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WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND MGNREGP WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COONOOR IN NILGIRIS DISTRICT: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT:

The MGNREGA 2005, plays a significant role to meet the practical as well as strategic needs of women's participation. It is a self-targeting programme, intended in increasing outreach to the poor and marginalized sections of the society such as women and helping them towards the cause of financial and economic inclusion in the society. In the rural milieu, it promises employment opportunities for women and their empowerment. While their hardships have been reduced due to developmental projects carried out in rural areas, self-earnings have improved their status to a certain extent. However, women's decision for participation and their share in MGNREGP jobs is hindered by various factors. Apart from some structural problems, inattentiveness and improper implementation of scheme, social attitudes, exploitation and corruption have put question marks over the intents of the programme. At this juncture, the litmus test of the policy will have an impact on the entire process of rural development and women employment opportunities in India. There is excitement as well as disappointment over the implementation on the Act. The scheme has huge potential for regenerating employment opportunities provided there is the resolution of loopholes. This paper discusses status of women participation in Tamil Nadu, their employment opportunities in coonoor taluk and issues and challenges under MGNREGP.

Keywords: MGNREGA, Women Participation, Employment, Implementation, Problems, Coonoor, Tamil Nadu

1. INTRODUCTION :

Gender is the inevitable push factor for growth and development of a nation like India. In India women constitute a major share of chronically poor population. There is inequality and vulnerability of women in all sphere of life. They need to be empowered in all walks of life. Without active participation of women, establishment of a new social order may not be a successful one, because women constitute half of the population. Women should realize that they have constitutional rights to quality health care, economic security, and access to education and political power. Mahatma Gandhi firmly states that the status of women would not change merely by bringing legislations: it must be supported by change in the women's social circumstances and situations. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, promises the rural households for hundred days of casual works at the statutory minimum wage, for full participation of women. The Government has framed different schemes to uplift the women from poverty and vulnerability of life. One such women friendly programme is Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) which was enacted in 2005. MGNREGA has provided a unique opportunity to the people from rural India to earn their own income without any discrimination of caste or gender. The stunning feature of NREGA is that, it pays equally the women as same men paid, is virtually appreciable act in rural India. However, this scheme had benefitted very low percentage of women workers in Tamilnadu under MGNREGA.

Participation is another major strategy to help women to acquire power. It could be political participation (through voting, contesting and winning elections at different levels), economic participation (in the labor market through employment, skill training, finance and marketing), social participation (in major social and cultural institutions through membership and through holding positions of decision making) or participation in other spheres. Participation is likely to help women in being active members of the society and economy, in acquiring positions of decision makers. It also helps them in acquiring confidence in their own capabilities. Human development, through improving human capabilities of women as well as through ensuring basic needs and primary services/ infrastructure is another important approach that can empower women and change the power relations in favor of women. It helps human capital formation among women, improves their productivity and reduces their vulnerability through improved health and nutrition. Basic infrastructure can reduce women's drudgery and can improve quality of their life, opening new opportunities for them. Mobilization of women to acquire collective strength for improved bargaining in the economy and society is also known to be an important strategy for

empowerment of women. Collective strength of women challenges their subordinate status and inferior power, and removes certain critical barriers to empowerment, such as diffidence, isolation and feeling of powerlessness. It helps women to acquire confidence and self-esteem.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To study and compare the women's participation under MGNREGP.
- To analyze the status of women enrolled and beneficiary in MGNREGP in coonoor taluk.
- To find the problems related to women working under MGNREGP in Coonoor Taluk.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Women has a vital role in a modern society. Most of the women in coonoor taluk belongs to Scheduled caste and tribes who are illiterate and finds difficult in employment as well as generating revenue. Women here are purely engaged in Tea plucking work. It can be a lucrative profession and can play a vital role in improving the socio-economic condition of the economically backward state. But the tea labourers are facing many problems related to nature of work, availability of finance, risk of health, plucking of tea leaves in unsafe zone etc. They are forced to accept the low wage and no revision has made for their betterment. This study aims to identify the prospects of MGNREGP providing employment opportunities to women tea labourers. And further it aims to identify problems encountered by women tea labourers in Nilgiris district.

4. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

In spite of detailed analysis made in the present study, this study is not free from limitations. The following are the important limitations:

- ❖ The study is purely based on secondary data collected from panchayat villages of coonoor.
- ❖ The geographical area of this study is confined only to Nilgiris District.
- ❖ The study period is specific and applicable only for the Year 2013-2014.

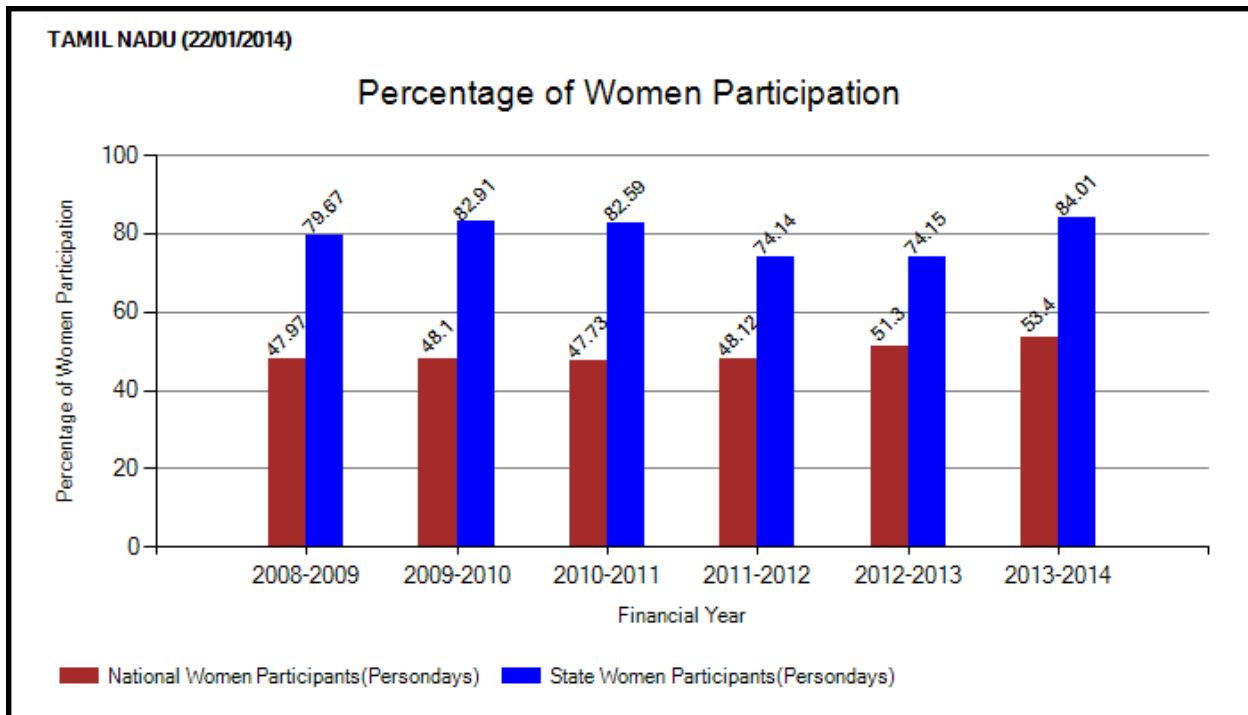
- 5. METHODOLOGY:** The study was conducted in Nilgiris district of Tamilnadu. The source of data is secondary which has been collected through books, Magazines, journals and from the internet.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION UNDER MGNREGP:

There are various factors which encourage the women worker's participation under this scheme include nature of work, which do not need skilled worker, the limited hours of works, availability of work locally, reduction of migration of male member, substantial jump in the wage rate etc. Participation of women varies widely across states. Women participation under MGNREGP is measured in person days.

At the national level women participation has increased significantly to 53.01% in 2012-2013 (till January, 2013). Highest participation is seen in states like Kerala (92.66%) followed by poducherry (83.96%). In comparison to these States Tamil Nadu ranked 20 with women participation rate of 37.39%. Although, women participation under the scheme has surpassed the statutory minimum requirement of 33 percent, the Act stipulates the priority shall be given to women. In terms of implementation it mandates that a minimum of one-third of the beneficiaries are women who have registered and have requested for work. However, ideally, there should be gender equality in participation in MGNREGP. That means, women proportion should be around 50% both in terms participation and person-days of work. Today, with regard to work participation, women are contributing 52 percent of the total work force under the ambitious NREGA scheme. Kerala and Tamil Nadu have taken a march over other states on the number of women work participation followed by Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh and Jammu & Kashmir at the bottom. As per statistics with the Ministry of Rural Development (Government of India), 2009, women in Kerala constituted 85.05 per cent of the total 3, 16,287 households which were provided jobs. In Tamil Nadu, the percentage of women stood at 80.52 among a total of 21, 21,317 households employed under the Act. Among the poor states, Rajasthan had the highest number of women who took up jobs under NREGA. They constituted 71.32 per cent of the total 47, 37,819 households which were provided work under the Act. In Andhra Pradesh, percentage of women in various NREGA programmes stood at 59.26 of a total 39, 09,189 households. Women outnumbered men in nasal-affected Chhattisgarh where they constituted 52.27 per cent of the total 10, 31,094. In Tripura, their participation remained nearly 52 per cent of the total 1, 29,775. Although, the national percentage of women participation remained high, Ministry assessment reveals that their share remained below 50 per cent in the rest of the states particularly in poverty-stricken states such as Bihar, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh (The Business Standard, 21 Aug. 2009 and Parthian 2009).

years	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
National women participants (person days)	47.97	48.1	47.73	48.12	51.3	53.4
states women participants(person days)	79.67	82.91	82.59	74.14	74.15	84.01



Source: Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India (MGNREGA)

The availability of work and convenience of finding work near home are important factors in attracting women to NREGA work. In case of Kerala, the high gender disporting in market as well as the high level of education among the population influence women’s participation in NREGA. Given the high level of literary, men prefer to not take up unskilled manual work provided under NREGA. The gap both the minimum wages paid is the scheme and the prevailing market wages for adult make workers of is usually women also take up NREGA work.

TAMILNADU’S EXPERIENCE:

Tamil Nadu’ success in implementing the NREGA shows its commitment to social welfare, and they way need for other states. This state emerge as a well governed state with a genuine commitment to social welfare as an NREGA success story. Most social welfare schemes (ICDS, mid –day meals, public health and soon), perform better there than in other parts of the country.

The share of women in the NREGA work force in Tamil Nadu has remained high (around 80%) from the beginning and is the highest in the country. Women also employed in sizeable numbers as NREGA staff at Gram panchayats and block level) as work site supervisors (Makkal Nala Panniyalars, or MNP’S).data entry and so on.

Tamil Nadu' success in controlling corruption in NREGA works. Tamil Nadu is the only state that continues to make wage payment in cash, it helps to avoid delays. In 2008, the central government ordered all wage payments to be made directly to workers bank and post office accounts, as an anti- corruption measures. Under the Act, a household in guaranteed 100 days of manual employment in a year. Adult member can share this guarantee and the wage is same for man and women. More than 90% of women workers are farm labourer. A substantial part of their work is unpaid because they work in their farms MGNREGA has changed this now parts of women's non-paid jobs, like land leveling and digging a pond in their farms, are paid. This has attracted women to the programme. In Tamil Nadu history of women mobilization for schemes and campaigns seems to have contributed to their higher participation. It is now mandatory to have 50% women panchayat representations that have nodal roles in the program's implementation including preparing the village developmental plan. So if the supervisory roles in presence as workers converge, it will be a win-win situation for the programme as well as villages.

MGNREGA statistics of Nilgiris in comparison to Tamil Nadu in2013-2014

MGNREGA Statistics	NILGIRIS	MGNREGA Statistics	TAMILNADU
Employment provided to households:	0.47213 Lakhs	Employment provided to households:	59.20398 Lakhs
Person days [in Lakh]:		Person days [in Lakh]:	
Total:	16.41	Total:	2871.2
SCs:	4.71 [28.7%]	SCs:	847.76 [29.53%]
STs:	1.67 [10.16%]	STs:	36.54 [1.27%]
Women:	11.92 [72.59%]	Women :	2411.96 [84.01%]
Others:	10.03 [61.13%]	Others:	1986.9 [69.2%]
Total works taken up:	731	Total works taken up:	149853
Works completed:	347	Works completed:	40517
Works in progress :	384	Works in progress :	109336

Source: Ministry of Rural Development government of India (MGNREGA)

Households Completed 100 days in Financial Year -2013-2014

State: TAMILNADU District: NILGIRIS Block: COONOOR

S.No	Panchayat	Household Employed	Person days Generated
1	Bandishola	16	1608
2	Beratty	11	1102
3	Burliar	23	2313
4	Hubbathalai	10	1002
5	Melur	6	601
6	Yedappalli	5	503
	Total	71	7129

Source: Ministry of Rural Development government of India (MGNREGA)

No. of Registered households, SC, ST, and Others in MGNREGA

State: TAMILNADU District: NILGIRIS Block: COONOOR

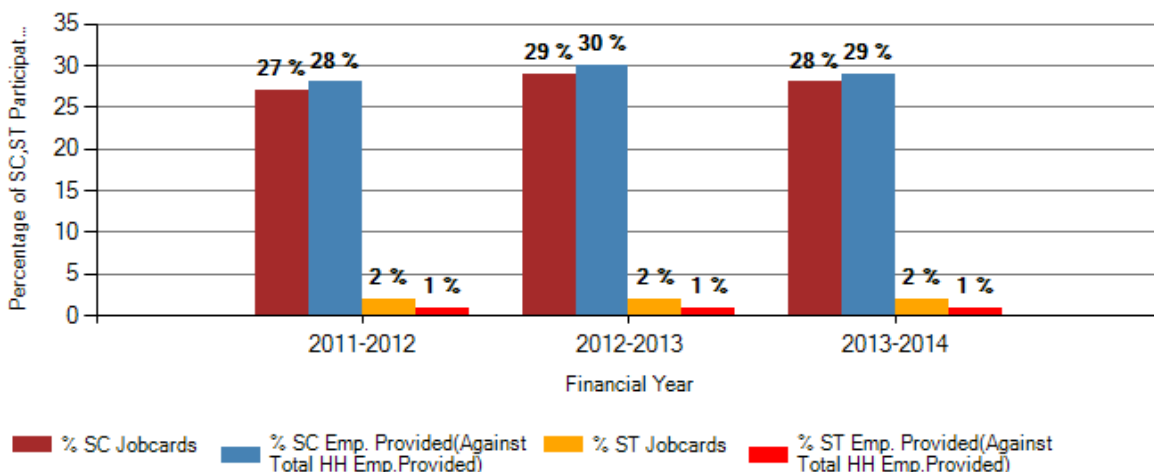
S.No	Panchayat	No. of households registered in MGNREGA *			
		SC	ST	OTHERS	TOTAL
1	Bandishola	439 (93.6%)	1 (0.21%)	29 (6.18%)	469
2	Beratty	327 (44.73%)	0 (0%)	404 (55.27%)	731
3	Burliar	252 (35.1%)	168 (23.4%)	298 (41.5%)	718
4	Hubbathalai	1408 (61.57%)	2 (0.09%)	877 (38.35%)	2287
5	Melur	2623 (66.37%)	291 (7.36%)	1038 (26.27%)	3952
6	Yedappalli	700 (49.75%)	0 (0%)	707 (50.25%)	1407
	Total	5749 (60.11%)	462 (4.83%)	3353 (35.06%)	9564

Source: Ministry of Rural Development government of India (MGNREGA)

TAMIL NADU (28/01/2014)

SC,ST Participation

Total No. Of Jobcards 5956502



No. of Registered workers, SC, ST, Others, Women & BPL-Families in MGNREGA

State: **TAMILNADU** District: **NILGIRIS** Block: **COONOOR**

S.No	Panchayat	No. of workers registered in MGNREGA				
		SC	ST	OTHERS	TOTAL	WOMEN
1	Bandishola	639(93.97%)	1(0.15%)	40(5.88%)	680	406(59.71%)
2	Beratty	472(46.78%)	0(0%)	537(53.22%)	1009	754(74.73%)
3	Burliar	335(33.27%)	262(26.02%)	410(40.71%)	1007	613(60.87%)
4	Hubbathalai	1566(62.29%)	2(0.08%)	946(37.63%)	2514	2094(83.29%)
5	Melur	2828(66.67%)	337(7.94%)	1077(25.39%)	4242	2750(64.83%)
6	Yedappalli	881(53.49%)	0(0%)	766(46.51%)	1647	1281(77.78%)
	Total	6721 (60.56%)	602 (5.42%)	3776 (34.02%)	11099	7898 (71.16%)

Source: Ministry of Rural Development government of India (MGNREGA)

ISSUES RELATED TO WOMEN PARTICIPATION MGNREGP:

1. **Non- availability of child care Facilities:** One of the major shortcomings of the Act is non-availability of proper crèche facilities at the work site even though the Act includes this provision. There is a non-availability of proper child care facilities.
2. **Low level of Awareness:** In many states women participation is low because of low level of awareness about the process and entitlements of the programme. This is reflected in Coonoor taluk also.
3. **Nature of work:** Most of the studies reveal that nature of work is also not helpful for women workers. In most of the projects selected being related to rural connectivity and renovation of local water bodies involving earth work requiring application of physical force, male workers were preferred to women workers.
4. **Poor Worksite Facilities:** MGNREGA funds have been allocated for provision of safe drinking water, resting place and first aid. But the present study reported that except drinking water facility all other facilities are generally absent.
5. **Delay in Payments:** Delay in payments is also responsible for poor participation of women particularly in case of single women if they are the main earners in family. Because the Banks are far from the village, it becomes difficult for the women to open Bank Account and draw cash which discourage women participation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Suggestions for policy and programme design include the followings:

- By Strengthening active citizenship among women, will make aware of their rights and duties.
- Recommendations can be encouraged to broaden the understanding of poverty to include the needs of women.
- Provisions can be made to provide door step delivery of the wages to overcome the difficulties faced by the women in drawing cash from bank.
- To meet the needs of women who are at different stages in their life cycle, a cash transfer or other kind of intervention can be efficiently encouraged.

- Recommendations include mobile crèches need to be made available at workplaces.

CONCLUSION:

MGNREGP has positive impact on employment pattern of women. Women have benefited both individual and community. They are able to earn independently, spend some money for their own needs, contribute in family expenditure etc. Certain initiatives and changes should be taken to remove the specific problem highlighted in the study can uplift the status of women and overcome poor implementation of the programme.

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