



## GROWTH OF UN-ORGANIZED WOMEN EMPLOYMENT IN INDIA: A PROBLEM AND CHALLENGES

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**ABSTRACT** The women workers in unorganized sector are deprived of the benefits and amenities like equal remuneration vis-à-vis their male counterparts, maternity benefits, proper child care services and indifferent attitude of the employers towards women workers. The women and girls, who tend to work harder than men, are more likely to invest their earnings in their children, are major producers as well as consumers. Therefore a credible employment strategy needs to focus on enhancing educational level of the workers, social status of workers including women, specific industries that can absorb a higher proportion of males and females and creation of quality job. Therefore this paper attempts to examine the growth of un-organised women employment in India: a problem and challenges.

### KEYWORDS :

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

A woman is identified as a mother, a wife, a daughter-in-law or a daughter but never as an independent person. To be born as a woman means to inhabit, from early infancy to the last day of life, a psychological world that differs from the world of the man. Much of the exasperation and discrimination in woman's life stems from this fact and the overall picture is one of greater disadvantage for women workers in general and those belonging to unorganized sector in particular.

As a matter of fact, the problem of female worker is the index of the status of Indian labour in both organized and unorganized sectors. Any discussion regarding the problems associated with the women labour has many aspects, such as economic, political, psychological, sociological and legal etc. The employment in the organized sector require certain minimum qualifications and most of these educated women workers are drawn from middle classes and richer sections, a very few women from lower class would get opening in these job.

The National Commission on Labour describe the constraints of unorganized sector, namely: (a) casual nature of employment; (b) ignorance and illiteracy; (c) small size of establishment with low capital investment per person employed; (d) scattered nature of establishments; and (e) superior strength of the employers operating singly and in combination. This paper attempts to examine the growth of unorganised women employment in industry, agriculture and service sector in India.

#### 1.2 Employment in agriculture, industry and services

Almost 400 million people (more than 85 per cent of the working population in India) work in unorganized sector and of these about 120 million are women. National Commission on Self-Employed Women reveals the total number of women workers in India (i.e 94%) are in the informal or unorganized sector remaining 6 per cent are in the organized or formal sector. Thus there is no exaggeration in saying that the unorganized sector in India is the women sector.

However, the plight of women in this sector is miserable as they work for extremely low wages, with a total lack of job security and social security benefits, working hours are long and working conditions are unsatisfactory. According to census 2011, women constitute 48.46 per cent of the total population in India and about 25.67 percent of female population is designated as workers. The Challenges of Employment in Informal Economy measures that are considered necessary for enhancing competitiveness of the unorganized sector in the emerging global environment and generation of large scale employment opportunities on sustainable basis. The most significant finding is that the economy will experience a greater degree of informalisation of employment that will increase the already high share of informal workers from 91.8 per cent to 93.9 per cent.

**Table 1.1 Projected employments in agriculture, industry and services**

Year	GDP growth rates	Projected employment in million			Total
		Agriculture	industry	service	
2011-12	9%	229.2	105.0	153.5	487.7
	7%	225.4	102.0	149.0	476.4
	5%	221.5	99.1	144.6	465.2
2016-17	9%	240.2	126.2	189.5	555.9
	7%	232.0	116.8	174.8	523.5
	5%	224.0	108.1	161.2	493.3

Source: computed

#### 1.3 Important features of unorganized sector

The most vital features of unorganized sector are women labourers are appointed as contract labourers. The awful conditions of the women workers in this sector continue to face discrimination and marginalization both subtle and blatant and do not share the fruits of development equally. Ignorance, traditional bound attitudes, illiteracy, lack of skills, seasonal nature of employment, heavy physical work of different types, lack of job security, lack of a comprehensive legislation to cover women workers in unorganized sector and competition in employment are resultant deprivation of real wage.

Wages in the unorganized sector are arbitrarily fixed, often without regard to the minimum wage legislations, which adversely affect the income of the wage workers in general, and women workers in particular. In the informal sector, wage workers constituted 36 per cent and the remaining 64 per cent were self-employed. The average wage of men and women workers are Rs. 75 and Rs. 45 respectively, which is much less than the wage of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGP) i.e. Rs.100 and another dimension of this wage result shows the existence of gender bias in unorganized sector in terms of wage level.

The higher level of unemployment and under-employment among women leads us to conclude that their proportion below the poverty line is likely to be higher than men. Women who are drawn from rural areas are unskilled labourers. The life of unorganized sector worker is very tough. They are exploited in many ways. The exploitation is not only carried on the class lines but also on the lines of male domination over females while, sexual harassment is common but unarticulated due to fear of loss of employment. In spite of the advance women have made in many societies, women's concerns are still given second priority almost everywhere.

Women workers in unorganized sector gap behind the males in terms of quality of employment, there are still cases where women workers are deprived of the benefits and amenities like equal remuneration vis-à-vis their male counterparts, maternity benefits, proper child care services and indifferent attitude of the employers towards women

workers. Women and girls, who tend to work harder than men, are more likely to invest their earnings in their children, are major producers as well as consumers and shoulder critical, life sustaining responsibilities without which men and boys could not survive, much less enjoy high levels of productivity, such women, when they have to perform dual role of both outside employment in harsh and hostile working conditions and manage their homes, come across problems, which needs a loud hearing.

The major problems they face are poverty, lack of access to education and inadequate healthcare facilities. Living in abject poverty, most workers in the unorganized sector barely manage a subsistence existence. The rising costs of private healthcare and the systematic dismantling of the public health system in these times of liberalization are a major reason for the huge indebtedness of households in the unorganized sector. There is a pressing need to provide insurance, especially health insurance cover to the workers. The several factors responsible for their plight are indifferent attitude of the employers towards women workers, their weak bargaining power and in many cases the women workers themselves being unaware of their rights. Women working in unorganized sector are living a life far below from satisfaction, it is not that there are no statutory provisions to ensure fair working conditions for women in India.

In fact, the Constitution of India provides equal rights and opportunities to both the genders. In addition, there are specific provisions for protection and welfare of working women in many of the labour laws. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is a major step in the direction of providing security of employment to rural workers. One of the successes of MGNREGA is that, on average the participation of women in the programme is higher than the stipulated minimum requirement of 30 per cent. Women constitute 46 per cent of the beneficiaries. Although the Government is seized of the situation, yet it continues to remain a problem area due to non-availability of reliable statistical data and other information pertaining to working, living and socio-economic conditions of women workers. The first enquiry for studying socio-economic conditions of women worker was undertaken by Labour Bureau in the year 1953 and a report titled "The Economic and Social Status of Women Workers in India" was brought out.

#### 1.4 Problems and Challenges

The women workers face a number of difficulties such as, in many cases, they are not considered as workers which make their income very low when linked to the earnings of the male workers. Often they are considered as workers which are out-of-date and low skilled according to the requirements of the market. They also have to take care of their children at home and at the same time have to work to support their families; they are doing double the amount of work and paid less than half when compared with their male counterparts.

The women who are engaged in domestic work and street vending face difficulties such as sexual harassment and abusive language. Domestic workers have to work in three to five houses per day without any bonus or overtime. They face sexual harassment and many a times their working conditions are very bad. Migrant domestic workers face such difficulties in a more intense manner. Sometimes the recruiting agents compel the women to engage in sex work. Also they are paid very less and due to the lack of bargaining power, they are not in a position to demand more. They are replaced frequently, in case of better wage demands, as they are in surplus in the market. There are still cases where women workers are neglected of the benefits and facilities like equal payment vis-à-vis their male counterparts, maternity benefits, proper child care services and indifferent attitude of the employers towards women workers. Research shows that women and girls, who tend to work harder than men, are more likely to invest their earnings in their children.

#### 1.5 CONCLUSION

It is observed that no doubt, there are laws to protect women and prevent exploitation but these laws (the Interstate Migrant Workmen Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service Act, 1979, The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976 and Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 etc.), and legislations are not practically and strictly implemented. The very vastness of the country, the scattered nature of women workers, their lack of education and legal literacy, the indifferent attitude of the government-bureaucracy and the general

status of women in society caused vulnerability to women. It is the need of the hour that government and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) must come forward to actively and efficiently deal with the plight of these women.

The Trade Unions and Voluntary Organizations can play a vital role in making them conscious of health, education and above all their rights. Women should be provided education and training to enhance their sense of self-worth and self-esteem and to enlighten them regarding their right to good health. Therefore a credible employment strategy needs to focus to enhance educational level of the workers, social status of workers including women, specific industries that can absorb a higher proportion of males and females and creation of quality job.

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