

## **Women's Participation on National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in Manipur**

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**ABSTRACT:** *An empirical investigation has been carried out on the women's participation in NREGS in Manipur, one of the north eastern states of India. The percentage of the women persondays to the total cumulative persondays in a financial year is defined to be women's participation in the workforce of the scheme. Though, the state's figure (40.64%) is higher than that of the national target of 33%, the women participation on the implementation of the scheme varies significantly ( $P < 0.01$ ) with the different nine districts of Manipur.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Panchayat, Valley, Village Authority, Hill, Women, District*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Under the caption of "National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS)", the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) 2005, a Central sponsored wage employment scheme aiming at providing livelihood security to the rural poor, was implemented in 200 districts, in the first phase, with effect from the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006 and extended subsequently to additional 113 and 17 districts with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 and 15<sup>th</sup> May 2007 respectively. The remaining districts were included under the Act with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008. It is one of the unique job scheme, firstly introduced by the Government of India to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to enhance livelihood security in rural areas in a financial year. The scheme is implemented on cost sharing basis between the centre and the state in the ratio of 90:10. It provides employment opportunity to adult members of every household who are willing to do unskilled manual work.

In Manipur, the NREGS was launched initially on the 13<sup>th</sup> April 2006 at Tamenglong District Head Quarter in first phase, by distributing Job Cards to registered applicants. In second phase, Chandel and Churachandpur Districts are covered under this scheme in 2007-08. In the third phase, the remaining six districts namely Ukhrul, Senapati, Imphal West, Imphal East, Thoubal and Bisnupur are also covered. During the last five financial years (2008-09 to 2012-13) this scheme not only boost the rural economy by increasing purchasing power of the rural poor masses by creating employment opportunities but also targeted a set of specific rural development activities such as water conservation and harvesting, afforestation, rural connectivity, flood control and protection etc.

While implementing the scheme all over rural sectors of the country, members of the Panchayati Raj Institutions are taking key roles according to the provisions of the Act. However, Manipur has a unique feature that the scheme is implemented in two distinct channels specifically at village level – the Valley Districts through Panchayati Raj Institutions and the Hill Districts through Village Authority. The India Parliament passed the '**Manipur Village Authority (Hill Areas) Act, 1956**', for the administration of the hill areas in Manipur. A total of 725 village authorities were constituted under the Act in seven areas of the hills viz., Sadar Hills, Tengnoupal Sub-Division, Tengnoupal Circle, Ukhrul, Mao, Jiribam and Churachandpur . This Act may be regarded as the first step towards the democratisation of hill administration in Manipur. By placing certain restrictions on the powers of the Chief and by introducing adult franchise at the lowest level of administration that is the village authority, the common villagers became aware of democratic values and practices. As it has local self administrative set up, the hill areas of Manipur is considered to be very important part of research in the implementation of NREGS.

### **II. RATIONALE**

In one sense, the goal of poverty alleviation cannot be achieved without the active participation of women who constitute a large section of workforce in India. Thus women's empowerment in the participation is critical to the process of national sustainable development. In spite of so much emphasis given to women's right and promoting their welfare, the status of women is still nowhere near a satisfactory level in Manipur. As in the least developed states, amongst rural women workers in Manipur, a majority are employed in agriculture as labourers and cultivators. The women are engaged in transplanting, weeding, applying fertilizers and also

harvesting the produce. According to 2001 census, 44.22% of the total workers in Manipur are women. The main and marginal workers among females constitute 54.82% and 45.18% of the total female workers respectively. Out of the total main female workers, 48.42% were cultivators, 7.17% were agricultural labours and the remaining 44.42% were engaged in other sectors like manufacturing, processing, servicing and repairing other than household industries and other services (Govt. of Manipur, 2011). However, the NREGS is a highly gender-sensitive scheme. It is mandatory that at least one third of workers should be women. Thus, apart from the two distinct administrative set-ups in village levels (Panchayat in Valley and Village Authority in Hill), the present study has been initiated to evaluate the women's participation in NREGS in the state of Manipur.

### III. REVIEW WORKS

There are arguments against the implementation and activities of NREGS. The issues like the accountability of the policy makers, misused of funds are some of the major criticisms against the policy implementers (Singh 2008). So, there are good numbers of arguments in favour as well as against the activities of the scheme. Patnaik (2005) stated that the scheme should be universally operational within a specific time horizon; fully funded by the centre, avoid tokenism in the sense that very low wages in the name of enlarging the number of beneficiaries or targeting and it should not occasion conflicts with other workers employees/peasants too. He further highlighted that all those who are concerned with the plight of the rural poor should insist on these features of the schemes even as they insist on the introduction the scheme itself. Virmani (2005) has also rightly emphasized an institutional reform and Employment Guarantee Scheme, unless seen in overall context of policy and institutional reform will be just a poverty alleviation Scheme. However, in the statement of Kapila (2008), the scheme provides for a legally backed employment provision, guaranteeing 100 days of employment on demand at statutory minimum wages, to begin with in some, and finally in all rural areas of the country, makes it qualitatively different from the earlier rural employment programmes for poverty alleviation as it envisages implementation by Panchayati Raj Institutions, is seen to be a major step in empowerment of the panchayats and local communities. It will incorporate a large mass of rural population in an organized manner to secure their right to employment is seen as a great opportunity for social and possibly political mobilization. And of course it is vital step in realization of right to work provided in the Directive Principles of the state Policy in the Indian Constitution. The findings of Ratna (2010) highlighted that significant variation in the women's participation is observed across states, within states and across districts in the implementation of the scheme.

### IV. OBJECTIVE

The present work is to evaluate the women participation in the implementation and activities of NREGS in Manipur. Specifically it is to check the district-wise variation in women participation in the scheme.

### V. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This investigation is based on the secondary sources of information viz. "NREGS Implementation Status Report" furnished by the Department of Rural Development under Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. The number of persondays for the last five financial years say from 2008-09 to 2012-13 have been taken into consideration. For the present analysis, the Women's Participation (WP) is computed by dividing the Cumulative Women Persondays (CWPD) by the Cumulative Total Persondays (CTPD) and

multiplied by 100. That is to say that  $WP = \frac{CWPD}{CTPD} * 100$ . It has to check the women participation

in the workforce of NREGS subject to the provisions of the Act. that at least one-third of the workers should be women. It may also be quantified by 33% of the total persondays will be the minimum women persondays in a financial year. The variability in the women's participation in the scheme according to districts as well as five financial years has been advocated by using F-test. The statistical inference is drawn through SPSS vs 19.

### VI. RESULTS

The percentage of the women's persondays to the total persondays in the activities of NREGS in Manipur during the last five financial years (2008-09 to 2012-13) is distributed in Table - 1 according to its nine districts. The percentage quantifies the women's participation in the workforce in the implementation of the scheme. During the five financial years, the women participation in the scheme is highest in 2009-10 as evidenced by 48.54% and the lowest figure of 34.71% is observed in 2012-2013 while the overall participation rate is 40.84%. In other words, the activities of the NREGS performed in the last five financial years in Manipur, women section participates about 41%. Thus, more than 40% of the benefits of the scheme can be extended to the women section which is remarkably higher than the gender based target of at least one third of the workers should be women. Despite some visible difference observed in the women's participation in the

implementation of NREGS at state level, the variation in the participation levels according to the five financial years is found to be insignificantly varied as advocated by F-value (1.01,  $P > 0.05$ ). It means that the level of women participation in the workforce of NREGS in Manipur is uniformly distributed for the last five financial years which may also be visibly detected in Figure - 1.

A highly significant difference in the levels of women's participation in the workforce of NREGS has been observed according to different nine districts. During the last five financial years since the inception of the implementation in the state, the three hill districts – Chandel, (27.54%), Churachandpur (29.55%) and Ukhrul (19.61%) cannot achieve the national target of at least 33% of women share. It may also be observed that among the five hill districts, only two say Tamenglong (35.64%) and Senapati (43.12%) are above the national target of the women's participation in the scheme, shown in Figure - 2. The maximum level of women participation in the implementation of the scheme is noted in valley district of Imphal West (62.60%) followed by Imphal East (59.94%). Among the four valley districts of Manipur, the lowest women's participation (40.91%) in the scheme is observed in Thoubal district. Thus, despite it is visibly higher than the state's overall figure of 40.64% during the last five financial years, the women's participation in the workforce of NREGS in Manipur is highly significantly varied with respect to the nine district which is witnessed by the F-Statistics (4.28,  $P < 0.01$ ).

## VII. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Though the present findings explore the considerable level of women's participation (40.64%) in the implementation of NREGS, it may be treated to be not so good in national context. The distinct levels of women's participation in the scheme between hill (through Village Authority) and valley (through Panchayat) districts may be influenced by the way of implementation at village level. A state progress report of the NREGS activities shows that women's participation which was 44.51% in 2007-08 rose to 51% in 2008-09, which is higher than the national average of 48%, Tripura held the highest record in terms of employing women in NREGS among the northeastern states. In some of the tribal states of the region like Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya, the percentage of women's participation in 2007- 08 was 29.58, 29.36, 36.62 and 30.87 respectively while it was 30.85 and 32.80 for Assam and Manipur respectively (Roy, 2010). In this context, Jyoti (2012) observed that among the states of the country, Tamil Nadu has highest women participation (82%) in the workforce of NREGS followed by Tripura (76%) and the lowest figure of women participation (5%) in the scheme is noted in Jammu and Kashmir. The official data evinces that there are wide variations across states, within states and across districts in the persondays going to women. This view is supported by Ratna (2010). Thus, apart from the level of women's participation in the national employment scheme, Manipur has to go long journey to achieve the national target for the welfare of rural poor through many parameters of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005.

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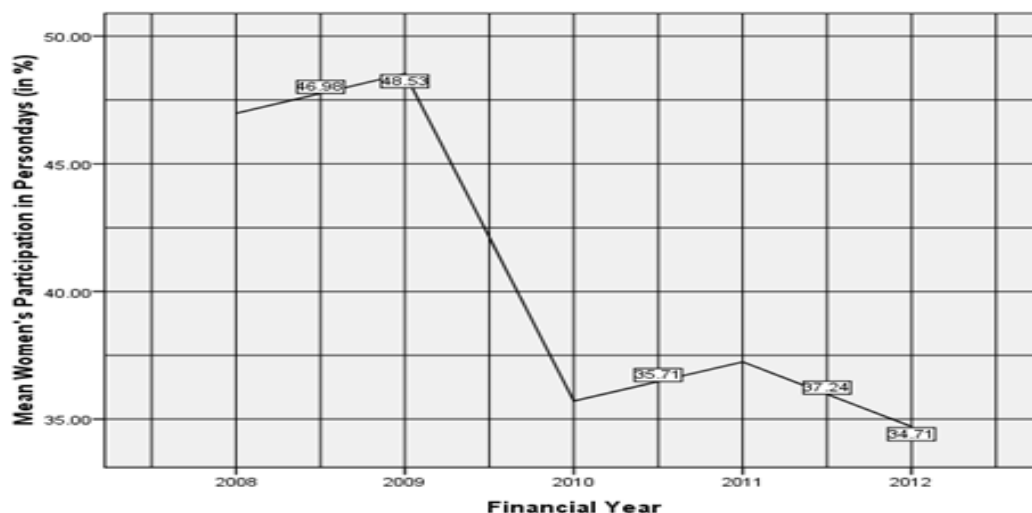


Figure - 1: Level of women's participation during '2008-09 to 2012-13'

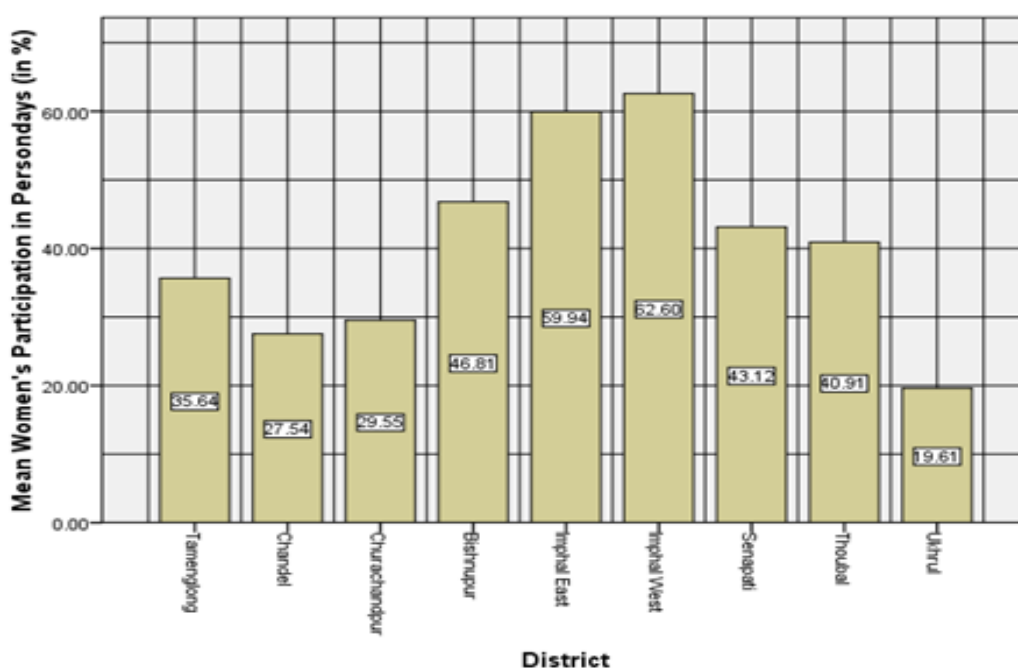


Figure - 2: Level of women's participation according to districts

Table - 1 District-wise distribution of women's participation (in %) in persondays according to five financial years (2008-09 to 2012-13)

District	Financial year					Total
	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	
Tamenglong	60.65	35.01	34.99	22.55	24.99	35.64
Chandel	22.43	35.78	11.99	33.11	34.38	27.54
Churachandpur	32.42	54.17	6.11	27.55	27.48	29.55
Bishnupur	59.97	59.99	25.19	59.99	28.90	46.81
Imphal East	68.92	99.96	47.66	37.66	45.53	59.94
Imphal West	74.25	52.04	84.99	50.65	51.07	62.60
Senapati	50.01	49.99	60.01	30.04	25.54	43.12
Thoubal	40.02	39.55	40.44	42.58	41.95	40.91
Ukhrul	14.11	10.31	10.01	31.06	32.56	19.61
<b>Total</b>	<b>46.98</b>	<b>48.54</b>	<b>35.71</b>	<b>37.24</b>	<b>34.71</b>	<b>40.64</b>

$$F_{(district-wise)} = 4.28, P < 0.01; F_{(year-wise)} = 1.01, P > 0.05$$