



Source : www.santipurblock.in.

Gender Dimensions: Migration and a Public Works Programme (MGNREGA)

- The enactment of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (MGNREGA) led to the implementation of MGNREGS which by 2008 was operational across all rural districts in the country.
- It's a demand driven rights-based work entitlement.
- In the context of distress migration, the objective of the scheme was to alleviate poverty by providing employment during lean periods of agricultural season.
- It is considered to be the largest public works programme that guarantees 100 days employment to every rural household, provided they agree to do unskilled manual work at notified wages.
- A significant achievement of this scheme has been the setting of a reservation wage among rural workers curtailing distress migration.
- It is a dependable fall-back option for rural households under dire situations if provision of employment is made on time.

MGNREGA wages and migration

- Some of the early studies give evidence on the positive impact of MGNREGA on distress migration. As households got more work and income from the programme, the probability of migration decreased significantly. But recent studies do not support this.

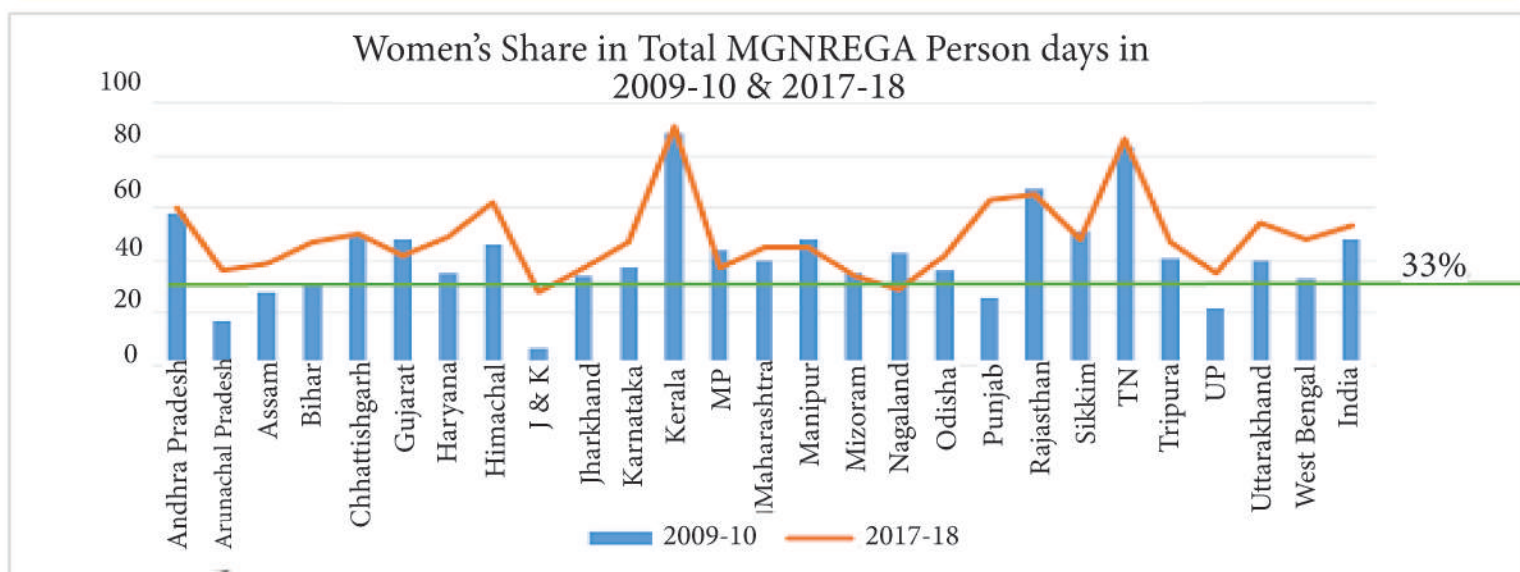
- Equality in wage rates encouraged women to participate in MGNREGA.
- Many MGNREGA households combined migrant remittances and MGNREGA income for household survival.
- Proportion of poor is more in the programme. However, many do not get work owing to poor implementation and work rationing.
- If MGNREGA work is not provided during the lean period, most labourers migrate out of the village for survival.
- MGNREGA employment in the country fell in 2014-15. Many factors were responsible for this:
 - a) Workers being unable to assert and unaware of their rights.
 - b) Non-registration of employment.
 - c) Non-timely provision of work.
 - d) Delay in transfer of funds from Centre to states.
 - e) Delay in payment of wages.

Women's participation in MGNREGA work

According to MGNREGA MIS data, the participation of women in MGNREGA has gone up over the years, with 53% of all employment generated in 2017-18 going to women. Women's share of MGNREGA employment across the country rose from 41% of total MGNREGA person days in 2006-07 (367.9 million person days) to 48% in 2009-10 (1364.05 million person days), and then to 49% in 2010-11 (1227.42 million person days).

- The design of MGNREGA has some gender specific clauses. These include, at least a third of all workers to be women, provision of equal wages, decision of who should work to be left to the household, provision of work within 5 km radius from home, crèche or childcare facilities at work-sites, and the flexibility of choosing when work is undertaken, all of which widens the scope for women's participation.
- Participation by women was higher in households where men had migrated, leading to a rise in women's share in the programme.
- Kerala followed by Tamil Nadu recorded highest women's participation in the programme in 2017-18.
- Gender differences in rationing of MGNREGA employment (based on NSSO data) indicate women being explicitly favoured in most Southern states, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan.
- Nationally, women headed households faced lower rationing rates (0.19), but for female headed households with no adult males rationing rate was 0.56 and 0.93 in

MP and Maharashtra, while for widows it was 0.58 in Assam and Bihar, and 0.85 in Maharashtra indicating significant social barriers in accessing work (Narayanan and Das 2014).



Source : Calculated from data available in the MGNREGA MIS

MGNREGA: Individual/Private land works and migrant households

- The list of permissible work under MGNREGA is categorised into A, B C and D categories. The category B works broadly include “provision of irrigation facility, horticulture plantation and land development facilities on land owned by households belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes or to Below Poverty Line (BPL) families or to beneficiaries of land reforms, small and marginal farmers (SF/MF) as defined in the Agriculture Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme, 2008.”
- There has been a progressive increase in the works under category B.
- MGNREGA has the potential to transform from a wage employment programme to one that creates sustainable livelihoods through the provision of category B works on private lands.
- Single women headed households is a beneficiary category that have priority for category B works as they are more vulnerable to poverty and distress with more number of dependents.
- While single women headed households were receiving priority with respect to sanction and completion of works, they were not getting a ‘just’ share.
- With respect to private land works, it is important to ensure female headed households (single or married but without adult males as they may be migrants /deceased) get a similar share (as in wage work where they are assured of one-third share) both in total numbers and with respect to work types under expenditure bands.

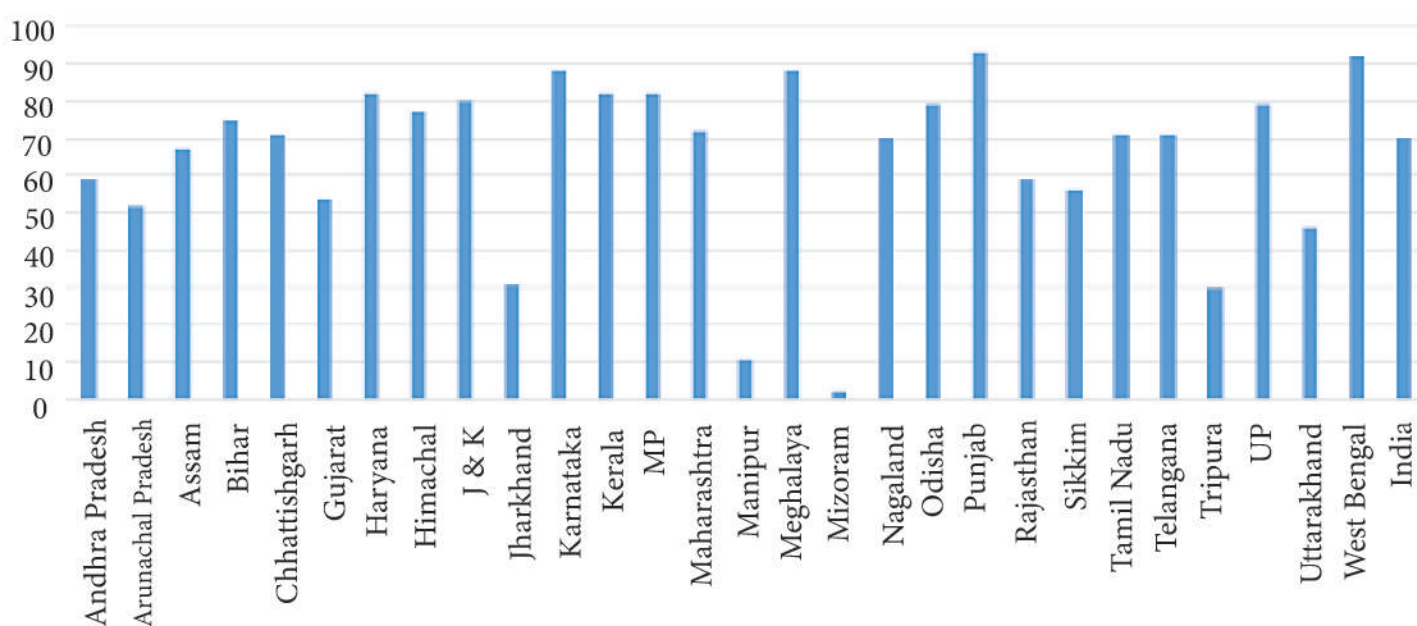
MGNREGA: Impact on women and migration

- For households where males migrate out for survival, MGNREGA work may positively impact household welfare.
- MGNREGA and the public distribution system could possibly provide income and food security to those who cannot easily migrate, particularly women and the elderly.
- Studies show that while women work in MGNREGA, men take to internal migration.
- Studies found 'vertical labour market segmentation', with women, old and infirm seeking employment with MGNREGA, and able-bodied men working for higher wages in farm jobs.

Dependability of wages and work under MGNREGA

- **Delay in provisions of work:** The Act provisions work to be given within 15 days of 'registering demand'. However in reality, work is provided only when it's available. The purpose of the programme as a dependable fall back option is lost.

Proportion (%) of wages paid with Delays



Source : Based on 2014-15 data given in Aggarwal (2016)

- **Delay in payments:** Households were forced to resort to migration for survival. Poor households cannot withstand delay in payments as daily wages determine food security and survival.
- **Rationing of work:** Households do not get 100 days of employment due to rationing. Only 2.59 million households were provided 100 days of employment during 2017-18.