



# EXTENT OF PARTICIPATION OF THE MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT (MGNREGA) BENEFICIARIES IN SALEM DISTRICT

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## ABSTRACT

**KEYWORDS:**  
*Mahatma Gandhi National  
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participation, beneficiaries*

*A study mainly focuses on extent of participation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act beneficiaries in Salem District. The present study was conducted in Thalaivasal block of Salem District. Salem district has been administratively divided in to twenty blocks. Out of these blocks Thalaivasal block has higher number of beneficiaries. So, it was selected as a study area. For the selection of the respondents based on the proportionate random sampling technique was followed to select a sample size of one hundred twenty respondents. The data were collected from each of the respondent through personal interview methods with the help of interview schedule. The results revealed that, half of the beneficiaries (50.00 per cent) had medium level of participation followed by 31.67 per cent and 18.33 per cent under high and low level of participation respectively.*

## INTRODUCTION

India is the country of villages and even today around 70.00 per cent of its population is residing in the villages of which 28.30 per cent live below poverty line (World Bank, 2011). The rural character of the economy as stated by Mahatma Gandhi is not found in cities but in its villages. Mahatma Gandhi's human capital model of development appears to be the most suitable for labour surplus country like ours upliftment of villages will continue to be the major area of achievement in all the discussions pertaining to economic growth of our country.

To overcome the above problems and deficiencies of the earlier wage employment programmes, Government of India took a historic step by enacting the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in 2005 by merging Swarnajayanthi Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY) and National Food for Work Programme (NFFWP) for providing livelihood security to rural unemployed.

The law was initially called the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) but was renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2009. This act was introduced with an aim of improving the purchasing power of the rural people, primarily semi or unskilled work to people living in rural India, whether or not they are below the poverty line.

Based on man days working on the project, the MGNREGA districts were classified into good performing districts and poor performing districts. Researcher is

particularly interested in good performing districts as there is lot of research studies in poor performing districts. Among the good performing districts, Salem was selected for the study. Considering the above discussion, it is essential to study about the extent of participation of the MGNREGA beneficiaries. Hence, the present study was entitled with "Extent of participation of the MGNREGA beneficiaries in Salem District".

## METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in Salem district of Tamil Nadu state. Salem district has been administratively divided into twenty blocks. Out of these blocks, higher beneficiaries of MGNREGA were noticed in Thalaivasal block. Hence, Thalaivasal block has been selected for the purpose of study. Thalaivasal block had thirty five panchayat villages and eight villages were purposively selected based upon its maximum number of beneficiaries.

For the selection of the respondents based on the proportionate random sampling technique was followed to select a sample size of one hundred and twenty respondents. For the purpose of data collection only the heads of households were introduced.

## Extent of participation in MGNREGA

Participation of people in the development programmes is very much essential for the success of any programme. It is to create a sense of awareness and a sense of profession or ownership. It enables them to discover their resources for productive purpose. Participation is to activate people from

passiveness to be thinkers, decision makers, doers and implementers.

Participation is a social experience shared by individual and group who live in definite economic and social relations to each other in a society. In this study, the extent of participation was operationalized as the total participation in MGNREGA related activities and MGNREGA works.

Participation of beneficiaries in the MGNREGA related activities viz., Grama sabha meeting, open project meeting, social audit process, verifying muster roll, verifying job cards, verifying bills/vouchers, scrutiny of records of ongoing works and wage distribution was assessed using a four point continuum. The response was obtained in a four point continuum. One score was given to no participation, two scores to occasional participation and three scores to regular participation. The high score referred to high participation. The respondents were classified into low, medium and high level of participation using cumulative frequency method.

After assessing the participation in MGNREGA related activities, the beneficiaries' participation in MGNREGA work was assessed similarly and the responses were obtained in four point continuum. Participation in MGNREGA in works was assessed in terms of number of days of work attended and different kinds of work undertaken by the beneficiaries.

Number days of work attended by the beneficiaries for the last ten years were classified into 0-250 days, 251-500 days, 501-750 days and 751-1000 days. One, two, three and four scores were given to beneficiaries, who had worked up to 250 days, 251 to 500 days, 501 to 750 and 751 days to 1000 days respectively.

Four kinds of works viz., rural connectivity, micro irrigation, water conservation and water harvesting, renovation of traditional water bodies (desilting of tanks/ponds, desilting of old canals, desilting of traditional open well) had been implemented in the study area. All the four kinds of work were taken into consideration and one score was given to each kind of work undertaken by the beneficiaries.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

**Extent of participation of the beneficiaries in MGNREGA**

**Overall participation**

The extent of participation of beneficiaries indicates their extent of involvement and their interest in the activities of MGNREGA. The overall participation of the beneficiaries in the activities of MGNREGA was studied and the results are given in Table-1.

**Table-1. Distribution of respondents according to their overall participation in MGNREGA**

(n=120)			
S.No.	Category	Number	Per cent
1.	Low	22	18.33
2.	Medium	60	50.00
3.	High	38	31.67
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

It is evident from Table-1, that half of the beneficiaries (50.00 per cent) had medium level of participation followed by 31.67 per cent and 18.33 per cent under high and low level of participation respectively. The medium level of participation in MGNREGA among the respondents to engage in MGNREGA, majority of them belonged to old age category, with marginal land size holdings. This factor would have resulted with majority of the respondents under medium level of participation in MGNREGA. This is in line with the findings of Mohanraj (2011).

**Component wise participation**

Further, attempt was made to assess component wise participation of the beneficiaries in MGNREGA. The activities were sub-divided into major areas viz., participation in MGNREGA related activities and participation in MGNREGA works.

**Participation of beneficiaries in MGNREGA related activities**

The participation of beneficiaries in MGNREGA related activities were studied and results are given in Table-2.

**Table-2. Distribution of respondents based on their participation in MGNREGA related activities**

(n=120)							
S.No	Particulars	Extent of participation					
		Regularly		Occasionally		No participation	
		No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
1.	In grama sabha meeting	120	100.00	-	-	-	-
2.	In the decision making for selection of projects in grama sabha	-	-	35	29.17	85	70.83
3.	In open project meeting	-	-	106	88.33	14	11.67
4.	Social audit process	-	-	-	-	120	100.00
5.	In meetings conducted by social audit committee	46	38.33	50	41.67	34	28.33
6.	In verifying muster roll	-	-	10	8.33	110	91.67
7.	In verifying job cards	-	-	-	-	120	100.00
8.	In verifying bills/ vouchers	-	-	-	-	120	100.00
9.	In scrutiny of records of ongoing works	-	-	-	-	120	100.00
10.	In wage distribution	-	-	-	-	120	100.00

From the Table-2, it is evident that in grama sabha meeting all the beneficiaries (100.00 per cent) had participated regularly. Grama sabha meetings are conducted periodically in their village itself. Hence, all the members might have attended the grama sabha meetings regularly. This is in line with the findings of Dinesh Das (2012).

In meetings conducted by social audit committee, nearly two-fifth (38.33 per cent) of the beneficiaries had participated regularly.

Most (88.33 per cent) of the beneficiaries had occasionally participated in the open project meeting, followed by 41.67 per cent of the beneficiaries who had occasionally participated in the meetings conducted by social audit committee, while 29.17 per cent of the beneficiaries had occasionally participated in the decision making for selection of projects in grama sabha. Only 8.33 per cent of the beneficiaries had occasionally participated in verifying muster roll.

Cent per cent of the beneficiaries (100.00 per cent) did not participate in MGNREGA related activities viz., social audit process, verifying job cards, verifying bills/ vouchers, scrutiny of ongoing works and wage distribution. Most of

the beneficiaries (91.67 per cent) did not participate in verifying muster roll, followed by 70.83 per cent of the beneficiaries who have not participated in the decision making for selection of projects in grama sabha. A little more than one-fourth (28.33 per cent) of the beneficiaries had not participated in meetings conducted by social audit committee. Only 11.67 per cent of the beneficiaries have not participated in the open project meeting. The beneficiaries who were assigned for social audit process alone participated in these activities. Hence, this may be the reason for not participating in these activities. This is in line with the findings of Anamica (2010).

#### Participation in MGNREGA work

The participation of beneficiaries in MGNREGA work consisted of two areas viz., number of days of work completed in MGNREGA and number of works undertaken in MGNREGA.

Data on number of days of work completed in MGNREGA and distribution of beneficiaries involved in different kinds of jobs undertaken in MGNREGA were collected and the results have been furnished in Table-3 and Table-4 respectively.

**Table-3. Distribution of beneficiaries based on number of days of work completed in MGNREGA**

(n=120)

Category	Number of days of work for the last ten years							
	0-250		251-500		501-750		751-1000	
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
Number of days of work completed (from 2008 to 2017)	31	25.83	22	18.33	35	29.17	32	26.67

It is evident from Table-3, about one-fourth (25.83 per cent) of the beneficiaries fell under the category of 0-250 days of work, 18.33 per cent of the beneficiaries fell under 251-500 days category, 29.17 per cent of the beneficiaries fell under the category of 501-750 days and 26.67 per cent of the

beneficiaries falls under the group of 751-1000 days category. Most of the beneficiaries belonged to the old age group. This may be the reason for about one-third of the beneficiaries to be engaged (501-750 days) in more number of work days.

**Table-4. Distribution of beneficiaries based on number of works undertaken in MGNREGA**

(n=120)

Category	Number of works undertaken							
	One		Two		Three		Four	
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
Different number of works undertaken	19	15.83	30	25.00	46	38.33	25	20.87

It is revealed from Table-4, that 15.83 per cent of the beneficiaries were found to be engaged only in one kind of work, 25.00 per cent of the beneficiaries undertook two different number of works, 38.33 per cent of the beneficiaries had undertaken three different number of works and the remaining 20.87 per cent of the beneficiaries were involved in four different number of works. Most of the beneficiaries had participated in MGNREGA work whenever they could not find any other agriculture works in nearby farmer's field. Hence, only about two-fifth (38.33 per cent) of the respondents might have involved in three numbers of works under MGNREGA.

#### CONCLUSION

Gram panchayats play an important role in the functioning of the scheme. It should be the panchayats' responsibility to implement the scheme in an effective manner after releasing the funds. Now, the MGNREGA is providing guaranteed employment of only 100 days per family.

Hence, increase the number of days of employment per year per person would encourage more participation by the rural poor. It also revealed that most of the beneficiaries were not members of social audit committee. The policy makers should take initiatives to involve more number of beneficiaries in social audit committee.

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