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Assess Effectiveness of Women Empowerment in MGNREGA

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ABSTRACT

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), introduced in 2005, is one of the most ambitious social welfare programs in India. It aims to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. While the program primarily targets poverty alleviation, it also has a significant impact on women empowerment. Assessing the effectiveness of MGNREGA in this regard involves analyzing various dimensions such as financial independence, decision-making, social status, and access to resources. One of the most direct ways MGNREGA empowers women is through financial independence. By providing women with direct wage employment, MGNREGA ensures a steady income stream that many rural women did not have access to before. This financial independence allows women to contribute to their households, reduces their reliance on male members, and gives them a sense of autonomy. Studies have shown that women often use their earnings from MGNREGA to meet essential household needs, invest in their children's education, and even save for future security. This shift in economic power within households contributes to a more equitable distribution of resources and decision-making power. In addition to financial empowerment, MGNREGA has a profound impact on the social status of women in rural communities. Traditionally, rural Indian women have been confined to domestic roles with limited participation in public life. MGNREGA, by providing work opportunities, enables women to step out of their homes and engage in productive labor. This visibility in the workforce not only enhances their social status but also challenges deep-rooted gender norms. Furthermore, MGNREGA mandates the formation of women's self-help groups (SHGs) that offer a platform for collective bargaining and advocacy, thereby fostering a sense of solidarity and collective identity among women.