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WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal provided dedicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

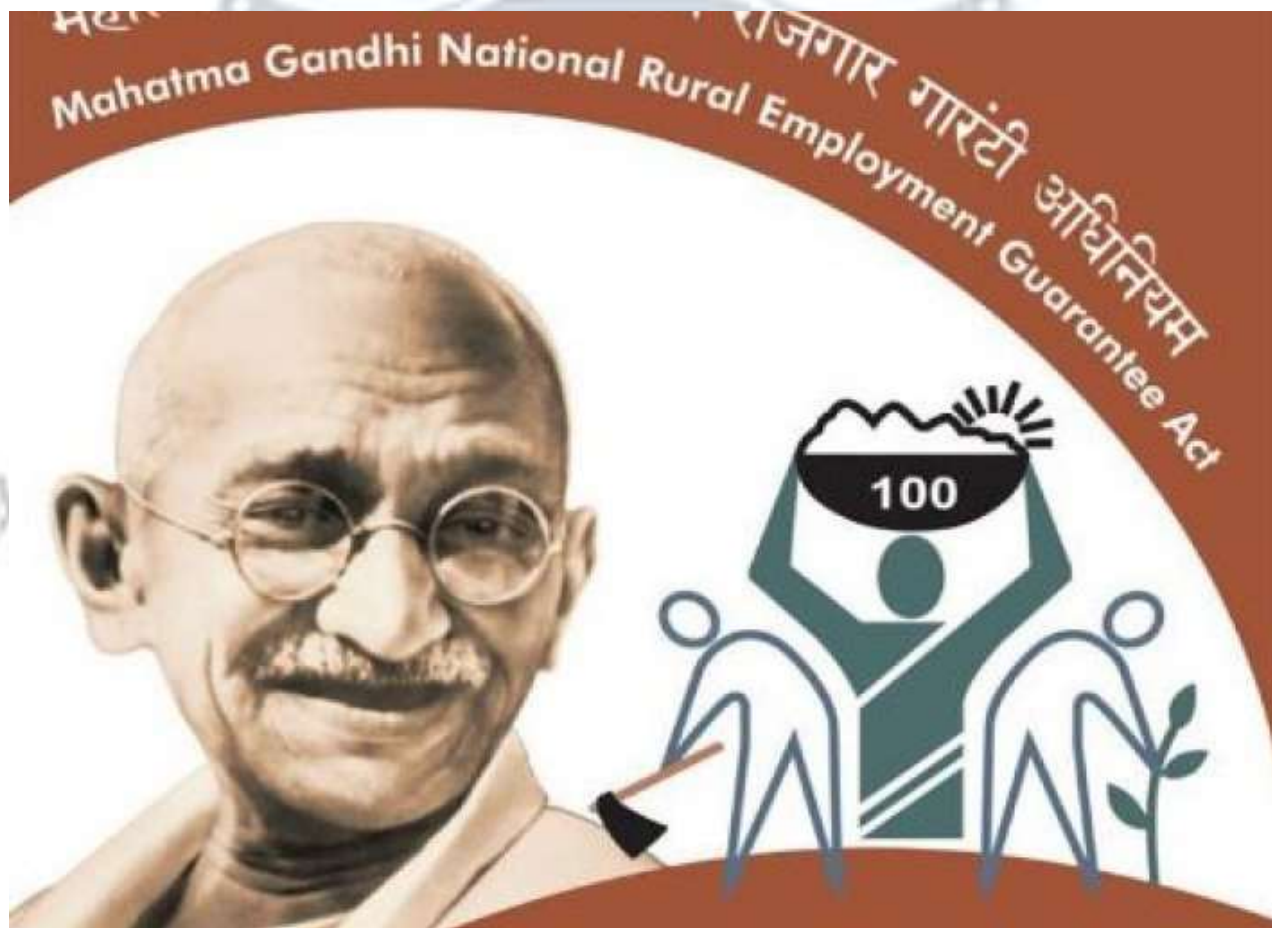
# WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN MGNREGA

AUTHORED BY - CHARU PRIYADARSHI (LLM)

AND SIMANT PRIYADARSHI (LLM)

## 1. MGNREGA: A CATALYST FOR RURAL TRANSFORMATION

The National Rural guarantee act is the 42 act of 2005. It was passed on 5<sup>th</sup> September,2005. National Rural Employment Guaranteee Act 2005 was later renamed as the “Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act” (or MGNREGA), is an Indian Labour Law and social security measure that aims to guarantee the “Right To Work.”<sup>1</sup>



2

<sup>1</sup>Ministry of Rural Development Government of India, *MGNREGA*, available at <http://www.nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx> (last visited on Mar.31, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

**1.1. AIMS OF THE ACT:** The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act aims at enhancing the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing hundred days of wage-employment in a financial year to a rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. It aims to enhance livelihood in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult member volunteer to do unskilled manual work.<sup>3</sup>MGNREGA is the largest and the most ambitious social security and public works programme in the world. In its World Development Report 2014, the world bank termed it a “**stellar example of rural development.**” Another aim of MGNREGA is **to create durable assets** (such as roads, canals,ponds, wells). Employment is to be provided within 15 days of applying, applicants are entitled to an unemployment allowance. Thus, the employment under MGNREGA is a **legal entitlement.** MGNREGA is to be implemented mainly by gram panchayats. The involvement of contractors is banned. Labour –intensive tasks like creating infrastructure for water harvesting, drought relief and flood control are preferred. NREGA can help in protecting the environment, empowering rural women, reducing rural urban migration and fostering social equality, among others. Law provides many safeguards to promote its effective management and implementation. The act is explicitly mentions the principles and agencies for implementation, list of allowed works, financing pattern, monitoring the detailed measures to ensure transparency and accountability.<sup>4</sup>

**1.2. SCOPE OF THE ACT:** MGNREGA is the world largest job guarantee scheme. NREGA was launched in 200 selected districts on 2.2.2006. and was extended to 130 additional districts during 2007-08.<sup>5</sup> Advisories had been issued for implementation of the ministry’s programmes such as MGNREGA. Also, an advisory has been issued for enrolment of MGNREGA workers under newly launched schemes namely Atal Pension Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana. Provision had been made that at least 60 per cent of the work undertaken in a district in terms of cost under the Act was for creation of productive assets directly

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Jairam Ramesh and Neelaxmi Mann, *A Scheme For Change*, THE INDIAN EXPRESS, Feb.2,2016, available at <http://images.indianexpress.com/2014/10/mgnrega.jpg> (last visited on Mar.31,2017).

<sup>5</sup> IBID.

linked to agriculture and allied activities.<sup>6</sup>

**1.3. UNION BUDGET 2017-18 ALLOCATION ON MGNREGA:** The Union Budget had allocated Rs 38,500 crore towards MGNREGA for 2016-17.<sup>7</sup> The union budget 2017-18 stressed on rural development through the highest ever allocation for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) to the tune of rupees 48,000 crore, increased spending on social sectors and provisions of affordable housing for all. Hence, India's flagship employment generation scheme, MGNREGA has got the highest ever allocation.<sup>8</sup> Prime Minister Narendra Modi's shock decision in November to ban 86 per cent of the notes that were in circulation. Increasing the Budget for MGNREGA could help compensate the rural poor, hit hardest by the cash shortage that followed the demonetisation drive. Despite the pain, rural Indian have expressed vast support for the PM's initiative and intent of using the notes ban to unearth tax evasion and punish the corrupt. Under the NREGA scheme - introduced in 2006 by the previous Congress-led government - villagers can enroll for work building roads, digging wells or creating other rural infrastructure and receive the minimum wage for 100 days a year. That income has helped improve nutrition levels and reduce child labour, especially at times when crops fail or prices shoot up, NREGA supporters say. It has raised rural consumption, created new markets and shored up growth when investment falters. The majority of NREGA workers are women, and nearly half are from lower castes or tribal communities - some of the most marginalised groups in India.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ravi S Singh, *Government expands scope of MGNREGA workers*, THE TRIBUNE Mar.10,2017, available at <http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/govt-expands-scope-of-mgnrega-works/207321.html> (last visited on Mar.31,2017).

<sup>7</sup> Harish Damodaran, , *MGNREGA 2.0: Modi to spend a record Rs 60,000 crore on what was UPA flagship scheme*, THE INDIAN EXPRESS, Oct.20,2016, available at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/mgnrega-nda-government-pm-modi-employment-days-mgnrega-3092201/> (last visited on Mar.31,2017)

<sup>8</sup> Parveen Kumar, *Redifining Agriculture Growth*,(Vol.65,No.5)KURUKSHETRA:A JOURNAL ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT (Mar.2017).

<sup>9</sup> *Union Budget 2017: For Rural Jobs Scheme MGNREGA, 'Highest Ever' Allocation Of 48,000 Crores*, MARKET INDICATORS(NDTV NRWORKS ltd. (Feb.1,2017).

## 2. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN MGNREGA

MGNREGA is a forward looking programme that has viewed women not only as reproducers but also as producers. In other words, it has made an attempt to bring about social justice and equality to the rural poor in general and women in particular by providing them equality and empowering them by ensuring equal wages for equal work. These steps have motivated their rate of participation, and have made them more self-reliant. MGNREGA recognised the relevance of incorporating gender equity and empowerment in its design. Various provisions under the Act and its Guidelines, aim to ensure that women have equitable and easy access to work, decent working conditions, equal payment of wages and representation on decision-making bodies. From FY 2006–07 up to FY 2011–12, around Rs 53,000 crore have been spent on wages for women and around 47 per cent of the total person-days generated have been by women.<sup>10</sup> In terms of opportunities for women, three key features of the programme set it apart. First, the Act prescribes that at least one-third of the workers should be women. Second, the Act mandates equal wages for men and women.<sup>11</sup> For many women, MGNREGA is the first opportunity to earn independent cash income. This has led to broad changes in women's lives. MGNREGA requires a bank account for payment, so in households where women participate in MGNREGA, women's access to a bank account increased by 38 percentage points.<sup>12</sup> Increasing women's participation in MGNREGA can be used for effective delivery of its core objective that is local ecological revival.<sup>13</sup> The Researcher has focused on the implementations and the realities of the programme in Bihar which is primarily agricultural and which also is among the poorest states in India. In Bihar, with the introduction and implementation of MGNREGA, there is a noticeable paradigm shift in the existing approach towards, wage distribution and gender, bargaining capacity, migration etc. Focusing on gender, we note that the participation rate of women at the national level in the financial year 2011-12 was 47 percent while it was just 29 percent in Bihar. In Bihar, a survey conducted in Araria district in the Fiscal Year 2012-13 revealed that the women constitutes the majority when it comes to demand to seek work at a stipulated rate of Rs 122 per day. The payment of the wages was made through post office accounts. This was a short coming

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<sup>10</sup> MGNREGA SAMEEKSHA: An Anthology of Research Studies on Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (2006-2012), MORD, GOI; Orient Black Swan.

<sup>11</sup> Upasak Das, *How Gender Inclusive Is MGNREGA IN PRACTICE*, IDEAS FOR INDIA, (Nov. 21, 2014) available at [http://www.ideasforindia.in/article.aspx?article\\_id=376](http://www.ideasforindia.in/article.aspx?article_id=376) (last visited on March 31, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Press Release Of National Council Of Applied Economic Research, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act : A Catalyst for Rural Transformation (Aug. 12, 2015).

<sup>13</sup> Richard Mahapatra, *How women seized NREGA*, DOWN TO EARTH (Nov. 30, 2009) available at <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/how-women-seized-nrega-2282> (last visited on April 17, 2017).

at that point of time as women had to travel long distances to withdraw money. The flagship rural job guarantee scheme, MGNREGA may have succeeded in ensuring that a significant proportion of its workforce comprises of women, but it has failed to bridge the gender gap and include women in a holistic way. According to MGNREGA Sameeksha II — an anthology of research studies from 2012-2014 brought out by the UNDP in collaboration with the Rural Development Ministry — gender discrimination within the MGNREGA framework remains, with women excluded from the planning process and deprived of basic work-site facilities.<sup>14</sup> Women wanted to take up work in the close vicinity and earn a decent wage to spend it on education, health and living but corruption and lack of awareness had deprived them and accounting for the failure of the prime objective of the Act i.e. addressing poverty and migration. Work on demand was denied to women on the pretext of non availability of funds or unsuitable nature of the job that required rigorous physical labour. In Bihar the Employment provided to households is 120.34996 and the percentage of women employed are 297.1(i.e. 34.94%).<sup>15</sup>

### **3. GENDER DISPARITY IN MGNREGA: A STATISTICAL STUDY**

Gender norms and values may and do change with time. This change requires the realization of worth of labour and the social and economic justice meted to them in the process. MGNREGA in Bihar has initiated this development. The rural poor in general and the women in particular seek opportunities under the programme and earn enough wages to give them means of livelihood in the lean season and opportunity to earn wages and save them in their account. This has also laid to rise in financial inclusion of the rural households. The health, education and food habits have improved and the migration has also reduced; if it has not stopped completely. The bargaining capacity in the private sphere has also improved giving them enough space to decide the worth of their labour.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ruhi Tiwari, *Gender Disparity in MGNREGA: Women deprived of basic facilities at work site*, THE INDIAN EXPRESS, Sept 28, 2015, available at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/gender-disparity-in-mgnrega-women-deprived-of-basic-facilities-at-work-site/> (last visited on Mar.31,2017).

<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Rural Development Government of India, *MGNREGA*, available at <http://www.nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx> (last visited on Mar.31, 2017).

<sup>16</sup> Danice Lynn Langdon and Roger Klomegah, *Gender Wage Gap and its associated factors : An examination of traditional gender ideology, education, and occupation in International Review of Modern Sociology*, 39, International Review of MODERN SOCIOLOGY, 2013 available at [https://www.jstor.org/stable/43496468?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/43496468?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents). (Last Visited On Mar.31,2017).

To address future challenges of abject poverty and gender, the government should try to plug the shortcomings in the beginning by imparting skill and education to the women of each household, so that future generations become competent and efficient enough to shun the demand driven programme. The durable assets created under MGNREGA projects in Bihar must be geo-tagged to avoid misinformation and corruption. The payment of wages must be done based on biometric method so that the economic wellbeing is realized and a quality life is ensured. All these concerted efforts require the active engagement of Gram Sabha that conducts selection of work projects and social audits. The role of civil society, role of block and district level authorities must be complemented with participation of each household that owns a job card or has applied for. The role of expertise should be accommodated well to make it a grand success.<sup>17</sup> The participation of women in MGNREGA and the overall unemployment rate of women participation in work, has been given.



<sup>17</sup> Neha Sinha, *Understanding Mgnrega Through Gender Lens: A Case Study Of Bihar*, 6, INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (IJRESS)(Oct.2016) available at <http://euroasiapub.org> (last visited on Mar.31,2017).

<sup>18</sup> Annual Employment And Unemployment Survey.

In bihar, the Data Entry has been shown below:

State :					
<b>BIHAR<sup>19</sup></b>					
Total No. of Districts	38				
Total No. of Blocks	534				
Total No. of GPs	8,529				
<b>I Job Card<sup>20</sup></b>					
Total No. of JobCards issued[In Lakhs]	149.3				
Total No. of Workers[In Lakhs]	227.44				
Total No. of Active Job Cards[In Lakhs]	34.84				
Total No. of Active Workers[In Lakhs]	43.18				

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Rural Development Government of India, *MGNREGA*, available at <http://www.nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx> (last visited on Mar.31, 2017).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

(i)SC worker against active workers[%]						23.13
(ii)ST worker against active workers[%]						1.71
<b>II Progress<sup>21</sup></b>	<b>FY 2017-2018</b>	<b>FY 2016-2017</b>	<b>FY 2015-2016</b>	<b>FY 2014-2015</b>	<b>FY 2013-2014</b>	
Approved Labour Budget[In Lakhs]	1400	1425	937.9	848.64	1055.38	
Persondays Generated so far[In Lakhs] <sup>22</sup>	1.63	877.94	670.92	351.98	862.35	
% of Total LB	0.12	61.61	71.53	41.48	81.71	
% as per Proportionate LB	1.08					
SC persondays % as of total persondays	13.4	22.86	23.86	28.3	29.15	
ST persondays % as of total	1.74	1.74	1.76	1.62	2.1	

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

persondays					
Women Persondays out of Total (%)	45.87	43.76	40.84	37.32	34.97
Average days of employment provided per Household	13.02	37.5	45.11	34.03	41.88
Average Wage rate per day per person(Rs.)	167.97	176.8	176.8	165.73	152.64
Total No of HHs completed 100 Days of Wage Employment	0	14,969	57,954	30,567	1,23,485
Total Households Worked[In Lakhs]	0.13	23.41	14.87	10.34	20.59
Total Individuals Worked[In Lakhs]	0.16	28.64	18.39	12.44	25.75
Differently abled persons worked	21	4818	2863	2526	4567

<b>III Works<sup>23</sup></b>					
Number of GPs with NIL exp	6,964	143	1,163	356	156
Total No. of Works Takenup (New+Spill Over)[In Lakhs]	4.77	5.35	4.22	5.58	5.18
Number of Ongoing Works[In Lakhs]	4.77	4.77	3.17	4.21	4.1
Number of Completed Works	341	57,528	1,04,633	1,37,046	1,07,710
% of NRM Works(Public + Individual)	34.09	35.45	38.15	26.27	34.98
% of Category B Works	30.34	27.95	27.44	3.49	2.98
% of Expenditure on Agriculture & Agriculture Allied Works	42.43	49.78	43.23	38.14	42.76

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<b><u>IV Financial Progress</u></b> <sup>24</sup>					
Total center Release	47152.32	166740.56	102412.26	95968.24	158204.17
Total Availability	47152.32	203972.99	164416.76	154896.39	223705.64
Percentage Utilization	9.55	107.99	98.89	69.58	90.78
Total Exp(Rs. in Lakhs.)	4,505.28	2,20,277.05	1,62,597.99	1,07,776.05	2,03,071.01
Percentage Utilization	9.55	107.99	98.89	69.58	90.78
Wages(Rs. In Lakhs)	4,489.52	1,44,417.59	1,02,840.79	52,969.31	1,08,772.85
Material and skilled Wages(Rs. In Lakhs)	8.26	62,572.83	50,016.97	44,757.43	86,485.2
Material(%)	0.18	30.23	32.72	45.8	44.29
Total Adm Expenditure (Rs. in Lakhs.)	7.5	13,286.63	9,740.23	10,049.3	7,812.96
Admin Exp(%)	0.17	6.03	5.99	9.32	3.85
Liability	273.95	45,098.3	2,208.57	14,907.71	15,291.02

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

(Wages) (Rs. in Lakhs.)					
Average Cost Per Day Per Person(In Rs.)	391.79	281.28	245.89	312.09	256.63
% of Total Expenditure through EFMS	99.83	98.86	97.66	1.53	0
% payments generated within 15 days	100	39.82	15.51	15.59	26.81

25




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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

States	%age Of Women Participation In MGNREGA
<b>Top 5 States</b>	
Kerala	90
Tamil Nadu	83
Rajasthan	68
Andhra Pradesh	57
Chhattisgarh	49
<b>Worst 5 States</b>	
Jammu & Kashmir	7
Uttar Pradesh	21
Assam	27
Bihar	28
Jharkhand	33
All India	48

*Figures In %*

**Source: Parliamentary Committee On Empowerment Of Women, 2012**

26

From the Statistics and the survey conducted that overall participation of women in Mgnrega has enhanced. Women have now gained momentum in the field of employment. However, in Bihar the percentage of women participation in MGNREGA is only 28%. Women participation is comparatively less in Bihar compared to other states.

#### **4. ACHIEVEMENT'S OF MGNREGA**

Gender norms and values may and do change with time. This change requires the realization of worth of labour and the social and economic justice meted to them in the process. MGNREGA in Bihar has initiated this development. The rural poor in general and the women in particular seek opportunities under the programme and earn enough wages to give them means of livelihood in

<sup>26</sup> Parliamentary Committee On Empowerment OF Women,2012.

the lean season and opportunity to earn wages and save them in their account. This has also laid to rise in financial inclusion of the rural households. The health, education and food habits have improved and the migration has also reduced; if it has not stopped completely. The bargaining capacity in the private sphere has also improved giving them enough space to decide the worth of their labour.<sup>27</sup>

To address future challenges of abject poverty and gender, the government should try to plug the shortcomings in the beginning by imparting skill and education to the women of each household, so that future generations become competent and efficient enough to shun the demand driven programme. The durable assets created under MGNREGA projects in Bihar must be geo-tagged to avoid misinformation and corruption. The payment of wages must be done based on biometric method so that the economic wellbeing is realized and a quality life is ensured. All these concerted efforts require the active engagement of Gram Sabha that conducts selection of work projects and social audits. The role of civil society, role of block and district level authorities must be complemented with participation of each household that owns a job card or has applied for. The role of expertise should be accommodated well to make it a grand success. Participation of women in social audit will make the programme more gender sensitive. Decision making process in work provisioning and allocations should have adequate participation of women as they generally constitute the majority in the demand driven MGNREGA work. The realization of wages should be made in the account of women of the household, to make economic empowerment in rural milieu a reality than a farce promise. A fractionally high rate of interest should be made in the account held by women to promote the culture of gender empowerment.<sup>28</sup> The issue of Bihar's comparative performance under National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) has been raised on more occasions than one. It has been alleged that Bihar lagged behind other states and it has not been able to effectively utilise the fund. Among the 20 big states, Bihar ranks higher than Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Jharkhand and J&K in fund utilization. Also, it is among the top 10 states in utilisation of funds. "The rate of utilization in Bihar has been 63.3%."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Supra*, note 10.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>29</sup> TNN, *Bihar better in implementation of NREGA scheme*, THE TIMES OF INDIA Apr.15, 2009 available at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/patna/Bihar-better-in-implementation-of-NREGA-scheme/articleshow/4406935.cms> (last visited on April 17,2017).

The ministry reported that Bihar ranked seventh in man days created, fifth in employment provided to households and sixth in total works taken up, said Singh. In terms of total fund sanctioned, Bihar ranked seventh only behind Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, MP, Rajasthan and UP whereas in terms of absolute number of BPL people, Bihar is second with a high concentration in rural areas. He also claimed that non-Congress states were much ahead in the implementation of the scheme. Since its inception in 2006, 1,39,000 crore has gone directly as wage payment to rural households. 1431 crore person-days of employment have been generated. On an average; five crore households have been provided with employment every year since 2008. In 2012 – 13 nearly 4.93 crore families were provided over 224 crore person days of work under the programme. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have accounted for around 50% of the total person-days generated. Women have accounted for 47% of the total person days generated. This is well above the mandatory 33% as required by the Act. 185 lakhs works have been taken up since the beginning of the programme. Average wage per person-day has gone up by 81% since the Scheme's inception, though there are state-level variations. The notified wage today varies from a minimum of 122 in Bihar and Jharkhand to 191 in Haryana. Nearly ten crore bank/post office accounts have been opened and around 80% of MGNREGA payments are made through this route, an unprecedented stride to achieve financial inclusion. 12.7 Crore Job Cards have been given. 12.5 crore muster rolls have been uploaded on the Management Information System (MIS) and are available for public scrutiny. Since 2010-11, all details with regard to the expenditure of MGNREGA are available on the MIS and are in the public domain.<sup>30</sup> Around 182 million beneficiaries (15 percent of India's population) are provided social security by MGNREGA (under Ministry of Rural Development).<sup>31</sup>

## 5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

It can be assessed from the above interpretation and analysis that MGNREGA has restructured the anti-poverty initiatives by mainstreaming gender and the wage distribution and in the process has empowered the vulnerable sections rendering social and economic justice by providing equity. This step has addressed the sexual division of labour. Gender is obviously a social construct but

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<sup>30</sup> Ministry of Rural Development Government of India, *MGNREGA*, available at <http://www.nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx> (last visited on Mar.31, 2017).

<sup>31</sup> IST, *MGNREGA completes 10 years of implementation: Important facts*, INDIA TODAY, (Feb.3, 2016) available at <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/education/story/mgnrega/1/586370.html> (last visited on Apr.17,2017).

the relative discrimination of one in context of another makes the whole concept a contested concept and MGNREGA has not only stepped in to look at it through social and economic lens but has also worked towards the achievement and realization of worth of the labour which is unskilled and manual in nature. The gradual empowerment of women in Bihar is a testimony of this beautiful change that has occurred after the implementation of MGNREGA.

## **5.1. A DECADE OF MGNREGA: CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

MGNREGA is a self-targeting programme that assumes anyone who has access to other, better-paying work will not participate. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act has been remarkably successful in improving the welfare of workers who participate in the programme. But its reach has been limited due to the lack of work in some of the poorest areas. At least 25% of the decline in poverty since 2004-5 for participating households can be attributed to participation in MGNREGA. But in spite of this success the impact of MGNREGA on household income is limited. Almost 70% of the poor do not participate in MGNREGA, mostly because work is not available, according to a survey of 28,000 households of which only 24.4% participated in MGNREGA.<sup>32</sup> A decade after coming into force, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is suffering from a decline in employment, budget caps, delays in wage payments and rampant violations of workers' entitlements.<sup>33</sup> The total expenditure on the scheme has amounted to over 3 lakh crore rupees, since the implementation of MGNREGA. Out of this, 71 percent has been spent on wage payment to workers.<sup>34</sup> Also, as per the reports, the percentage of Scheduled Caste (SC) workers has consistently been about 20 percent and that of Scheduled Tribe (ST) workers has been about 17 percent. Women participation has risen to 57 percent well above the statutory requirement of 33 percent.

## **5.2. NEED FOR A MORE FOCUSED APPROACH**

The positive effect of MGNREGA is limited by very low access to work in some of the poorest states such as Bihar and Odisha. Only 24.4% of rural households participate in MGNREGA nationwide, and nearly 70% of the interested households cannot participate due to lack of work.

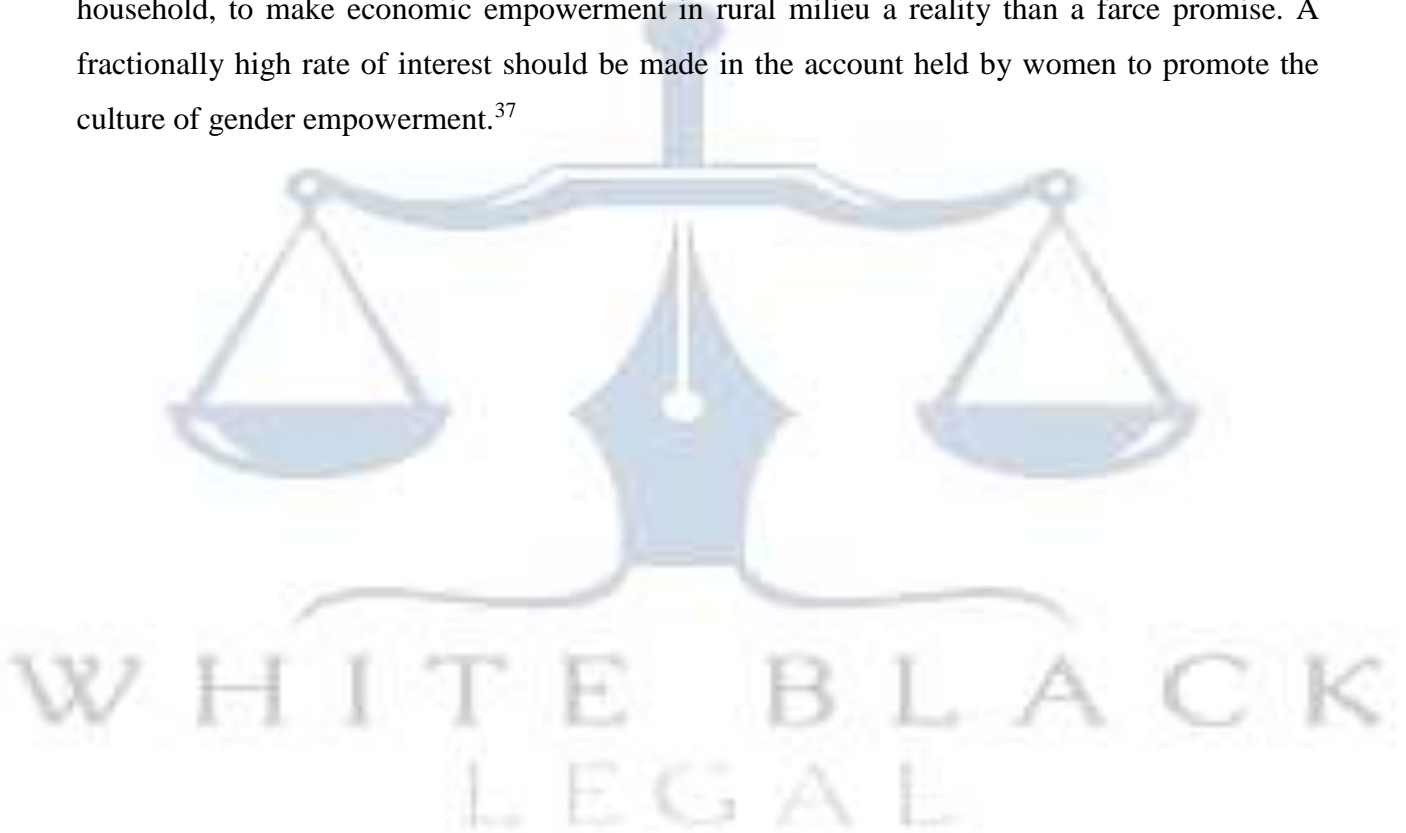
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<sup>32</sup> Press Release Of National Council Of Applied Economic Research, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act : A Catalyst for Rural Transformation (Aug.12,2015).

<sup>33</sup> Ankita Agarwal, *The MGNREGA Crisis*, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, (May 28,2016) available at <http://www.epw.in/journal/2016/22/perspectives/mgnrega-crisis.html> (last visited on Mar.31,2017).

<sup>34</sup> IST, *MGNREGA completes 10 years of implementation: Important facts*, INDIA TODAY, (Feb.3, 2016) available at <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/education/story/mgnrega/1/586370.html> (last visited on Apr.17,2017)

Most important, about 70% of households below the poverty line do not participate. Implementation challenges lie at both the state and the local level.<sup>35</sup> The most striking impact of MGNREGA participation is on women. Increasingly women dominate MGNREGA work. And for more than 40% of them, MGNREGA is their first opportunity to earn independent cash income. This increases their power within the household and improves their conditions, including access to health care.<sup>36</sup> Participation of women in social audit will make the programme more gender sensitive. Decision making process in work provisioning and allocations should have adequate participation of women as they generally constitute the majority in the demand driven MGNREGA work. The realization of wages should be made in the account of women of the household, to make economic empowerment in rural milieu a reality than a farce promise. A fractionally high rate of interest should be made in the account held by women to promote the culture of gender empowerment.<sup>37</sup>



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<sup>35</sup> Press Release Of National Council Of Applied Economic Research, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act : A Catalyst for Rural Transformation (Aug.12,2015).

<sup>36</sup> *Rural Migration*, (Vol.62, No 11), KURUKSHETRA: A JOURNAL ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT (Sept.2014).

<sup>37</sup> *Women Empowerment*, (Vol.63, No. 05), KURUKSHETRA : A JOURNAL ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT (March 2015).