



RESEARCH ARTICLE

# An Analysis of Direct Changes by MGNREGS on the livelihoods of Dalit Women Beneficiaries in Northern Districts of Tamil Nadu

T. Raj Pravin<sup>1\*</sup> and V. Thirumal Kanan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Horticultural Research Station , Pechiparai- 629 101

<sup>2</sup> Department of Agricultural Extension, Faculty of Agriculture, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar – 608 002, Tamil Nadu, India

## ABSTRACT

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is one of the largest social security scheme implemented in the world to ensure food and livelihood security to the marginalized sections of our country. The main objective of this scheme is to provide employment for a minimum of 100 days in a year to every family member willing to do unskilled manual labor in rural areas. The direct changes brought out by MGNREGS on the livelihoods of dalit women beneficiaries was found to be medium in this study. With regard to component-wise direct changes, medium level on total number of man days in a year, two persons being employed in a family, more than seven hours of daily working hours, daily wage rate of Rs. 200-Rs.300, with a medium level of migration after their participation in MGNREGA was reported in this study. Our policy planners at the national and state level, district administrators at the regional level and extension professionals at all levels need to be involved in strengthening this welfare scheme to achieve it's desired objectives.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is one of the largest social welfare scheme implemented in the world to provide food and livelihood security to the marginalized sections of our society in our nation. The main objective of this scheme is to provide employment for a minimum of 100 days in a year to every family willing to do unskilled manual labor in rural areas. At present, this scheme gives much focus to natural resource management works and 65 percent of the total expenditure is allotted for other related works. Out of the total expenditure of Rs. 1670.38 crores for the year 2020–21 in Tamil Nadu, Rs. 1334.69 crores has been spent towards natural and water resource management works, which is 79.9 percent of the total expenditure. In Tamil Nadu for the year 2020-21, the total beneficiaries of this scheme are 130.15 lakhs out of which 74.05 lakhs are active beneficiaries. About 85 percent of them are women and 30 percent belong to SC/ST communities. About 45,145 differently able persons are also employed in this scheme. So keeping this in view, a study is undertaken to assess the direct changes by MGNREGS

on the livelihoods of dalit women beneficiaries in the most backward northern districts of Tamil Nadu.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Tamil Nadu has a very relative small population falling under the multidimensional poverty index (Rajv Kumar,2021). But, the northern districts in Tamil Nadu still remain mostly as backward districts (Chengalpattu, Cuddalore, Dharmapuri, Kallakurichi, Kanchipuram, Krishnagiri, Ranipet, Salem, Tirupathur, Tiruvallur, Tiruvannamalai, Vellore, and Villupuram) on many socio-economic indicators as identified by the State Planning Commission and Niti Aayog (2021). In this study, thirteen blocks, namely Madurantakam, Mangalur, Harur, Kallakurichi, Uthiramerur, Uthangarai, Arakonam, Thalaivasal, Madhanur, Minjur, Chengam, Gudiyatham, and Kandamangalam were purposefully selected from all the thirteen northern districts of northern Tamil Nadu as they have a higher number dalit women beneficiaries of MGNREGS. Proportionate random sampling method was used to select the 300

dalit women beneficiaries in this study. The data was collected using a well-structured interview schedule. Necessary efforts were made to cross-check the data collected from the respondents in this study. The percentage analysis, cumulative frequency, and paired t - test was used as statistical tools. The selected districts, identified blocks, and village panchayats are presented in Table 1.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *Impact of MGNREGS in terms of overall direct change on their livelihoods*

The overall direct changes was measured by pooling the component wise changes in terms of employment generation, total amount of work days provided in a year, number of persons employed in

**Table 1: Details of the study area**

S.No	Districts	Identified Blocks	Selected Village Panchayats
1	Chengalpattu	Madurantakam	Mamandur
2	Cuddalore	Mangalur	Sirupakkam
3	Dharmapuri	Harur	Veerappanaickampatty
4	Kallakurichi	Kallakurichi	Ka. Alambalam
5	Kanchipuram	Uthiramerur	Arumbuliyur
6	Krishnagiri	Uthangarai	Mittapalli
7	Ranipet	Arakonam	Sembedu
8	Salem	Thalaivasal	Thalaivasal
9	Tirupathur	Madhanur	Vadacheri
10	Tiruvallur	Minjur	Neithavoyal
11	Tiruvannamalai	Chengam	Paramanandal
12	Vellore	Gudiyatham	Ramalai
13	Villupuram	Kandamangalam	Gengarampalayam

MGNREGS and their daily wage rate. The dalit women beneficiaries in this study were categorized under 'less direct changes', 'medium direct changes' and 'more direct changes' categories based on the impact of MGNREGS on their livelihoods. The component wise direct changes were computed in terms of employment generation, reduction of migration as experienced by the dalit women beneficiaries of MGNREGS in northern districts of Tamil Nadu. The distribution of MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries are given below

It could observed from table 2 that, majority (54.00 per cent) of the dalit women MGNREGS beneficiaries

experienced medium direct changes followed by less (27.00 per cent) and more (19.00 per cent) direct changes on their livelihoods in this study. Though MGNREGS has been in operation in the study area for the many years, the absence of promised 100 days employment, failure in providing unemployment assistancem on frequent delays in wage disbursals are few of the practical difficulties in the implementation of this welfare scheme. This has made majority of the beneficiaries achieve or get medium direct changes in their livelihoods as a result of the implementation of this welfare programme. On the other hand, less direct

**Table 2: Distribution of the MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries according to overall direct changes in their livelihoods**

		(n=300)	
S.No	Direct Changes on their livelihoods	MGNREGS beneficiaries	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Less direct changes	81	27.00
2.	Medium direct changes	162	54.00
3.	More direct changes	57	19.00
	Total	300	100



changes (27.00 per cent) and more direct changes (19 per cent) reported in this study shows that the benefits availed differed on the basis of their participation in this scheme and also on the basis of their land ownership rights, their income from other sources and so on. Therefore, mostly working as farm laborers has also assisted them in deriving increased monetary benefits as their bargaining capacity in rural wage markets has increased over a period of time due to the implementation of this welfare scheme. So a relative large majority could achieve medium level of direct changes in their livelihoods by being beneficiaries of this welfare scheme.

### **Component wise direct changes perceived by the MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries**

Component wise direct changes as perceived by MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries was studied in terms of the employment generation and migration in this study. The results obtained is presented in [Table 3]

#### **Employment generation**

The major direct change on employment generation was studied by considering the various sub components viz., total number of man days in an year, number of employed persons in a family and daily working hours with wages.

#### **Total number of man days in year**

Based on the total number of man days available in an year, the beneficiaries were grouped into low, medium and high categories in table 3

It could revealed from table 3 that, before their participation in MGNREGS, majority (68.00 per cent) of the dalit women MGNREGS beneficiaries had low total number of man days of employment

in an year followed by medium (20.67 per cent) and low (11.33 per cent) level categories. But, after their participation in MGNREGS, majority (65.00 per cent) of the MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries in this study, got medium total number of man days labour employment followed by low (19.67 per cent) and high (15.33 per cent) number of man days employment in a year. This findings is in line with Dhulgand and Kadam (2019) who also reported that after their participation of MGNREGS majority of the MGNREGA beneficiaries had got medium level of employment. This increase in total number of man days in a year might be due to more works assigned towards natural management in the study area.

In order to find out the significant of difference on the total number of man days in a year before and after their participation of MGNREGS, the data was subjected to paired t- test and the results obtained were furnished in table 4.

The mean score of total number of man days in a year was 76.3633 with a standard deviation 22.8895 and the calculated 't' value (57.784) from table 4 was found to be significant at 1 per cent level of probability indicating that there existed a significant difference in total number of man days employed in a year of MGNREGS among dalit women beneficiaries before and after their participation in MGNREGS scheme. It could therefore, be concluded that the MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries differed significantly in their total number of man days employed in a year after their participation in MGNREGS scheme. It means that MGNREGS scheme is helpful to the dalit women beneficiaries for increasing their total number of man days employment in a year enhancing their livelihood security. This findings derives support from Godse et

**Table 3: Comparative distribution of MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries in accordance with total number of man days employed in a year before and after their participation in MGNREGS**

(n=300)

S.No	Total number of man days in an year	Before their participation in MGNREGS		After their participation in MGNREGS	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Low	204	68.00	59	19.67
2.	Medium	62	20.67	195	65.00
3.	High	34	11.33	46	15.33
	Total	300	100	300	100
		Mean : 102.17		Mean : 178.53	
		SD : 18.01		SD : 21.33	



**Table 4: Significance of difference in the total number of man days in a year of MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries before and after their participation in MGNREGS**

(n=300)

Total Number of man days in a year	Paired Sampled Test							
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error mean	Paired Differences		't' Value	df	'P' Value
				95% Confidence interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Before-After	-76.363	22.889	1.321	-78.964	-73.762	-57.784	299	.000**
**Significant at 1 per cent level								

al., (2014), Dhulgand and Kadam (2019) who also reported that there existed a significant difference in their employment generation after their participation in MGNREGS.

#### **Number of employed persons a family**

The MGNREGS women dalit beneficiaries were categorized into three groups based on number of persons employed in their respective family as one person, two person, three and more persons as depicted in table- 5

It could be observed from table 5 that, before their participation in MGNREGS, majority (76.00 per cent) of MGNREGS dalit women beneficiary family had one person employed followed by two persons (15.67 per cent) and three and more persons (8.33 per cent) employed in a family. But, after their participation in MGNREGS, majority (80.67 per cent) of the dalit women beneficiaries families had two employed persons in their family followed by three and more persons (12.00 per cent) and one person (7.33 per cent) employed in their family. As of now, they were no longer indebted or remained outside the clutches of

landlords for getting farm work or wages. This social change though remains to be at medium level as guaranteed 100 days of MGNREGS work is not given to the MGNREGS beneficiaries and still they need to depend on the land owning class. However, their wage bargaining capacity in rural markets has increased considerably through their participation in MGNREGS.

The mean score of number of persons employed was .9167 with a standard deviation .5693 and the calculated 't' value (27.887) of table 6 was found to be significant at 1 per cent of significance indicating that there existed a significant difference in terms of employed persons before and after MGNREGS implementation.

#### **Daily working hours in MGNREGS**

The information regarding daily working hours of MGNREGS works was categorized into three groups <5 hours, 5-7 hours and >7 hours. The results are presented in table 7

It was found from table 7 that, before their participation in MGNREGS, majority (58.67 per cent)

**Table 5: Comparative distribution of MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries according to number of employed persons in their family before and after their participation in MGNREGS**

(n=300)

S.No	Employed persons in the family	Before their participation in MGNREGS		After their participation in MGNREGS	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	One person	228	76.00	22	7.33
2.	Two persons	47	15.67	242	80.67
3.	Three and more persons	25	8.33	36	12.00
	Total	300	100	300	100
		Mean: 1.38		Mean : 2.30	
		SD : .55		SD : .51	

**Table 6: Significance of difference in the number of persons employed in MGNREGS among dalit women beneficiary family before and after their participation in MGNREGS**  
(n=300)

No of Person Employed	Paired Sampled Test						t	df	‘P’ Value
	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard Error mean	Paired Differences					
				95% Confidence interval of the Difference					
				Lower	Upper				
Before- After	-.9167	.5693	.03287	-.98135	-.85198	-27.887	299	.000**	

\*\*Significant at 1 per cent level

**Table 7 : Comparative distribution of MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries according to their daily working hours before and after their participation in MGNREGS**  
(n=300)

S.No	Working hours	Before their participation in MGNREGS		After their participation in MGNREGS	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	<5 hours	55	18.33	21	7.00
2.	5-7 hours	176	58.67	34	11.33
3.	>7 hours	69	23.00	245	81.67
	Total	300	100	300	100
		Mean : 6.72		Mean : 8.18	
		SD : .94		SD : .72	

of the MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries were daily working for 5-7 hours followed by more than 7 hours (23.00 per cent) and less than 5 hours (18.33 per cent) in this study. But after their participation in the MGNREGS, majority (81.67 per cent) of the dalit women MGNREGS beneficiaries were doing more than 7 hours of daily labour followed by 5-7 working hours (11.33 per cent) and less than 5 hours (7.00 per cent). This findings derives support from Archana (2016) who also reported that after their participation in MGNREGS, majority of MGNREGS beneficiaries were getting more than 7 daily working hours. It was clearly exhibited from the results that mean daily working hours before the implementation of MGNREGS was 6.72 hours and after the implementation of MGNREGS in the study area, the mean daily working hours has increased to 8.18 hours. From these results it could inferred that, there was significant increase in mean daily working hours of MGNREGS women dalit beneficiaries in the study area.

The mean score of daily working hours was 1.4600 with a standard deviation of .8107 and the calculated 't' value 31.192 in table 8 was found to be significant

at 1 per cent level of significance indicating that there existed a significant difference in daily working hours of MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries before and after their participation in MGNREGS scheme.

#### **Daily wage rates in MGNREGS**

The information pertaining to wage rates for MGNREGS works was categorized into three groups up to Rs.200, Rs.200-Rs.300 and > Rs.300. Information on daily wage rates are presented in Table- 9

It could revealed from the table 9 that, before their participation in the MGNREGS scheme majority (70.67 per cent) of MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries were getting daily wage rate upto Rs.200/- followed by 20.00 per cent of them getting Rs. 200 – Rs.300 and a meager (9.33 per cent) getting more than Rs.300/- daily wage rate. But after their participation in the MGNREGS scheme, majority (79.33 per cent) of the MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries were getting daily wage rate of Rs.200-Rs.300 followed by 14.00 per cent getting more than Rs.300/- and only a meager (6.67 per cent) of the dalit women beneficiaries are getting a daily wage rate upto Rs.200/-. The MGNREGS wages



**Table 8: Significance of difference in the daily working hours of MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries before and after their participation in MGNREGS**

(n=300)

Paired Sampled Test								
Daily working hours	Paired Differences					t	df	'P' Value
	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard Error mean	95% Confidence interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Before-After	-1.4600	.8107	.04681	-1.55211	-1.36789	-31.192	299	.000**
**Significant at 1 per cent level								

\*\*Significant at 1 per cent level

**Table 9: Daily wage rates of MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries before and after the implementation of MGNREGS in the study area**

(n=300)

S.No	Daily wage rates	Before their participation in MGNREGS		After their participation in MGNREGS	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Up to Rs.200	212	70.67	20	6.67
2.	Rs.200-Rs.300	60	20.00	238	79.33
3.	>Rs.300	28	9.33	42	14.00
	Total	300	100	300	100
		Mean : 178.97		Mean : 255.63	
		SD : 33.36		SD : 25.15	

has played an important role in fixing of farm related wages across rural villages in the study area as it has increased the bargaining capacity of the working class. Since majority of the MGNREGS beneficiaries in this study also work as farm labourers in their respective villages or in nearby villages in addition to getting jobs under MGNREGS, their daily farm wages has also increased over a period of time.

In order to find out the significance of difference in the daily wage rates of selected MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries before and after the implementation MGNREGS scheme in the study area, the data was subjected to paired 't' test and the results obtained were furnished in table 10.

The mean score of daily wage rates is 76.6667 with a standard deviation 33.7939 and the calculated 't' value was 39.294 from table 10 was found to be significant at 1 per cent level of probability indicating that there existed a significant difference in daily wage rates of dalit women beneficiaries before and after their participation in MGNREGS scheme. It could therefore, be stated that the MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries differed significantly in their daily wage rates before and after their participation in MGNREGS

scheme. It means that MGNREGS scheme is helpful to the dalit women beneficiaries for increase in their daily wage rates in their rural real life situation. This is in line with the findings of Hanumantha (2016) and Archana (2016) who also reported that existed a significant difference in wage rates of MGNREGS beneficiaries before and after their participation in MGNREGS scheme at 1 per cent level of significance as reported in this study.

### Migration

It could be observed from the table 11 that, before their participation in MGNREGS, majority (61.00 per cent) of the MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries had high levels of migration followed by medium (26.00 per cent) and low (13.00 per cent) levels of migration in search of jobs for meeting their food and livelihood needs. But after their participation in MGNREGS, majority (76.00 per cent) of the dalit women beneficiaries were found have medium level of migration followed by low (16.67) and high (7.33 per cent) levels of migration. The reason behind this outcome can be attributed to their increased farm wages in their respective villages and their increased



**Table 10: Significance of difference in the daily wage rates of MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries before and after their participation in MGNREGS**

(n=300)

Paired Sampled Test									
Daily wage rates	Paired Differences						t	df	'P' Value
	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard Error mean	95% Confidence interval of the Difference					
				Lower	Upper				
Before-After	-76.6667	33.7939	1.95109	-80.50628	-72.82705	-39.294	299	.000**	
**Significant at 1 per cent level									

\*\*Significant at 1 per cent level

**Table 11: Comparative distribution of MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries in accordance with migration before and after their participation in MGNREGS**

(n=300)

S.No	Migration	Before their participation in MGNREGS		After their participation in MGNREGS	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Low migration	39	13.00	50	16.67
2.	Medium migration	78	26.00	228	76.00
3.	High migration	183	61.00	22	7.33
	Total	300	100	300	100
		Mean : 120.57		Mean : 76.00	
		SD : 22.54		SD : 47.59	

participation in MGNREGS. Moreover, belonging to mostly middle and old age categories in this study and also being functionally literate has restricted their migration in search of high income jobs to nearby towns or urban centers. However, young dalits working in MGNREGS occasionally who are educated migrate to nearby urban centers in search of high wage jobs.

It evident from table 12 that, majority (89.00 per cent) of the dalit women MGNREGS beneficiaries in this study felt that their farm wages increased due to the implementation of MGNREGS in the study area.

In order to find out the significance of difference in the migration of MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries before and after the implementation of MGNREGS scheme in the study area, the data was subjected to

paired 't' test and the results obtained were furnished in table 13.

The mean score of migration is 56.5633 with a standard deviation a 52.4726 and the calculated 't' value (18.671) in table 13 was found to be significant at 1 per cent level of significance indicating that there existed a significant difference in migration of MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries before and after being part of MGNREGS. This shift from high migration to medium migration might be due to additional employment opportunities being provided to MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries in the study area and their increase in bargaining capacity of the labour class to get better wages for their employment in nearby rural farm markets. This has also reduced the migration in search of jobs among the majority of middle and old

**Table 12: Distribution of MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries according to changes in their migration status**

(n=300)

S.No	Statement	Yes		No	
		N	%	N	%
1	The wage upon migration increased due to MGNREGS implementation	267	89.00	33	11.00

**Table 13: Significance of difference in the migration of MGNREGS dalit women beneficiaries before and after their participation in MGNREGS**

(n=300)

Paired Sampled Test								
Migration	Paired Differences						df	'P' Value
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error mean	95% Confidence interval of the Difference		t		
				Lower	Upper			
Before-After	56.5633	52.4726	3.02951	50.60147	62.52519	18.671	299	.000

Significant at 1 per cent level

age beneficiaries of MGNREGS who were also mostly functional literate in this study. However, migration continues among young rural educated dalits in search of good jobs which are remunerative in the study area.

## CONCLUSION

It could be concluded from the study, that MGNREGS has brought a medium level of direct changes on the livelihoods of dalit women beneficiaries of northern districts of Tamil Nadu. With regard to component-wise direct changes, medium level of man days in a year, two persons in a family, more than seven hours of daily working hours, Rs. 200-Rs. 300 range of daily wage rate and a medium level of migration after their participation in MGNREGA was perceived by dalit women beneficiaries in this study. Our policy planners at the national and state level, district administrators at the regional level and extension professionals at all levels need to devise policy to strengthen this welfare scheme in achieving its intended goals and objectives.

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