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## WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN MGNREGA IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

Despite the dramatic reduction of poverty in India over the past 7 years, poverty has not been fully eradicated in rural areas and, in the context of growing inequalities, it remains a national concern. Although 109.8 million rural poor are come out from poverty and Poverty ratio is dropped up to 25.7% from 41.8% during 2004-05 to 2011-12 in rural areas. The changing socio-economic space in India has given immense reason to locate the women's work position in MGNREGA after its inception in India. This paper examines the women participation in MGNREGA work program launched in several states of India in February 2006, with a view to understanding both the challenges and achievements of this pro-poor programme in India. Using secondary data, we first highlight the current key indicator of MGNREGA at national level, demonstrating mix performance of the program towards the poor. Second, participation of women work force in MGNREGA work program provide evidence of increasing participation at national level and at a disaggregated state level, women's participation varies across states. The states having high sex ratios have high women's participation rates and in poor states vice-versa. Finally, to examine the women work force in all states under MGNREGA scheme in India, and evaluation of women work force in MGNREGA scheme.

### KEYWORDS

MGNREGA, work demand, social audit, commitment, capacity, social protection.

### INTRODUCTION

MGNREGA is one of the milestones in social protection measures in the world. It is also one of the pioneering rights based legislation and largest workforce programme in the world. The Indian Parliament legislated on this turning point Act, with a strong consensus across the political spectrum. This Act, therefore, reflects the will of the citizens of India and their fellowship with the most vulnerable and marginalized. The aims of this Act is to enhance livelihood security of households in rural areas of the country through providing at least 100 days of guarantee wage payment in financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The philosophy and strategy embedded in the scheme has many far reaching socio-economic consequences. The consequences are, however, for the betterment of the society in general and rural workers in particular. The scheme has three important dimensions - one dimension is the creation of assets in rural areas; second dimension is the social protection of the vulnerable sections of the society; and the third dimension is the guaranteed provision for employment, the mother of all social securities.

In the present paper, I have indicated some current highlights. Along with this, I have provided some analytical facts which are emerged from the study in lights of the objectives. It is remarkable that, as the implementation of the MGNREGA completed its journey of a decade. The Act came in to force on February 2, 2006 and was implemented in a phased manner. In first phase (since 2Feb.2006) in 200 districts; Second phase (from 2007-2008) in 130 districts and in third phase (from 1 April2008) comprised 330 for implementation. MGNREGA programme is operating in 32 states out of 35 states of India. No data are available pertain to Chandigarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu. Some of the current variables are presented as under:

**TABLE 1: CURRENT KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF MGNREGA AT NATIONAL LEVEL (FINANCIAL YEAR 2015-16)**

Total No. of Districts	660
Total No. of Blocks	6,852
Total No. of GPs	2,57,688
I Job Card	
Total No. of Job Cards [In Cr]	13.16
Total No. of Workers [In Cr]	27.66
(i)SC worker % as of total Workers	19.56
(ii)ST worker % as of total Workers	15.19
Total No. of Active Job Cards [In Cr]	6.37
Total No. of Active Workers [In Cr]	9.89
(i)SC worker % as of total Active Workers	20.85
(ii)ST worker % as of total Active Workers	16.67
II General Progress	FY 2015-2016
Total Households Worked[In Cr]	4.0674
Total Individuals Worked[In Cr]	5.9403
% of Men Worked	48.5
% of Women Worked	51.5
% of SC Worked	22.69
% of ST Worked	18.57
% of Disabled Persons Worked	0.65
Approved Labour Budget[In Cr]	239.112
Person days Generated so far[In Cr]	165.3433
% of Total LB	69.15
% as per Proportionate LB	77.2
SC person days % as of total person days	22.85
ST person days % as of total person days	17.56
Women Person days out of Total (%)	56.09
III Financial Progress	
Total Exp[In Cr]	35,101.97
Material(%)	23.35
Admin Exp(%)	5
Average Cost Per Day Per Person (In Rs.)	202.56
Wages[In Cr]	25,559.13
Liability (Wages) [In Cr]	3,409.93

Source: NIC, Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India.



It is obvious from the above table that in financial year 2015-16, 13.16 crore job card holders or 27.66 crore workers in India under MGNREGA programme in which SC and ST workers participation consists in 19.56% and 15.19% respectively. In concerning financial year, the performance of women is improved on an average corresponding previous year. In 2015-16, Women Person days generated 56.09% out of total Person days 165.3433 crore occurred in the year. In addition, total working individuals are 5.9403 crore having share of men, women, SC, ST, Disabled Persons are 48.5%,51.5%,22.69%,18.57%, and 0.65% consecutively.

**REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

Several empirical studies are conducted in India, regard to the role of MGNREGA in different field. Pattanaik (2007), which examining equity and efficiency aspect of NREGS observed that NREGS has been promoting gender equality in employment along with checking migration. The NREGS also contributing significantly to raise the household income of the beneficiaries. Institute of Applied Manpower Research, Delhi (2009), "All India Report on Evaluation of NREGA, A Survey of Twenty Districts". This study reveals that in many districts, affixing of photograph on job cards is not followed and in some places the beneficiary paid money for getting it. Job card was not designed to have sufficient space for all the entries in detail. Many households did not get the work within the stipulated 15 days time of demand for work, neither were they paid any unemployment allowance. On the utility of maximum number of days of works, only small fractions of households could utilize more than 35 days of work, remaining still lagging behind.

MGNREGA Scheme is that it has been playing a very important role providing employment to the most vulnerable sections of workers in the country. However, there are several problems which have emerged in course of its implementation process (see Ambasta, Shankar and Shah, 2008; Jha, Gaiha and Shankar, 2008). They point out that the quality of the asset was poor. Mathur (2007) thinks that a system of regular and continuous flow of authoritative information is essential. There is room for the government to take up concurrent evaluations, more effective monitoring, time-series studies, and focused reports on critical aspects like minimum wages, muster rolls. To improve implementation, the government needs to solve problems, modify policy directives, and issue operational guidelines for the district, block and village levels. The government must take the lead, be proactive, mobilize institutions and groups, and use the media effectively.

Dreze (2007) looks at the corruption in rural employment programs in Orissa and how this has continued in a NREGS as well. However, he believes that there is tremendous potential of NREGA in the survey areas. In most of the worksites, there is lack of facilities like shed, drinking water, etc. Thus, mix results are obtained from several studies regard to implementation of MGNREGA. It is worth mentioning that there is great lack of literature of women study in this scheme.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

Mainly the purpose of the study is to examine the participation of women work force in MGNREGA scheme in India and suggest measures for more participation. The specific objectives are:

1. To study of aggregate women work force working under MGNREGA scheme in India,
2. To examine the women work force in all states under MGNREGA scheme in India, and evaluation of women work force in MGNREGA scheme.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In the present study, secondary data and information were used. *Secondary* data and information were collected from the web site of Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India and from selected State Governments and also from various annual reports of MORD, Government of India. In addition, books, articles, etc. were also consulted for collecting information.

**WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN WORK UNDER MGNREGA**

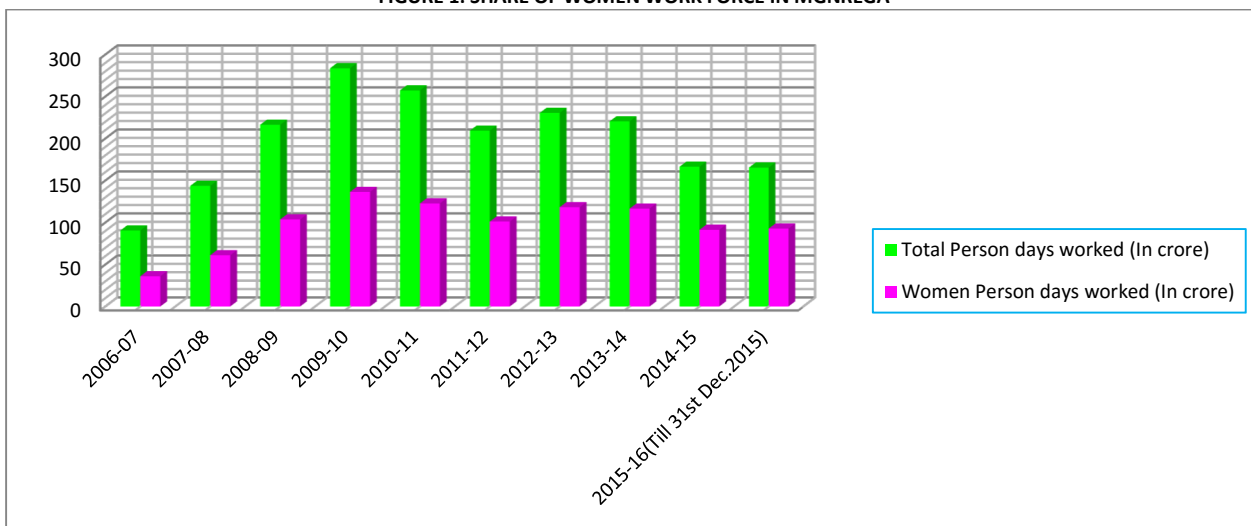
In MGNREGA, several guidelines and provisions are given to ensure that women have equal and easy access to work. Working conditions for women should be decent, even payment of wages and participation in decision-making process. Since the inception of this programme from February 2,2006 of financial year 2006-07 up to 2015-16 till 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015,96823 crore Person days have been generated for women. The trends on the participation of women in the MGNREGA scheme highlights in the following table:

**TABLE 2: PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE MGNREGA**

Year	Total Person days worked (In crore)	Women Person days worked (In crore)
2006-07	90.5	36
2007-08	143.59	61
2008-09	216.3	103.6
2009-10	283.6	136.4
2010-11	257.2	122.7
2011-12	209.3	101.1
2012-13	230.46	118.23
2013-14	220.37	116.53
2014-15	166.36	91.3
2015-16(Till 31 <sup>st</sup> Dec.2015)	165.3433	92.74

Source: NIC, Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India.

**FIGURE 1: SHARE OF WOMEN WORK FORCE IN MGNREGA**



It is clear due to analysis of table 2 and figure 1 that during the study period of 10 years from 2006-07 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015 of 2015-2016 total person days worked on an average 198.3023 crore and in the same period women participation in work remained average 92.74 crore person days which is more than 45% of entire work done. At an aggregated level, women’s participation in the scheme is higher than the mandatory 33 per cent; it was 54.86 per cent till 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015. Since the commencement of this scheme, it has been exerted that women participation in work should be more and more by that they should be economically strong and come into mainstream of the society.

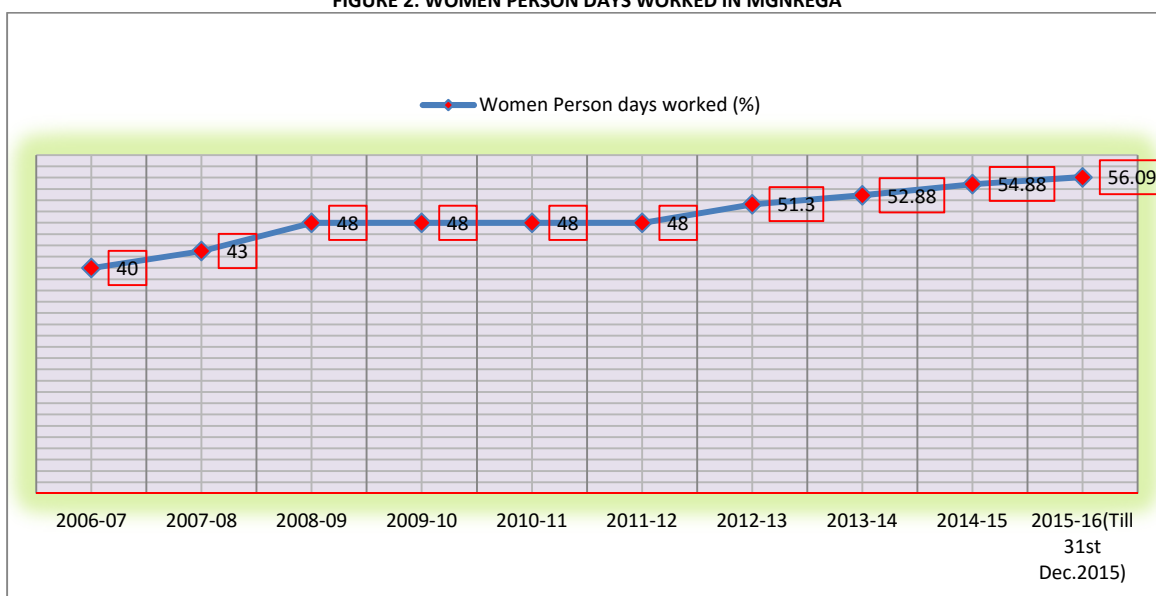
At an aggregated level, share of women in work in term of person days in total work percentage is given under in the table---which are as follows:

**TABLE 3: WOMEN WORK FORCE PERSON DAYS WORKED UNDER MGNREGA SCHEME IN INDIA**

Year	Women Person days worked (%)
2006-07	40
2007-08	43
2008-09	48
2009-10	48
2010-11	48
2011-12	48
2012-13	51.3
2013-14	52.88
2014-15	54.88
2015-16(Till 31 <sup>st</sup> Dec. 2015)	56.09

Source: NIC, Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India.

**FIGURE 2: WOMEN PERSON DAYS WORKED IN MGNREGA**



It is obvious from aforesaid table 3 and figure 2 that increasing rate of participation of women in Person days worked during the span from 2006-07 to 2015-16 till 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015. In the FY 2006-07, women participation in Person days worked was 40% which increase up to 56.09% in period of 9 years. Women’s participation in the scheme is higher than the mandatory 33 per cent since its inception.

With an increase rate of participation and equal wages for women, studies and field evidence suggest a positive impact of the scheme on the economic well-being of women and children. Access to economic resources has also had a positive impact on the social status of women, for example women have a greater say in the way the money is spent within households. A large percentage of women workers report spending their money to avoid hunger, repay small debts, paying for their child’s schooling, etc. Independent research notes that the way forward for the project of women’s empowerment is their larger inclusion in planning of work. Some of the states like Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Odisha depict lower than statutory participation of women which is a cause of concern.

**WOMEN WORK FORCE PARTICIPATION IN INDIAN STATES UNDER MGNREGA**

How do we know that higher women’s participation is reflective of changing power relations? One quick preliminary check would be to cross – validate the sex ratios in the states with high women’s participation rates. According to Census 2011, the top five states with healthy sex ratios are Kerala (1,084 per 1,000 males), Puducherry (1,038 per 1,000 males), Tamil Nadu (995 per 1,000 males), Andhra Pradesh (992 females per 1,000 males) and Chhattisgarh (991 females per 1,000 males). It is seen that Goa, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry compare well in terms of their sex ratios (Census 2011) and participation of women. At the lower level, the situation is more complex with some of the states with low women’s participation rates concurrently being states with lower women’s literacy rates like Uttar Pradesh and skewed sex ratio’s like in Haryana. These states show a coherent picture of the challenges that women face including participating in MGNREGA works.

It has been come in to observation that high women’s participation rates in MGNREGS, women’s literacy rates and sex ratios are concurrent in the high performing states, while this may not be so equivocal and linear in other states. A detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this paper, yet clearly this brief attempt implies two things: one that some states may show a higher coherence on several gender empowerments related parameters and high women’s participation in MGNREGA is certainly one of the important parameters in this assessment. In other states the complexities of negotiation and confrontation for gender empowerment may show differential effects. At a disaggregated state level, women’s participation varies across states with those like Kerala, Goa and Tamil Nadu showing higher women’s participation. Andhra Pradesh and Himachal also show high participation. States like Uttar Pradesh show very low women’s participation as do the North Eastern states and Jammu and Kashmir.

In state-wise study of women’s participation in MGNREGA, facts are come out that in entire states (excepting Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu, and Chandigarh) during the financial year 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 (till 05/05/2015) that women average Person days work in total Person days work remained 44.84%, 46% and 58.56% respectively.

TABLE 4: STATE DISAGGREGATED WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION UNDER MGNREGA SCHEME IN INDIA

S. No.	State	% age of Women Person days		
		2012-13	2013-14	2014-15 (till 05/05/2015)
1	Andhra Pradesh	58.34	58.68	58.72
2	Arunachal Pradesh	30.27	30.35	30.21
3	Assam	26.01	24.75	28.19
4	Bihar	30.63	34.97	37.17
5	Chhattisgarh	46.93	48.53	49.87
6	Gujarat	42.86	43.96	43.24
7	Haryana	39.86	41.71	41.66
8	Himachal Pradesh	60.69	62.52	61.04
9	Jammu And Kashmir	19.88	23.15	25.38
10	Jharkhand	32.71	31.89	32.06
11	Karnataka	46.25	46.59	46.86
12	Kerala	92.99	93.37	92.17
13	Madhya Pradesh	42.42	42.65	43.22
14	Maharashtra	44.55	43.69	43.37
15	Manipur	34.01	35.25	38.27
16	Meghalaya	41.07	41.62	42.57
17	Mizoram	26.15	30.20	40.27
18	Nagaland	26.01	28.93	31.28
19	Odisha	35.95	33.57	33.79
20	Punjab	46.36	52.74	57.43
21	Rajasthan	68.95	67.76	68.26
22	Sikkim	43.71	44.85	48.18
23	Tamil Nadu	74.15	83.94	85.42
24	Telangana	-	-	61.07
25	Tripura	41.08	47.11	49.36
26	Uttar Pradesh	19.70	22.17	24.75
27	Uttarakhand	46.93	44.88	50.56
28	West Bengal	33.71	35.55	41.37
29	Andaman And Nicobar	45.11	47.18	50.44
30	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	-	-	-
31	Daman & Diu	-	-	-
32	Goa	79.13	75.30	74.88
33	Lakshadweep	29.55	22.50	36.59
34	Puducherry	84.05	85.65	86.29
35	Chandigarh	-	-	-
	Total	51.30	52.80	54.86

Source: United Nations Development Programme: MGNREGA Sameeksha II p.86, New Delhi (India).

FIGURE 3 (A): WOMEN PERSON DAYS WORKED IN STATES IN MGNREGA SCHEME

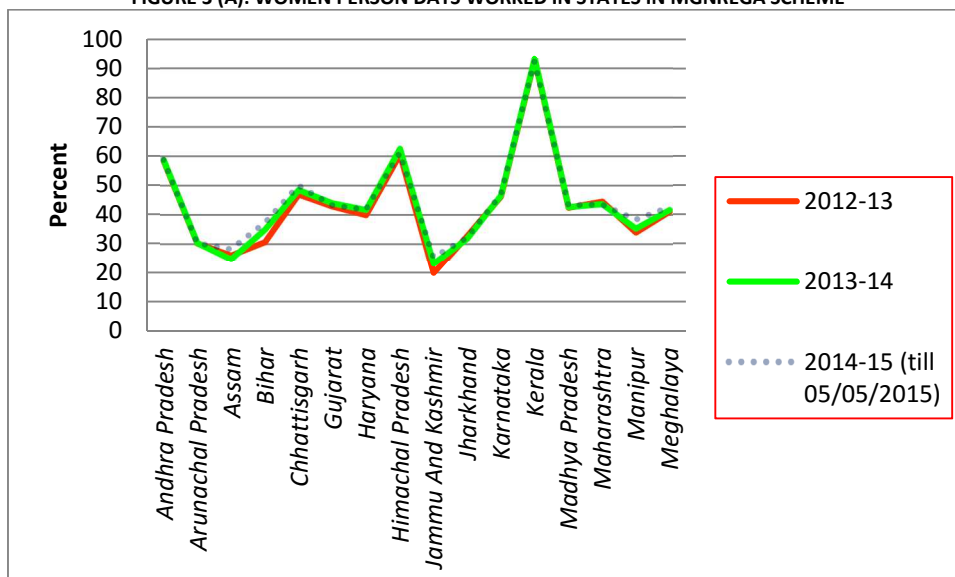


FIGURE 3 (B): WOMEN WORK FORCE PERSON DAYS WORKED IN STATES IN MGNREGA SCHEME

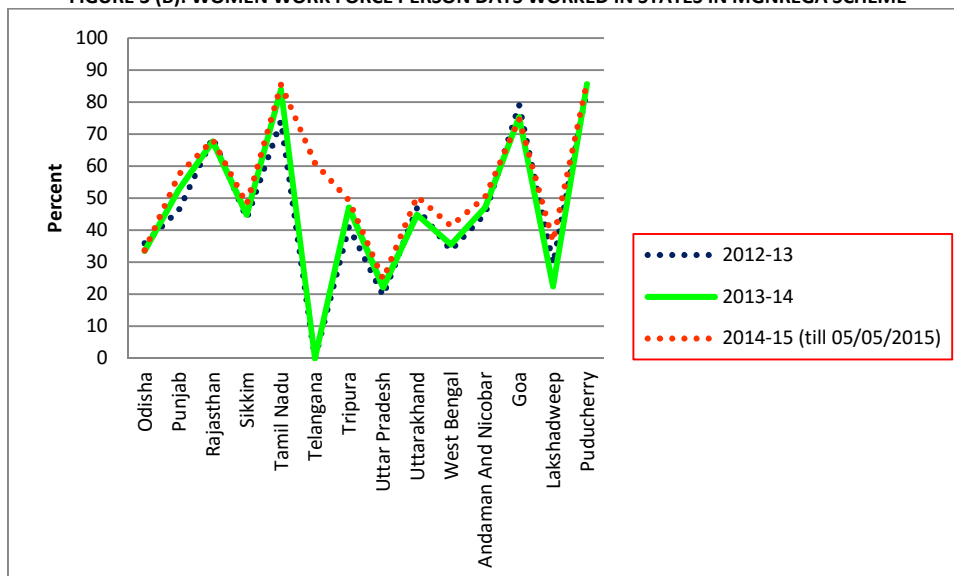


Table 4, figure 3(A) and 3(B) depicts women's participation in MGNREGA work programme in various states of India in the financial year 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15. Kerala is a state in which highest work person days occurred in study period as 92.99 person days, 93.37 person days, and 92.17 person days respectively and Uttar Pradesh having lowest person days work by women which are 19.70 person days, 22.17 person days, and 24.75 person days respectively. In nine states, women participation is less than mandatory requirements. These are poor states with greater casual labour potential, like Uttar Pradesh, Jammu And Kashmir, Nagaland, Mizoram, Lakshadweep, Assam, Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh, and Bihar. This is contradictory to the assumption that poverty forces women to take up casual jobs. It is believed that states with labour-intensive farming like paddy cultivation pull more women into workforce. The MGNREGA data shows the opposite in paddy-intensive Odisha and West Bengal. It is clear that in total out of 35 states as Kerala, Puducherry, Goa, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh, women's participation is 70% and above and data of three states are not available.

It revealed from some empirical studies that women take up this opportunity as economic freedom. More than wage parity the Act focuses on water conservation. It allows members belonging to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities to take up work in their own fields and get paid for that. Women participating in the programme are reviving their degraded farms or making provision for water through other works. In Tamil Nadu this trend is pronounced as several local studies have pointed out. In the drought-hit Bundelkhand districts of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, many households have adopted this strategy. In Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, More than 90 per cent of woman workers are farm labourers or cultivators. 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 levelling and digging a pond in their farms, are paid for. In drought-prone districts, like Warangal in Andhra Pradesh and Ahmednagar in Maharashtra, community members say this has attracted women to the programme. It is find some studies that In Kerala, management of work sites and other logistics for implementation is placed in the hands of women self-help groups under the poverty eradication mission Kudumbashree. So, most members of self-help groups have joined the MGNREGA programme. Increasing women's participation in MGNREGA can be used for effective delivery of its core objective: local ecological revival. It is now mandatory to have 50 per cent woman panchayat representatives who have nodal roles in the programme's implementation, including preparing the village development plan. So if the supervisory roles in panchayats and the dominant presence as workers converge, it will be a win-win situation for the programme as well as villages.

## CONCLUSION

It is concluded that, there is no single route to better inclusion of women work force in MGNREGA; different states have emphasised different dimensions of capacity and commitment. Clearly, a state with high capacity – in terms of its economic, organisational and human resources, as well as its ability to reach out to needy and potential beneficiaries – is better positioned for inclusion of women work force than a state with low capacity. The same applies to its commitment, in terms of initiative, preparation, mobilisation, sanctions, and continuity of effort. Capacity and commitment are interlinked and, by playing to its strengths, a state may be able to overcome weaknesses in other areas.

Therefore, state-specific capacity and commitment and stakeholder dynamics within states govern how much work is available, rather than the demand for it from rural households. The high women employment outcomes obtained from the states where high women sex ratio as Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, may suggest that a technocratic model is sufficient. But the poor employment outcomes are demonstrated by nine states in which women participation is less than mandatory requirements, are Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Mizoram, Lakshadweep, Assam, Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh, and Bihar. These are poor states having greater casual labour potential. These states have used their capacity to provide more autonomy to bureaucrats, which has led to better employment outcomes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Women employment outcomes are lower in states with higher poverty levels. These states have used their capacity to provide more autonomy to bureaucrats, which has led to better employment outcomes.
2. There should be continuous efforts towards creating adequate awareness on different provisions of MGNREGS amongst the women.
3. Emerging awareness is necessary not only to motivate the women to work under the scheme but also to encourage them to participate in its planning and implementation process.
4. Utilization of resources under the scheme requires bringing in transparency and accountability. Provision for social audit at the panchayat level on a regular basis can play a significant role in this regard.
5. There should be the ability and willingness of local Govt. and Panchayats to plan works and run the programmes effectively.
6. A proper monitoring mechanism should be developed that can have assured correct procedure in job card.

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