

Economic Transformation of Tribal women Through MGNREGA: A Study on Irula Community Women in Attappady, Kerala

Ashok Jacob Mathews

Research Scholar, Dept. of Political Science and Development Administration,
Gandhigram Rural Institute, Gandhigram, Dindigul.

Abstract

The MGNREGA programme has made changes in the life of rural women in India by empowering them in all fields of life. The economic and social security created by the schedule has caused them to stand in the society and to secure a decent position in the family. The program has produced revolutionary changes in the savings culture and in endorsing banking culture among women. Despite the criticism against the program as a “dole” by the economists, it has made its impact in transforming the rural women. The application has enabled the women to earn additional income for their family to build a robust financial security for their family. The women empowered themselves from social to economic security in their family. The rural economy used to depend on agriculture where the programme enabled the women to earn other than from farming job. The schedule allowed the women to fulfil their right to work and thereby to make by their self for the betterment of their financial stability.

Keywords - Economic revolution, tribal women, financial stability, programme, transformation.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian parliament passed its historical legislation of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act or NREGA in the year 2005. The aim to pass the law was to provide the rural households in India with the right to work. The act envisaged the rural family in India with hundred days of guaranteed work in a year. The law became one of the most massive wage employment programmes in the history of the humanity as it became the most significant public programme in the world. In the schedule, the rural households were the primary beneficiaries as it provided wage employment to the rural population in India. It assured the people living in rural India with the right to work and in fulfilling the rights of the people. The main highlight of the programme was the wage parity provided for men and women who participated in the application, and it was the unique feature of its kind.

The application is designed to give job on demand of the work seekers and provide who doesn't have a wage. The works allocated under the scheme based on the creation of productive assets with a decentralised decision in regards to the selection of the works. It guaranteed jobs for all individuals and became a tool for the workers in increasing their wage and livelihood. The act concentrated on raising the bargaining power of the poor people and in transforming the structure of rural society. It allowed the poor to have a decent wage based on their demand to have a job.

The MGNREGA programme allocated to every state in India and the Panchayat Raj Institutions given the role in implementing the scheme in the rural areas. In the state of Kerala, the programme introduced during the initial stage itself in the year 2006. Kerala is a state which proved its experience in delivering the decentralisation of power to the local bodies. The state has made remarkable progress in planning and executing the devolution of power. The success achieved by the state in regards to the Panchayat Raj Institutions is an example for all the states in India. The strong decentralisation experience caused the state to implement the programme most efficiently. The state described by the economists and social scientists as a unique model for development regarding social welfare, education and health for all other states in India. The year 1991 was an outstanding year for the state of Kerala as it declared the whole literate state in India. Even though the state achieved remarkable progress, the conditions of the tribal and fisherman communities were minimum considering the growth of other groups. The tribal population in the state lacked in the decentralised management strategies and local power delivery while considering with the general population of Kerala. According to Zachariah and Irudaya Rajan, the state has achieved a demographic transition which resembles the developed nations, but the tribal community in the state is not.

The case of tribal population in Kerala is compassionate that the literacy rate and level of

dropouts among the group are much higher. The tribal communities are facing problems like poverty, health problems, livelihood insecurity and environmental degradation in the state. The census reports of 2011 registered the tribal population of Kerala as 3, 64,189, which is the 1.14% of the total population of the state. The people of tribal communities in Attappady block in Palakkad district marked as 30,970.

A. Attappady

The Attappady block panchayat is the part of Mannarkkadaluk of Palakkad district in Kerala and is the most significant block regarding geography in the state. The block comprises of three PanchayatsnamelyAgali, Sholayur and Pudur. The block is 745 sq.km in size and lies between Nilgiri and Velligiri ranges. The area sharesaboundary with the state of Tamil Nadu in the east and has agriculture as its primary cultivation. The 2001 census noted that there are about 180 tribal hamlets in the region with a population of 30,658. The tribal society includes the people belonging to Muduga, Irula and Kurumba community.

The Attappady block has reported with the deaths related to health problems, starvation and malnutrition which alarmed the development attainments of the state of Kerala. The area faced issues in regards to the nonstable livelihood conditions of the tribal population. The MGNREGA programmeimplemented in the zone in the year 2006, and it attracted the community over there. The average person days of Attappady is higher than that of the state of Kerala. According to NRLM report 2013, the women are looking after the family as the men die very early due to alcoholism. The programme can act as change factor in the area as it provides better living conditions and economic security as it can change the existence of tribal women.

B. Irula Tribe

The majority of the tribal population of Attappady comprised of the Irula tribe which is also known as Irulans or Irular with an average of 82.3% of the total population. The name is derived from the dark complexion of the community people and uses a language called Irula language which is a combination of Tamil and Malayalam. The group of people is believed to be the inhabitants of Tamil Nadu who settled in Attappady.

II. MGNREGA AND ITSIMPLICATION

The MGNREGA is known as MGNREGS in its implementation stage for the states and implementedin the districts of Palakkad and Wayanad in the year 2006. The State Employment Guarantee Council has implemented by The Government of Kerala to guide the matters related to the execution and assessment of the scheme in the state. The study has been carried out among 100 respondents who belonged to the Irula community, with their participation in MGNREGA. The study was carried out among the women belonging to the particular community in all the three panchayats in Attapady block based on random sampling method. The data were analysed using simple percentage method based on objectives of the study.

A. Objectives

- To study the general status of Irula community women working in MGNREGA
- To analyse the habit of savings among the women working in MGNREGA
- To evaluate the expenditure of women working in MGNREGA
- To estimate the influence of MGNREA income in decision making

Table-1: MGNREGA improved welfare of household

Sl. No.	Impact made by MGNREGA	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	General welfare improved	100	100%
2	No improvement	0	0

The table illustrates that the MGNREGA programme has resulted in improving the general welfare of the Irula community as all the respondents made that the well-being of their household has improved. The publicwelfareincludes their livelihood and related activities.

Table-2 : Perception of evolving status in community

Sl. No.	Perception about changing status in Community	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Honor & respect increased	38	38%
2	Gender discrimination reduced	18	18%
3	Opportunity to take decision	44	44%
4	No changes in status		

The table demonstrates that a majority of 44 percent of the respondents believes that the programme has helped them in taking decisions which highlights the freedom attained by the women in regards to decision making. It is also notable that the schedule has gained honour and respect to the women in front of the community. The program also helped the women in reducing the gender discrimination in the society which points to the empowerment made by the women. It is notable that none of the women responded in favour of no changes which shows the positive aspect made by the programme.

Table-3 : MGNREGA influenced consumption expenditure

Sl. No.	Influenced consumption expenditure	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Influenced consumption	100	100%
2	No Influence	0	0

The MGNREGA has influenced the consumption expenses of the Irula community women as the table shows that cent percent of the respondents favours the programme has made changes in their consumption related expenditure.

Table-4 : Decisions regarding the spending of the family

Sl. No.	Decisions on spending of the family	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Husband	24	24
2	Children	4	4
3	Self	72	72

The table shows the empowerment level of Irula women in regards to the decision-making process, and it positively indicates that 72 percent of the women can decide in regards to the spending of their family, whereas only in the case of 24 percent the husbands have the authority. A little percent of four is in favour of the children taking the decisions in the family.

Table-5 : Influence of programme on decision making in family

Sl. No.	Influence in family decision making	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Influence	100	100
2	No Influence	0	0

The table positively shows the influence made by the programme in the decision-making process. It highlights the importance attained by the schedule in dealing with the empowerment of women and indicates the capacity achieved by women regards of the decision-making process in the family.

Table-6 : Had a bank account before joining MGNREGA

Sl. No.	Details of Bank Account	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Had Bank Account	8	8
2	No Bank Account	92	92

The table highlights that a majority of 92 percent of the population did not have a bank account before joining the programme, which shows that the schedule only made them open a bank account. Only 8 percent of the respondents went that they had bank accounts before joining the application.

Table-7 : MGNREGA Influenced on savings

Sl. No.	Savings Income	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Promoted Savings	100	100
2	Not Promoted Savings	0	0

The table illustrates that all the respondents believed that the MGNREGA had influenced them in having better savings habit. The income earned from the scheme made them keep an amount of savings.

Table-8 : MGNREGA reduced the burden of not having job

Sl. No.	Burden of not having job	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Reduced	100	100
2	Not Reduced	0	0

The table describes the influence made by the MGNREGA in reducing the burden of not having a job as cent percent of the women in Irula community believes that the programme has overcome their problem by providing them with a job.

Table-9 : MGNREGA in curbing migration

Sl. No.	MGNREGA & migration	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Reduced Migration	68	68
2	Not Reduced Migration	32	32%

The table describes that the level of migration reduced as 68 percent of the respondents believe the MGNREGA influenced in lowering immigration whereas 32 percent believes that it has not reduced the movement in the area.

Table-10 : Does MGNREGA bought financial stability for your family

Sl. No.	Financial Stability	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Bought Financial Stability	100	100

2	No Changes	100	100
---	------------	-----	-----

The table illustrates that the MGNREGA programme has enabled the families to have financial stability as all the respondents were in favour of the changes brought by the schedule in ensuring their economic security.

Case

A relief to have a decent life

The 46-year-old widow, Pappathi from the Irula community lives with her son who is studying in 9th standard. Her family depends on the income earned from the scheme as her husband passed away five years back due to alcoholism. She believes that the programme only makes herself and her son to sustain as there is no other way to have a livelihood. She used to be an agricultural labourer, but there is no availability of job in the area as the agriculture is affected by the climatic conditions. The only way to have a livelihood is the scheme, and it is income earned from this which makes her manage the affairs of her family including the education of her son. If the programme was not there, she doesn't know what she would have done. It is the only MGNREGA which enabled her to have a decent life in spite of her unsafe conditions.

them to have a stable economic condition as the women were able to earn for the family. The income earned by women allowed her to decide over the income thus earned and has strengthened her in taking better decisions. The earnings from the scheme made the women have better decision-making capacity. The income received from the programme has enabled the women to have a sustainable livelihood with decent wages. It made the women to enhance her capability and to strengthen her capacity. Thus the MGNREGA programme has enabled the tribal women of Irula community to have an economic transformation through their involvement in MGNREGA.

III. CONCLUSION

The MGNREGA programme has enabled the Irula community women to empower themselves regarding having a better livelihood. The majority of women use the income for running their family whereas it helped them in dealing with their conditions in the household as well as family. The women believe that the programme made them improve their dignity in the family as well as the community as it has brought honour to them by reducing the gendered issues. The participation even caused the women to curb gender discrimination in the family, and it has reflected regarding decision making as the decision-making capacity of the women has increased in the family as they began to decide over the expenses of the family in regards of expenditure. The income earned made the women start the habit of savings which is an indicator of empowerment where the starting of bank account allowed them to save the amount thus collected. The MGNREGA even allowed the women to work in their locality by reducing the level of migration as the women use to get work in their region. Moreover, the participants made the people have financial stability in their family as the income earned from the scheme allowed them to have an income for expenditure as well as savings.

The programme has made the women belonging to the Irula community to have a transformation in the means of their income. It enabled

REFERENCE

- [1] Government of India, (2014), “The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (NREGA)-Operational Guidelines, Ministry of Rural Development New Delhi.
- [2] The government of Kerala, (2011) “The Performance of NREGS in Phase I & Phase II districts in Kerala”, Planning Board, Evaluation series No.: 89 March, An Evaluation Study.
- [3] Gandhigram Rural Institute, (2009), “ Performance of NREGS in Kerala State-A Study”, Department of Extension Education, Gandhigram, Tamil Nadu, MoRD/UNDP, December
- [4] Jain S P (2001), Emerging Institutions for Decentralised Rural Development” NIRD Publication, Hyderabad
- [5] Jean Dreze (2007), NREGA: Dismantling the contractor raj The Hindu, 20th November
- [6] Jean Dreze, (2014), ‘Learning from NREGA”, The Hindu, August 23rd
- [7] Jos Chathukulam and Giressan K (2007), “Impact Assessment of NREGS in Kerala, Evaluation of system systems and procedure.”
- [8] Tata Institute for Social Sciences (2011).: An evaluation of MGNREGA in Kerala” Mumbai, October