



WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH MGNREGA SPECIALY IN DHEMAJI DISTRICT OF ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), passed by the Indian Government in 2005, went into effect in February 2006. On October 2, 2009, it was subsequently renamed the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). Any rural Household whose adult members are willing to perform unskilled manual labor is guaranteed 100 days of employment under the MGNREGA during a fiscal year. The Act stipulates that women must be given preference when it comes to employment, with at least one-third of the beneficiaries being women who have registered and regulated for work under the Act. By giving them opportunities for wage employment, the Act has the potential to significantly contribute to women's empowerment. The study's goal is to draw attention to MGNREGA's impact on women's employment, particularly in Dhemaji district of Assam. The goal of the study is to identify the barriers to women's MGNREGA participation in Dhemaji district of Assam.

Keywords: *MGNREGA, Women Employment, Women Participation, Obstacles, etc.*

INTRODUCTION

Women empowerment is social process that gives women the ability to take charge of their lives, engage with society, and challenge gender inequality. However, a variety of discriminatory practices and social barriers are prevalent in our society, causing women to continuously be neglected and lose their way. A significant portion of the Dhemaji district's female population continues to face discrimination and deprivation. Women's power in the district must be mobilized in order to advance in all areas of development. Therefore, in order to develop the district and ensure that all segments of society actively participate, the government has formulated various programmes and schemes that aim to lift women out of poverty and vulnerability. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), which was passed into law in 2005, is once such programme that is targeted towards women. Under MGNREGA every rural household is legally guaranteed 100 days of wages employment during a fiscal year. With its pledge to provide each household with 100 days unskilled

labour, MGNREGA has been viewed as a gender sensitive programme. This scheme is gender sensitive due to its features. Women are guaranteed one-third of the jobs under the MGNREGA scheme, and the programme works to ensure that this number is surpassed. MGNREGA has helped women become more enlightened by giving them more work options, higher income, more decision-making authority, and the ability to engage community life.

OBJECTIVES

1. To understand how MGNREGA contributes to the empowerment of women.
2. To learn about the obstacles that women face when they participate in MGNREGA.

METHODOLOGY

This study is descriptive in nature and is based on secondary data gathered from a variety of websites, book chapters, and published articles. A variety of statistical tools, including tables, graphs, percentages, and more, have been used to evaluate and analyze the available data.

SOCIO- ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE STUDY AREA

Dhemaji district is located in the eastern most part of Assam. It comprises six numbers of Development block-Bordoloni, Dhemaji, Machkhowa, Murkongselek, Simen Sissitongani and Sissiborgaon. There were 6, 86,133 people living in the Dhemaji district as of the 2011 population census, with 3,50,725 men and 3,35,408 women. The 2011 census shows that the sex ratio, or the number of females per 1000 males, is 956. According to the 2011 census, 6,37,848 people, 3,26,278 men and 3,11,570 women, live in rural areas, making up the majority of the district's population. The district is heavily reliant on agriculture; nearly 85% of the population works in agriculture and related activities, and the secondary and tertiary sectors have very little development. There are many socioeconomic issues facing Dhemaji district, especially those pertaining to poverty, agriculture, and the effects of natural disasters like floods and riverbank erosion. Despite having a comparatively high literacy rate, the district's socioeconomic fabric is impacted by environmental issues because a sizable section of the population depends on agriculture.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) was passed by Indian government in 2005 and went into effect in February 2006. On October 2, it was subsequently renamed the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). Any rural household with adult members willing to perform manual labour without specialized training is guaranteed 100 days of work during a fiscal year under the MGNREGA. The Act stipulates that women must be given preference when it comes to employment, with at least one-third of the beneficiaries being women who have registered and regulated for work under the Act. The Ministry of Rural Development has recommended that all female MGNREGA workers have their own bank or post office accounts opened in their names, with their wages being directly credited to their accounts based on the number of days they worked. This will increase the number of women workers who participate in MGNREGA. Along with the other six districts of Assam, Dhemaji district also implemented MGNREGA in 2006-2007. By offering job opportunities, the MGNREGA has been instrumental in empowering women since its inception.

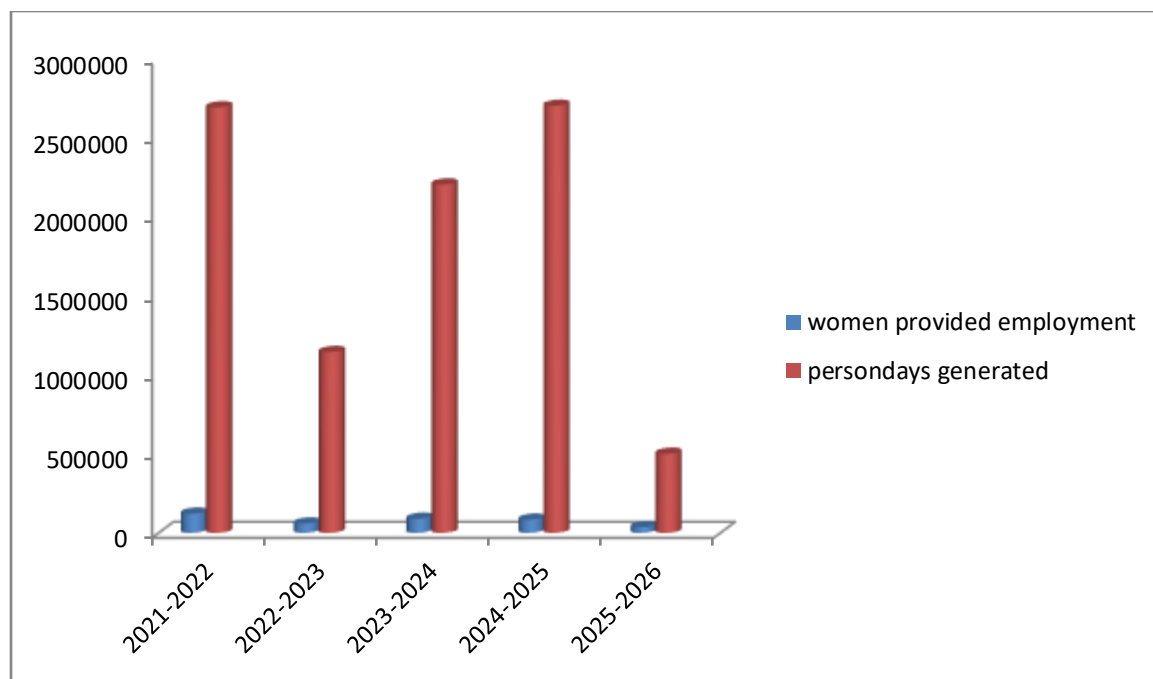
Following table shows the women provided employment through MGNREGA in different blocks of Dhemaji district –

Table 1: Women employment through MGNREGA

SI No	Block	2021-2022		2022-2023		2023-2024		2024-2025		2025-2026(till 28-07-2025)	
		No of Women provided employment	No of personday generated	No of Women provided employment	No of personday generated	No of Women provided employment	No of personday generated	No of Women provided employment	No of personday generated	No of Women provided employment	No of personday generated (women)
1	Bordoloni	17939	396175	8655	203031	11166	290814	10967	330704	6309	85688
3	Dhemaji	9846	189222	7478	132757	7982	192274	7472	203023	3655	63926
4	Machkhowa	6550	152169	5072	90850	6802	162535	7822	214311	7632	108426
5	Murkongselek	59615	1267791	17752	340934	38079	970336	30808	1160849	5962	59828
6	Simen Sissitonga	0	0	0	0	0	0	2308	83046	6657	84788
7	Sissiborgaon	27450	687744	20022	374400	25391	587623	24082	711328	5771	96693
8	Total	121400	2693101	58979	1141972	89420	2203582	83459	2703261	35986	499349

Source: Govt. of India Ministry of Rural Development

Fig.1



In the above table and the bar diagram it is seen that in 2021-2022 various blocks in the Dhemaji district employed 121400 women and generated 2693101 persondays for women. Like that in 2022-2023 various blocks in Dhemaji district employed 58979 women and generated 1141972 persondays for women, in 2023-2024 total 89420 women were provided employment and generated 2203582 persondays for women, in 2024-2025 total 83459 women were provided employment and generated 2703261 persondays for women and in 2025-2026 till 18-07-2025 total 35986 women were provided employment and generated 499349 persondays for women. The aforementioned table and bar diagram shows that, with the exception 2025-2026, the Murkongselek block of Dhemaji district has provided employment to most women and generated persondays for women, than the other blocks of the district. In 2021-2022 the district has provided maximum employment to women and in 2024-2025 generated maximum persondays for women. The above table gives a clear view that MGNREGA has played a key role in providing employment to women.

ECONOMICS INDEPENDENCE FOR WOMEN

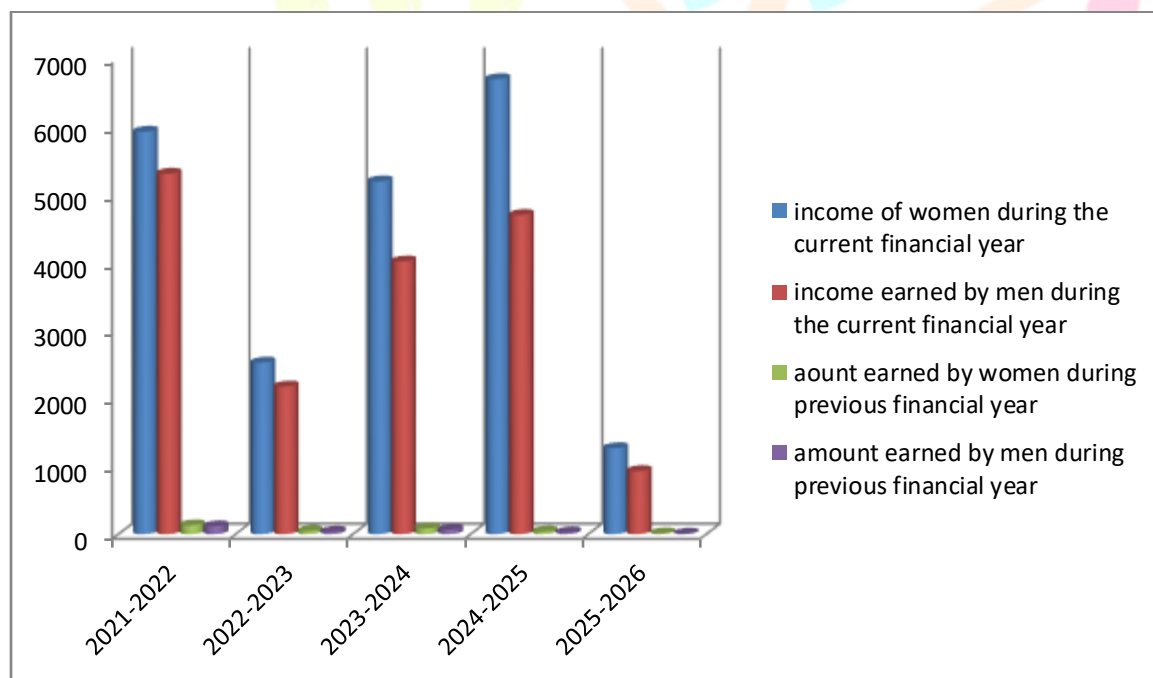
Most of the time MGNREGA serves as the initial source of independent income for a large number of women. Their MGNREGA wages enable them to save for emergencies, support their families and cover their children's education. This financial independence lessens reliance on male for their needs. They are more confident in their decision-making when they are economically independent. Women who work under MGNREGA frequently assume leadership roles in their communities. Following table shows the income earned by the women of Dhemaji district during 2021-2022 to 2025-2026(till 18-07-2025) from MGNREGA –

Table 2: Amount earned by women from MGNREGA

Sl No.	Year	Amount earned during current financial year (in Lakhs)		Amount earned during previous financial year (in Lakhs)	
		Women	Men	Women	Men
1	2021-2022	5922.739	5304.633	130.088	115.542
2	2022-2023	2524.597	2172.229	46.729	35.699
3	2023-2024	5192.132	4013.173	83.119	65.815
4	2024-2025	6695.866	4697.897	39.086	27.153
5	2025-2026 (till 28-07-2025)	1264.665	928.934	11.497	8.005

Source: Govt. of India Ministry of Rural Development

Fig.2



In the year 2021-2022 women earned form MGNREGA was 5922.739 lakhs as compare to men 5304.633 lakhs during the current financial year. Like that in the year 2022-2023 amount earned by women form MGNREGA was 2524.597 lakhs as compare to men 2172.229 lakhs during the current financial year. Again in the year 2023-2024 amount earned by women form MGNREGA was 5192.132 lakhs as compare to men 4013.173 lakhs during the current financial year. In the year 2024-2025 amount earned by women form MGNREGA was 6695.886 lakhs as compare to men 4697.897 lakhs during the current financial year. In the year 2025-2026(till 28-07-2025) women earned form MGNREGA was 1264.665 lakhs as compare to men 928.934 lakhs during the current financial year. It is seen that throughout the financial year 2021-2022 through 2025-2026(till 28-07-2025),

women income consistently outpaced men's. During the financial year 2024-2025 women earned highest amount of money, which was 6697.866 lakhs and during the financial year 2025-2026(till 28-07-2025) they earned less amount of money, which is 1264.665 lakhs. As it can be seen that MGNREGA play an important role in women empowerment by providing employment and income. The wage provides to them offering a source of income and contributing to their economic independence and also enabling them to have control over their household resources and expenditure. By providing wage for work, MGNREGA helps reduce poverty among women and their families. It increases the decision – making power and they have better control over household decisions, including health care, child education, saving, expenditure and other aspects. It also allowing women to engage more actively in community affairs. MGNREGA help in financial inclusion to women, as the wage of workers were provided through Bank or Post office account.

OBSTACLES FOR WOMEN IN MGNREGA

1. Worksites frequently lack basic amenities like childcare, drinking water, ladies toilets, etc. This deterred women, especially mothers, from fully participating.
2. Delays in wage payments also disproportionately affect women.
3. In certain areas, social and cultural barriers limit women's mobility.
4. The burden of house hold work load,
5. Poor awareness of their rights

MAJOR CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- In order to encourage women to participate more actively, it is important to reduce the barriers.
- A specific percentage of positions at each level may be set aside for female functionaries as a policy because women officials are seen to be contributing positively and assisting women in participating in MGNREGA.
- In order to increase women's participation women-friendly tools should be used
- It is necessary to take action to guarantee the safety of MGNREGA women (especially mothers) who work with their children from heat, insects bites, etc.
- Special initiative should be taken to encourage women in participation.
- Special initiative should be taken for public awareness.

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