



Social Justice

MGNREGS Scheme

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- Employment
- Growth & Development
- For Prelims: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Covid-19, Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS).
- For Mains: MGNREGS Scheme, Government Policies & Interventions, Issues Relating to Development.

Why in News?

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) has witnessed a significant surge in women's participation, marking a historic high in the current financial year of 2023-24.

What are the Women Participation Trends in MGNREGA?

- **Women Participation Trends:**
 - There has been a **gradual increase in women's participation over the last decade**, with percentages

rising from 53.19% during the Covid-19 outbreak in 2020-21 to the current 59.25%.

- Southern states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, and Goa showcase **notably high rates of women's involvement**, surpassing 70%, while northern states like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh lag **behind at around 40% or below**.
- Despite historical disparities, some states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Lakshadweep show **recent improvements in women's participation rates** in the ongoing financial year, attributed to incremental percentages.
- **Rural Labor Force Trends:**
 - Beyond MGNREGS, the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation demonstrates a **substantial surge in female Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in rural areas**.
 - Notable figures show an **increase from 18.2% in 2017-18 to 30.5% in 2022-23 in rural female LFPR**, along with a decline in female unemployment rates from 3.8% to 1.8% during the same period.

What is MGNREGA Scheme?

- **About:**
 - MGNREGA is one of the largest work guarantee programmes in the world launched in 2005 by the Ministry of Rural development.
 - It provides a legal guarantee for one hundred days of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage.

- Active workers: 14.32 Crore (2023-24)

- **Major Features:**

- The cornerstone of **MGNREGA's design is its legal guarantee**, ensuring that any rural adult can request work and must receive it within 15 days.
 - If this commitment is not met, an "unemployment allowance" must be provided.
- It requires that priority shall be given to women in such a way that at least one-third of the beneficiaries shall be women who have registered and requested for work.
- Section 17 of the MGNREGA has mandated Social audit of all Works executed under the MGNREGA.

- **Implementation Agency:**

- The Ministry of Rural Development (MRD), Govt of India is monitoring the entire implementation of this scheme in association with state governments.

- **Objective:**

- This act was introduced with an aim of improving the Purchasing Power of the rural people, primarily semi or unskilled work to people living below poverty line in rural India.
- It attempts to bridge the gap between the rich and poor in the country.

- **Achievements of 2022-23:**

- 11.37 crore households availed employment.
- 289.24 crore person-days employment has been generated out of which:
 - 56.19% were for women
 - 19.75% were for Scheduled Castes (SCs)

- 17.47% were for Scheduled Tribes (STs).
- What are the Challenges with the Implementation of the Scheme?

- **Delay and Insufficiency in Funds Dispersal:**

- Most states have failed to disburse wages within 15 days as mandated by MGNREGA. In addition, workers are not compensated for a delay in payment of wages.
 - This has turned the scheme into a supply-based programme and subsequently, workers had begun to lose interest in working under it.
- There is ample evidence by now, including an admission by the Ministry of Finance, that delays in wage payments are a consequence of insufficient funds.

- **Caste Based Segregation:**

- There were significant variations in delays by caste. While 46% of payments to SC (Scheduled Caste) workers and 37% for ST (Scheduled Tribes) workers were completed in the mandated seven-day period, it was a dismal 26% for non-SC/ST workers.
- The negative impact of caste-based segregation was felt acutely in poorer States such as Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal.

- **Ineffective Role of PRI:**

- With very little autonomy, Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) are not able to implement this act in an effective and efficient manner.

- **Large Number of Incomplete works:**

- There has been a delay in the completion of works under MGNREGA and inspection of projects has been irregular. Also, there is an

issue of quality of work and asset creation under MGNREGA.

- **Fabrication of Job cards:**

- There are several issues related to the existence of fake job cards, the inclusion of fictitious names, missing entries and delays in making entries in job cards.

What are the Initiatives under MGNREGS?

- **Amrit Sarovar:** Construction/renovation of at least 75 Amrit Sarovars (ponds) in each district of the country; they will help in increasing the availability of water, both on surface and under-ground.
- **Jaldoot App:** It was launched in Sept 2022 for measuring the water level in a Gram Panchayat through 2-3 selected open wells twice a year.
- **Ombudsperson for MGNREGS:** Ombudsperson App was launched in Feb 2022 for smooth reporting and categorization of grievances received from various sources related to the implementation of the MGNREGS.

Way Forward

- There is a need to ensure **consistent fund flow to states and implementing agencies** while leveraging digital tools for transparent, timely wage payments.
- **Focus on exclusion errors**, identifying pockets where marginalized SC and ST families are missing out on MGNREGA benefits.
- **Empower State and Central Employment Guarantee Councils** for informed decisions, incorporating public participation via assemblies, civil society, and worker unions.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Among the following who are eligible to benefit from the “Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act”? (2011)

- (a) Adult members of only the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe households
- (b) Adult members of below poverty line (BPL) households
- (c) Adult members of households of all backward communities
- (d) Adult members of any household

Ans: (d)

Exp:

□ Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (MGNREGA), which is the largest work guarantee programme in the world, was enacted in 2005 with the primary objective of guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment per year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

□ It aims at addressing the causes of chronic poverty through the ‘works’ (projects) that are undertaken, and thus ensuring sustainable development. There is also an emphasis on strengthening the process of decentralisation by giving a significant role to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in planning and implementing these works.

□ Therefore, option D is the correct answer.