respondents of Tiruvarur District, Tamil Nadu, India

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### Abstract

The empowerment of rural women is crucial for the development of Rural Bharat. Bringing women into the mainstream of development is a major concern for the Government of India, which is why 2001 was declared as the “Year of Women Empowerment”. The programme for poverty alleviation has a women’s component to ensure flow of adequate funds to this section. So, this study aims at understanding the impact of MGNREGP on the lives of women workers who have worked under this programme. This study was conducted in Tediur and Vadugarpalayam, two hamlets in Tediur revenue village in Kudavasal Taluk of Tiruvarur district. The study adopted the purposive sampling method and primary data was collected through the questionnaire from the respondents. The primary survey was conducted for the year 2009-2010. The study analyzed the contribution made by women respondent’s income to their family income, decision making status, savings and usefulness of MGNREGP.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, rural women, MGNREGP, purposive sampling, primary data, Tiruvarur district.

### Introduction

Poverty eradication and women empowerment are essential for overall growth of a country. This will take the country to a developing path. So women empowerment is essential for rural women. The classical women’s movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century was a movement by women for women. They sought fundamental change in gender relations by improving women’s conditions from economic, social, political and cultural perspectives in comparison with their traditional situation and in comparison with men. Bagchi (2007) has pointed out women primarily dominated the home front. They did cooking for the family and often helped their husbands in other activities e.g. in agricultural operations (winnowing and husking) etc., Their importance in other spheres however, was not ephemeral women in ancient India being employed in industries as well as in the households. A perusal of the smritis and other ancient Indian scriptures reveals that women were employed either as Dasi (slaves or maid servants); or Ganika or as Karmakar (hired workers in agriculture and industry). According to Jain (2007), the United Nations world conference adopted the forward looking strategies for the advancement of women from 1986 to 2000 A.D. Empowerment is the most recent approach articulated by the ‘Third World’ women. It seeks to meet women’s strategic gender needs, due to their subordinate position to men, through bottom up mobilization around practical gender needs according to their accepted role in society.

It aims at increasing women’s power in terms of their self-reliance and internal strength to determine choices in life and to influence the direction of change. Lalneihzovi (2007) has explained that women of Aryan and Dravidian societies suffer due to the burden of women’s share (what the dowry used to mean in the past) and many women died for the same. Raju (2007) has emphasized the term empowerment of women as an important popular concept among political spectrum. Empowerment through the expansion of civil, political and social rights of citizenship is a laborious and unexciting process. Empowerment is only effective answer to oppression, exploitation, injustice, and other maladies of society. Empowerment is both a means to an end and an end in itself. The focus on empowerment has given a new emphasis to the building of economic and social capabilities among individuals, classes and communities. Mukherjee (2008) has explained that the principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its preamble, fundamental rights, fundamental duties and directive principle. The constitution not only grants quality to women but also empowers the state to adopt measures, a position, or indiscriminate in favour of women. Verma (2003) says that women play a crucial role in the empowerment of the family, group, society etc. Rural women usually get engaged in home and farm activities.

Their contribution is invisible as they influence men, educate family and convince the people to accept change in development. This force is to be utilized in planning, execution, monitoring and assessment of poverty alleviation programmes for better results. Bhumali and Poddar (2005) have explained that the multiplicity of agencies has been carrying on the task of providing rural employment. They include Employment Guarantee Schemes, Food for Work Programme, Small Farmers Development Agency, Marginal Farmers and Agricultural labourers, Drought Prone Area Development etc., Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP). The Food for Work Programme was restricted and renamed as National Rural Employment programmes (NREP) since 1980. Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM) is centrally sponsored scheme. It started functioning since 15<sup>th</sup> August 1979. Banerjee (2005) says that poverty alleviation programmes would be formulated and implemented in a decentralized manner with the participation of people at the grass roots level. Banerjee and Saha (2010) observed that employment generation is necessary to raise the purchasing power, and thereby create demand in the economy.

Maulick (2009) has explained that some of the positive features of NREGA are high share of female employment, benefits are reflected in greater economic security, higher farm wages, lower migration and building of infrastructure. The NREGA works are intended to create permanent assets in the rural areas for future needs. Sankari and Siva Murugan (2009) observed that the NREGP have a positive impact on the social and economic well-being of rural labourers and their families. In particular, it holds the powerful prospect of bringing major changes in the lives of women. This is especially true in a state like Tamil Nadu, where women constitute an over whelming proportion (more than 80%) of NREGP workers. Pattanaik (2009) has explained that the women beneficiaries of MGNREGPs of Hoshiarpur district of Andhra Pradesh have opined that the income through this wage rate has helped the household to purchase low cost furniture, kitchen materials and even better cloths for their children and even spend on the education of the children purchase of books, copies and others need of their school going children. The income has enabled them to purchase additional amount of pulses, vegetables and other nutrition items for their households.

Considering the above facts in view, this study analyzed the contribution made by women respondent's income to their family income, decision making status, savings and usefulness of MGNREGP.

## Materials and methods

**Study population, data collection and analysis:** Tediur and Vadugarpalayam are two hamlets in Tediur revenue village in Kudavasal Taluk at Tiruvarur district. In these two hamlets, the total population is 2,880 persons. There are 1,420 males and 1,460 females. The total workers of MGNREGP are 717. It includes 354 males and 363 females. The study has adopted the purposive sampling method to collect data from 94 women respondents. All the necessary information has been collected through the questionnaire. The survey was conducted for the year 2009-2010. The information was to analyze the contribution made by women respondents to their income to their family income, decision making status, savings and usefulness of MGNREGP. The data collected were analyzed in the terms of percentage.

## Results and discussion

Women empowerment cause serious influence on developing countries. There is a big question mark to give employment opportunity to rural unskilled women hence resulting in poverty. Poverty results in various kinds of problems in developing countries like India. To get rid of this problem, Indian Government has implemented various poverty alleviation programmes, among those programmes, MGNREGP is an important one. To analyze the impact of MGNREGP on rural women empowerment, the study was carried out in two villages namely Vadugarpalayam and Tediur, Kudavasal Taluk in Tediur panchayat. The total population of this panchayat was 2880. Among them 1460 were females. Among the above group, there were 717 MGNREGP workers. Among the above category, 354 were males and 363 were females. The number of Scheduled Caste (SC) persons was 138. There were three wards in this panchayat. This study was carried out in Vadugarpalayam and Tediur villages from the first ward. There were 239 numbers in the first Ward. But the people who are working in MGNREGP were only 106. Among them, 94 were females and 12 were males. Village 1 Vadugarpalayam is BC (Christian) dominated area, where village 2 Tediur is SC (Hindu) dominated area.

**Development status of the respondents:** The MGNREGP was implemented in these villages in 2008. It was compulsory to keep job cards for all the people. The men and women involved in the MGNREGP were getting equal wage. Before the implementation of MGNREGP, the people were getting only Rs. 50 for even 8 h of hard work. But because of MGNREGP, there was a considerable decrease in working hours and also considerable increase in income. In MGNREGP, the women have been working with various expectations. Among this 58.6% of them were expecting high wages, 6.5% of the people reported that out migration was reduced and 35% of them replied that the MGNREGP was useful in various ways.

Table 1. Income particulars of the respondents.

Family total annual income (Rs.)	No. of respondents	Share of MGNREGP income (Rs.)	No. of respondents	Other sources of income (Rs.)	No. of respondents
3,900-10,320	25 (26.6)	4,800-8,640	19 (20.2)	200-4,160	11(31.4)
10,320-16,700	54 (57.4)	8,640-12,480	26 (27.7)	4,160-8,120	9 (25.7)
16,700-23,160	14 (14.9)	12,480-16,320	24 (25.5)	8,120-12,080	7 (20)
23,160-29,580	0	16,320-20,160	24 (25.5)	12,080-16,040	5(14.3)
29,580-36,000	1 (1.1)	20,160-24,000	1 (1.1)	16,040-20,000	3(8.6)
Total	94		94		94

Source: Computed from primary data.

Table 2. Monthly expenditure for food items before and after MGNREGP.

Items	Before MGNREGP (in Rs.)	Average (in Rs.)	After MGNREGP (in Rs.)	Average (in Rs.)
Rice	22,080	234.8	29,155	310.15
Vegetables	22,350	237.76	30,100	320.21
Fruits	16,850	191.47	24,750	284.48
Oil/Ghee	17,010	180.96	21,860	232.55
Non-Vegetarian	33,500	356.38	46,900	498.93
Gas/Kerosene	18,157	193.15	18,547	197.3
Sugar	4,150	44.14	4,350	46.27
Baby food	2,400	141.17	3,400	200
Total	1,36,307	1579.8	1,79,162	2089.89

Table 3. Savings before and after MGNREGP of the respondents.

Sources	Before MGNREGP (in RS.)	Average (in Rs.)	After MGNREGP (in RS.)	Average (in Rs.)
Post office	45,030	865.9	63,300	1217.3
Bank	1,50,500	4300	2,17,500	6214.2
SHGs	2,84,000	3173.1	3,68,200	4,113.90
Total	3,97,000	5,089.70	6,61,300	11,862.80

No one was interested in doing these works on contract basis. Likewise because of MGNREGP there was lot of developments in these villages with reference to livelihood. About 1.1% of the people replied that they attained individual development, 2.1% of the respondents replied that they attained empowerment, 75.5% of them replied that they attained family development, 2.1% attained village development, 19.2% of them replied that over all development was due to MGNREGP.

**Income particulars of the respondents:** When considering the socio-economic conditions of the respondents, majority earned Rs. 10,000-16,800 as annual income. The respondents earning Rs. 8,640-12,480 from MGNREGP were 27.7%. There were 31.4% earning Rs. 200-4,160 from various other sources of income. It was evident that MGNREGP benefitted the respondents (Table 1).

**Monthly expenditure for food items before and after MGNREGP:** The income of the respondents increased by MGNREGP. So the women did not have to depend on the men for family expenses. After the implementation of the MGNREGP, the monthly expenditure on food items increased by 100%.

So there was an enhancement of education, family development, sanitation, savings and buying luxurious goods (Table 2).

**Decision making status of the respondents:** With MGNREGP, the poverty of the respondents was getting reduced to a considerable limit. This control of poverty may depend on development in economic status, employment opportunity or both. Because of increase in income, economic decision making with the implementation of MGNREGP, poverty decreased. About 80.8% of the respondents replied that the economic status and employment opportunities got increased. About 94.7% of the respondents replied that the family decision making status got improved.

**Savings and loan particulars of the respondents:** With the MGNREGP there was an increase in employment opportunities, savings and borrowings. So the savings of the women through post office, banks, SHGs got increased. So there was women empowerment. In these two villages, all the people were saving by anyone of these saving modes. The MGNREGP workers had their savings in the banks and SHGs; although loans were extended to these workers by the banks as well as SHGs, yet it is SHGs that extended the larger amount of loan (Table 3).

**Possession of assets:** From the savings, the respondents showed a great interest to purchase household things and essential commodities. Through the loans of the SHGs, the people made asset creation. So the standard of respondents was improved.

**Economic status of the respondents:** In the area, with the MGNREGP the standard of living was improved and 100% of the respondents replied that this was the most beneficial scheme. Among the two villages 98.9% of the respondents replied that the economic status was improved. Only 1.1% replied that they could not attain any economic development from the MGNREGP.

### Conclusion

There was an existence of unemployment in Tiruvarur district in agriculture during summer season. To avoid this seasonal employment, there was a necessity to work with MGNREGP. Even though they could not control the effects of poverty fully, there was a considerable improvement. Before the implementation of MGNREGP, more than half of the respondents from this area were below poverty line. But the situation was improved in terms of employment, increase in income, savings, willingness to buy essential goods and there was a considerable reduction in the level of poverty. Hence, we may conclude that MGNREGP have empowered the women respondents partially in the study area.

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