

# TEMPORAL ANALYSIS OF WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN MGNREGS: A STUDY OF WEST BENGAL

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## ABSTRACT

*One of the famous centrally sponsored Indian livelihood generating scheme is MGNREGS, which is different from other contemporary schemes in both sense and spirit. While a large number of studies are done on the employment generating aspects of MGNREGS, very few have looked into the women participation on a temporal basis. This is important to understand the nature of consistency of women participation in the scheme on the basis of a selected state. In spite of being centrally designed, the implementation is highly regional especially in the case of gender. These variations owe its existence from variations in society, class, caste and political economy of the region. Physiography, too, plays a significant role in determining gendered participation. This paper relates the data obtained from secondary sources in West Bengal and tries to find out the gendered manifestations of MGNREGS participation.*

**Keywords:** Rural employment, Gendered Participation, Physiography, Temporal analysis

## Introduction:

MGNREGS is one of the famous centrally sponsored Indian livelihood generating scheme, which is different from other contemporary schemes in both sense and spirit. While a large number of studies are done on the employment generating aspects of MGNREGS, very few have looked into the women participation on an empirical basis. Literature suggests that mainstreaming women labourforce through M.G.NREGS requires in depth understanding of their backgrounds. Providing employment only is not a great way for improving women participation. The socially embedded normative that controls gendered participation and improvement of livelihoods are much more significant to understand the trend of women participation in such safety nets. These normative contour the dimensions of available public spaces for women which is a key determining factor for their work participation.

This paper makes an attempt to probe into the reasons for which women hailing from different socio-economic backgrounds are participating in the scheme together with an understanding of the geographical factors. The first section of the paper locates the women at work in general in reference with existing literature together with female M.G.NREGS workers. Second section presents an analysis of the women M.G.NREGS workers and their different aspects of the MGNREGS employment. The last section of the paper provides the discussion and critical issues of gendered participation. This paper is based on the data and information obtained from the website of the Ministry of Rural Development and official website of MGNREGS, [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in).

## Locating Women at Work

At the beginning of the 1970's Easter Boserup pointed out that development theory had so far underestimated the role of women in production. The obstacles described are inequality in distribution of land and income, patronage and corruption. Later on, in mid 80's, Maxine Molyneux has identified the influence of feminist research on development strategies pointing the differentiation of women's interests and gender interests. Further, she classified the gender interests as practical<sup>1</sup> and strategic interest<sup>2</sup> emerges as a result of hierarchical gender relationships. In 1993, Caroline Moser clearly differentiated between gender planning, and gender-conscious planning with a detailed view of women's problems. She has pointed out the incidence of the triple burden of work on women due to their productive, reproductive and community-related activities. The concern with gender relations in development has stimulated us to refine our perspective about efficient development. The modern perspectives of development realizes the

<sup>1</sup>'Practical gender interests are determined inductively, are a direct reaction to problems and interests which are perceived as being immediate, and based on social conventions such as the gender-specific division of labour and the roles it allocates to women'.

<sup>2</sup> 'Strategic gender interests are developed deductively from an analysis of the suppression of women and aim at overcoming the "gender hierarchy"'

need of creation of opportunities to earn sustainable livelihoods together with the creation of a conducive environment for men and women. An effective governance is required for equal voices in decision-making and policy implementation. M.G.NREGA's potential in empowering women through employment has been depicted by other research as well (Drèze and Oldiges, 2009, Drèze and Oldiges, 2007, ISST, 2006).The propositions of this act shows wide connection with the WID approach rather than GAD approach for livelihood development of rural women. The Act provides the preference should be given to women beneficiaries in the ratio of one-third of the total. Some of the provisions of the act have tried to make the scheme women-friendly like provision of crèche facilities in the worksites, provisions for rest and drinking water and opportunity to work within the village. The propositions of the government regarding probable women MGNREGS workers are a) rural women workers are mostly mother workers and they have to play their child caring role even when in the worksites b) Number of women participation signifies benefits of women as M.G.NREGS worker c) no gendered division of labour is needed within M.G.NREGS framework. The critical examination of these propositions reveals some loopholes in the act which puts major obstacle to women participation in M.G.NREGS.

#### Analysis of data:

The official website of MGNREGS provides following indicators relating to women employment .these are (a) number of women workers registered for MGNREGS job (b) number of active women workers (c) number of joint account of women (d) number of total account of women (e) number of women beneficiary with account (active and total) (f) number of persondays generated by women workers

**Table: (i) Composite Index Based on District Wise Registration of Women to Total (2013-2018)**

District	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	Composite index
24 parganas (north)	17	17	18	18	21	91
24 parganas( south)	14	15	16	16	18	79
Bankura	9	8	9	9	11	46
Birbhum	13	14	15	15	17	74
Coochbehar	4	3	3	3	4	17
Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (dghc)	3	2	2	2	2	11
DinajpurDakshin	2	9	10	10	12	43
Dinajpur Uttar	8	7	8	8	10	41
Hooghly	16	16	17	17	19	85
Howrah	18	18	19	19	22	96
Jalpaiguri	5	4	6	6	7	28
Maldah	11	11	12	12	14	60
Murshidabad	19	19	20	20	23	101
Nadia	10	10	11	11	13	55
PaschimBardhaman	15	13	13	14	16	71
PaschimMedinipur	12	12	14	13	20	71
PurbaMedinipur	7	6	7	7	9	36
Purulia	6	5	5	5	6	27
SiliguriMahakumaParisad	1	1	1	1	1	5
Alipurduar	Na	Na	4	4	5	13
Jhargram	Na	Na	Na	Na	8	8
Kalimpong	Na	Na	Na	Na	3	3
PurbaBardhaman	Na	Na	Na	Na	15	15

Source:www.nrega.nic.in dated 24<sup>th</sup> April,2018

\*Best performance is based on the share of registration of women to total consistently last five years. So, the rank of Alipurduar, Jhargram, Kalimpong and PurbaBardhaman is ignored at final stage.

\*\*lowest rank denotes best performance.

Registration in MGNREGS is significant to achieve the goal of working under it. The official data in last five years shows consistently lesser registration of women than their male counterparts, no district of West Bengal in last five years have shown women registration more than 50%. The northern blocks are exhibiting a good trend of registration. SiliguriMahakumaParishad has ranked first in terms of women registration to MGNREGS in last five years followed by Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council and Coochbehar. This table reveals some interesting observations:

(a) Districts located in the physically rugged topography is showing more registration trend of women than the plain land districts. This incident may be explained as a result of limited work opportunity and labour intensive nature of other available work due to hostile topography.

(b) Districts having significant share of tribal population is exhibiting good trend of women registration. This may be a result of socio-cultural dynamics, which allows women to work in the outer space as a part of their dominant culture.

**Table: (ii) District Wise Percentage Share of Active Women MGNREGS Worker to Total Worker (2013-2018)**

District	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
24 Parganas (North)	45.38	45.38	45.86	45.38	45.86
24 Parganas South	42.67	42.67	42.73	42.67	42.73
Bankura	43.26	43.26	43.31	43.26	43.31
Birbhum	42.19	42.19	42.25	42.19	42.25
Coochbehar	58.20	58.20	58.09	58.20	58.09
Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (Dghc)	48.49	48.49	48.51	48.49	48.12
DinajpurDakshin	47.52	47.52	47.46	47.52	47.46
Dinajpur Uttar	44.74	44.74	44.75	44.74	44.75
Hooghly	40.43	40.43	40.44	40.43	40.44
Howrah	38.48	38.48	38.56	38.48	38.56
Jalpaiguri	47.80	47.80	46.55	46.56	46.55
Maldah	42.96	42.96	43.03	42.96	43.03
Murshidabad	35.05	35.05	35.15	35.05	35.15
Nadia	47.78	47.78	47.78	47.78	47.78
PaschimBardhaman	42.37	42.37	42.40	42.37	45.18
PaschimMedinipur	41.58	41.58	41.58	41.58	40.80
PurbaMedinipur	50.31	50.31	50.26	50.31	50.26
Purulia	44.82	44.82	44.82	44.82	44.82
SiliguriMahakumaParisad	56.54	56.54	56.55	56.54	56.55
Alipurduar	N.A	N.A	49.41	49.42	49.41
Kalimpong	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	49.22
Jhargram	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	44.02
PurbaBardhaman	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	42.09
Total	44.45	44.45	44.49	44.45	44.49

Source:www.nrega.nic.in dated 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2018

**Table: (iii) Composite Index Based on District Wise Number of Active Women Worker to Total (2013-2018)**

District	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	Composite Rank
24 Parganas (North)	8	8	9	9	10	44
24 Parganas South	13	14	14	14	17	72
Bankura	11	11	12	12	15	61
Birbhum	15	15	16	16	18	80
Coochbehar	1	1	1	1	1	5
Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (Dghc)	4	4	5	5	6	24
DinajpurDakshin	7	7	7	8	8	37
Dinajpur Uttar	10	10	11	11	13	55
Hooghly	17	17	18	18	21	91
Howrah	18	18	19	19	22	96
Jalpaiguri	5	5	8	7	9	34
Maldah	12	12	13	13	16	66
Murshidabad	19	19	20	20	23	101
Nadia	6	6	6	6	7	31
PaschimBardhaman	14	13	15	15	11	68
PaschimMedinipur	16	16	17	17	20	86
PurbaMedinipur	3	3	3	3	20	32
Purulia	9	9	10	10	12	50
SiliguriMahakumaParisad	2	2	2	2	2	10

Source:www.nrega.nic.indated 24<sup>th</sup>April,2018

\*Best performance is based on the share of registration of women to total consistently last five years. So, the rank of Alipurduar, Jhargram, Kalimpong and PurbaBardhaman is ignored at final stage.

\*\*lowest rank denotes best performance.

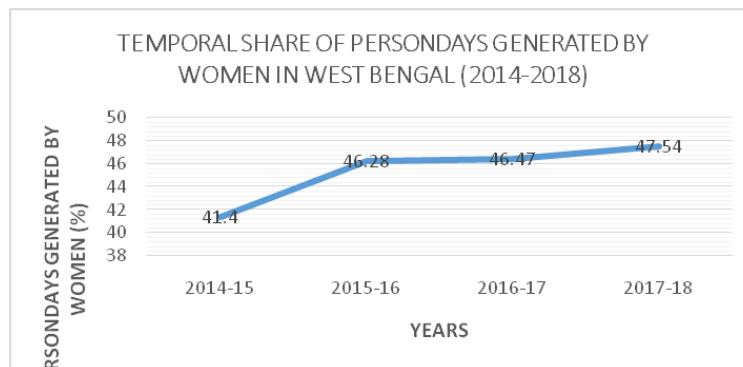
Table (iv) depicts the compliance of the situation assumed in table (i). Coochbehar ranks first in terms of the number of active women worker worked in MGNREGS followed by SiliguriMahakumaParishad and Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council. This table supports the idea of socio-cultural dynamics which is true in the case of registration also. One noticeable factor of active MGNREGS workers is, the share of women population in every five year has exceeded 50% in at least one of the district of West Bengal, which is, no doubt, an optimistic picture of women participation in MGNREGS.

**Table :(iv) Contribution of Women Persondays to Total PersondaysGenerated in 2014-2018**

District	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
SiliguriMahakumaParisad	60.80	60.20	57.26	61.96
Coochbehar	58.56	70.17	72.23	61.26
PurbaMedinipur	53.88	56.03	53.76	55.56
Nadia	50.78	52.56	53.10	52.12
Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (Dghc)	49.86	49.47	49.55	50.01
Jalpaiguri	43.97	42.97	47.56	48.32
Purulia	41.45	42.85	45.34	45.35
Hooghly	40.77	40.48	41.59	42.94
PaschimBardhaman	39.52	43.21	43.85	51.17
PaschimMedinipur	38.77	40.40	41.64	41.90
Bankura	35.99	43.96	46.72	47.80

24 Parganas (North)	34.78	44.07	46.04	56.85
24 Parganas South	34.11	42.41	43.70	44.42
Howrah	33.36	36.27	39.63	43.23
Maldah	31.51	40.55	40.95	44.34
Birbhum	30.60	45.27	43.6	51.24
Dinajpur Uttar	29.67	43.00	46.48	47.64
Murshidabad	29.28	30.44	33.74	36.29
DinajpurDakshin	27.54	41.10	53.57	61.18
Alipurduar	.....	.....	52.51	53.22
Total	41.40	46.28	46.47	47.54

Source:www.nrega.nic.indated 24<sup>th</sup>April,2018



Source:www.nrega.nic.indated 24<sup>th</sup>April,2018

Table (iv) depicts the temporal share of women generated persondays under MGNREGS in last four financial years. The northern states like Siliguri, Coochbehar, Darjeelingetcare having consistent good share of women persondays to total. Suburban districts like Howrah, 24<sup>th</sup>Paraganas north and south are showing consistent low share of the same. Birbhum and DinajpurDakshin is showing gradual progress for the said indicator. West Bengal, as a total, is showing gradual progress regarding women participation over time. The trend is positive in general. The table generates the following observations:

1. Geographicallydistricts having rugged terrain is showing good participation of women in MGNREGS compared to plain-land districts in West Bengal.
2. Districts are showing positive participation of women over years in general.
3. The positive trend is followed by the state in general.

### Conclusion:

The following analysis suggests that the Women participation in MGNREGS is subjected to social normative as well as the physiography of the region concerned. In West Bengal, temporal progress of the coverall scheme is seen together with the women participation. This study suggests to carry out micro-level survey to understand the issues relevant with women participation in deeper level.

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