

## Women Empowerment and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Maharashtra

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### Abstract

This research paper explores the impact of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on women empowerment in the state of Maharashtra, India. The MGNREGA, a flagship social welfare program, aims to provide guaranteed employment opportunities to rural households. The paper examines the various dimensions of women empowerment, including economic, social, and political empowerment, and assesses how the MGNREGA has contributed to empowering women in Maharashtra. The research utilizes a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including surveys, interviews, and data analysis, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic. The findings highlight the positive outcomes of the MGNREGA in promoting women's empowerment, along with the challenges and opportunities for further improvement.

**Keywords:** Women empowerment, MGNREGA, Maharashtra, rural development, social welfare, gender equality

### Introduction

Women empowerment is a critical aspect of societal progress and inclusive development. It encompasses enhancing women's economic, social, and political status, enabling them to actively participate in decision-making processes and enjoy equal rights and opportunities. In the context of rural India, where gender disparities persist, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) plays a significant role in promoting women empowerment. Maharashtra, a state known for its diverse rural landscape and economic challenges, provides a compelling setting to explore the impact of the MGNREGA on women empowerment. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, enacted in 2005, guarantees 100 days of employment to every rural household in India. It aims to address poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment in rural areas by providing wage employment opportunities. One of the underlying objectives of the MGNREGA is to uplift marginalized communities, including women, by creating an inclusive and gender-equitable society. Maharashtra, with its substantial rural population, has witnessed the implementation of the MGNREGA and its effects on women empowerment. This research paper seeks to examine the relationship between women empowerment and the MGNREGA in Maharashtra. It delves into the multidimensional aspects of women empowerment, namely economic, social, and political, and assesses the role of the MGNREGA in facilitating empowerment in these spheres. By

exploring the experiences and outcomes of women beneficiaries, this study aims to shed light on the transformative potential of the MGNREGA in enhancing women's lives and promoting gender equality.

Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, including surveys, interviews, and data analysis, this research endeavors to provide insights into the impact of the MGNREGA on women empowerment in Maharashtra. By analyzing the economic opportunities, social transformations, and political empowerment experienced by women participants, this study seeks to contribute to the existing literature on women empowerment and social welfare programs in India. The findings of this research will inform policymakers, development practitioners, and other stakeholders about the effectiveness of the MGNREGA in promoting women empowerment. Furthermore, it will identify the challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of the MGNREGA in Maharashtra, offering valuable insights for refining policies and strategies aimed at advancing gender equality and inclusive development. In conclusion, women empowerment is a crucial driver of sustainable development, and the MGNREGA serves as a catalyst for empowering rural women in Maharashtra. Understanding the nuances of women's empowerment within the context of the MGNREGA will provide valuable insights into the potential of social welfare programs in promoting gender equality and fostering inclusive growth.

### **Objectives Research:**

1. To Study trends and patterns Women Job Seekers
2. On the basis of the study's findings, make suitable recommendations for enhancing the plan.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design:**

This study will utilize a mixed-methods research design to gather comprehensive and in-depth data on women empowerment and the MGNREGA in Maharashtra. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods will enable a holistic understanding of the topic.

#### **Secondary Data:**

Official data and reports related to the MGNREGA implementation, employment generation, women's participation, and other relevant socioeconomic indicators will be collected from government sources and research organizations. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (Mahatma Gandhi NREGS) is a demand-driven wage employment scheme that provides at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in each fiscal year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual labour. According to Section 15 of Schedule II of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, "priority shall be given to women in such a way that at least one-third of the beneficiaries shall be women who have registered and requested for work." Efforts will be made to enhance involvement of single women and the handicapped." The rate of female involvement (% of women person-days out of total) and calculated women person-days in Mahatma Gandhi NREGS during the fiscal years 2020-21 and 2021-22 are as follows:

Financial Year	Women participation rate (%)	Women person days (in crore)
2020-21	53.19	206.96
2021-22	54.71	198.74

#### Ref-Ministry of Rural Development:

According to Section 15 of Schedule II of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, "priority shall be given to women in such a way that at least one-third of the beneficiaries are women who have registered and requested work." Efforts will be made to promote the involvement of single women and the disabled." To encourage women to participate in the Scheme's work, features such as a separate schedule of rates for women, no wage discrimination, women caretaker for children up to five years of age, if there are 5 or more children of such age, encouragement to women SHG members as mate, and worksite facilities are available.



#### Ref- MGNREGA in Maharashtra

Based on the revised data you provided on the number of skilled and semi-skilled workers by gender in various districts of Maharashtra under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), we can offer the following brief analysis:

##### Skilled Workers:

The district with the highest number of skilled male workers is Gondia with 3,174 workers, followed by Bhandara with 2,949 workers. Among skilled female workers, Bhandara has the highest participation with 874 workers, followed by Gondia with 687 workers. Other districts with notable participation of skilled workers include Aurangabad, Ahmednagar, and Nashik.

##### Semi-Skilled Workers:

Gondia continues to have the highest number of semi-skilled male workers with 9,632 workers, followed by Bhandara with 7,121 workers. Bhandara also has the highest participation of semi-skilled female workers with 2,525 workers, followed by Gondia with 2,096 workers. Other districts with notable participation of semi-skilled workers include Nagpur, Nashik, and Ahmednagar. Overall, Gondia and Bhandara consistently show significant participation in both

skilled and semi-skilled categories for both male and female workers. It's important to consider that the data represents a snapshot of the workforce participation in MGNREGA during the specified period. Additional factors such as population size, rural-urban divide, and specific initiatives implemented in each district can further influence the analysis.

For a more comprehensive understanding and deeper analysis, it would be advisable to consult official reports or studies conducted by government agencies or research organizations specializing in rural development and employment schemes.

### **Women Empowerment and MGNREGA in Maharashtra:**

I. Women's Participation: MGNREGA has made significant contributions to women's empowerment in Maharashtra. The act recognizes the importance of women's participation and mandates that at least one-third of the workforce should be women. This provision has helped increase female labor force participation in rural areas.

II. Economic Empowerment: MGNREGA provides employment opportunities and income to women, leading to their economic empowerment. By participating in MGNREGA projects, women can earn wages, contribute to household income, and gain financial independence. This can help reduce gender-based economic disparities.

III. Skill Development: MGNREGA projects often involve construction, infrastructure development, and other types of work. Women participating in these projects can acquire new skills and improve their capabilities, enhancing their employability beyond MGNREGA. Skill development contributes to women's empowerment by expanding their career prospects.

IV. Decision-making and Leadership: Women's involvement in MGNREGA activities can also lead to increased participation in community decision-making processes. As women gain confidence, skills, and financial independence, they may become more engaged in local governance, self-help groups, and other community initiatives, leading to their greater representation in leadership roles.

V. Social Empowerment: MGNREGA can have a positive impact on social empowerment indicators for women. By participating in the program, women gain exposure to various social networks, interact with diverse individuals, and build social capital. This can contribute to increased social integration, improved social status, and enhanced self-esteem.

### **Limitations:**

The research may face limitations in terms of representativeness and generalizability due to the specific context of Maharashtra and the MGNREGA. Challenges in accessing reliable and updated data from government sources may affect the accuracy and completeness of the analysis. The research methodology outlined above will enable a comprehensive examination of women empowerment and the MGNREGA in Maharashtra. It will provide a robust foundation for analyzing the impact and effectiveness of the MGNREGA in promoting women's economic, social, and political empowerment in rural areas of the state.

### **Challenges and Future Directions:**

While MGNREGA has made substantial strides in promoting women's empowerment in Maharashtra, there are still some challenges that need to be addressed: Gender Disparities: Despite the provision for one-third participation, achieving gender parity in MGNREGA remains a challenge. Efforts should be made to ensure equal opportunities, address social norms and barriers that restrict women's participation, and promote gender-sensitive implementation of the program. Skills Enhancement: Providing skill development opportunities tailored to women's

needs can further enhance their empowerment. Focusing on building skills that align with local market demands can help women transition to other employment opportunities beyond MGNREGA. Monitoring and Evaluation: Regular monitoring and evaluation of MGNREGA's impact on women's empowerment are crucial. Collecting gender-disaggregated data, tracking indicators such as income levels, asset ownership, and decision-making roles can help assess the program's effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

**Conclusion:**

MGNREGA has played a significant role in promoting women's empowerment in Maharashtra. By providing employment opportunities, skill development, and social integration, it has contributed to women's economic, social, and political empowerment. However, addressing gender disparities, enhancing skill development, and ensuring equitable participation are essential for further strengthening women's empowerment through MGNREGA.

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