



## WORKING CONDITIONS OF WOMEN AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS IN DINDIGUL DISTRICT, TAMILNADU

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### ABSTRACT :

India is a developing country having the second largest arable land in the world. Agriculture is the main source of sustenance for both developing and under developed countries. In countries like India, women's position is not as strong as men both economically and socially and she faces more constraints than men. They cannot relocate easily. Women in rural areas have to manage multiple activities like maintaining home, making food, arranging water etc. and they are working in farms also. So, they are living hard life. All the activities performed by rural women is essential for the well-being of the rural households, still they are not defined as 'economically active employment' in national accounts. In India, 24 percent to total workers work as female cultivators and 41.1 percent to total workers work as female agricultural labourers. Past studies also relieved that because of less education, unawareness about the laws, poverty and gender discrimination, women workers face many problems. Also, few studies show that in some parts of the nation women workers are being paid less than the male workers. This Paper reviews past research studies to highlight the role and position of women workers in agricultural sector.



**KEYWORDS :** Women laborers, work, dindigul, agriculture .

### INTRODUCTION

Ratcheting up the growth of the economy would be possible provided the agriculture sector fares well on a sustained basis. A good performance of the agriculture sector is views as an effective instrument for attainment of inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction. Agricultural labourers constitute the single largest section of working population. Agricultural labourers play a vital role in agricultural production and thereby contribute substantially to the development of the national economy. They are the worst exploited section among workers. They suffer from seasonal unemployment and under employment, insecurity of jobs, below subsistence living, indebtedness, bondage, migration, inability to get minimum wages and lack of social security. They live in poorly built-up houses, undernourished and malnourished. Most of them go to bed daily without even a single meal. They are very little educated. Their health, sanitary condition and personal hygiene are also very poor. The first agricultural labour enquiry commission of 1950-51 stated that, agricultural labourers are those people who are engaged in raising crops on payment of wages. The second agricultural labour enquiry commission of 1956-57 viewed agricultural workers as those who are engaged in agriculture and in allied occupations like animal husbandry, dairy, poultry, etc.

According to the National Commission on Labour, agricultural labourer is one who is basically unskilled and unorganised and one who totally depends on physical labour for existence. As such the

major part of the income is derived from wages for work on land.<sup>6</sup> The census of 1961 defined agricultural labour as one who works in other person's land (only as a labourer) for wages in cash, kind or share of produce. The first group consists of those permanent agricultural labourers who worked with particular land owner either for the whole year or for fixed period of time. They work under a verbal contract or understanding with the land owner and they are never free to work elsewhere without the prior permission of their master. Their wages are also determined according to the prevailing traditional wage methods. The second group consisting of those casual agricultural labourers who work temporarily in the agricultural sector with the different land owners as and when they get the opportunity to work. Their wages are determined according to the prevailing market rate. They always remain free to work anywhere according to their own convenience. Agricultural labour is an adult labourer (male or female) who mostly hires out labour in the agricultural sector and whose major source of income is agricultural wages.

Landless agricultural labourers are the wage earners without any significant means of subsistence other than their low wages. An agricultural labour household consists of members of a family who partake meals from the same kitchen. All members of the family share responsibility equally in the household affairs. The districts get more rains from the southwest monsoon. The average annual rainfall ranges from 80mm to 120 mm. The atmosphere of the delta is somewhat damp. The hot season begins from March and the heat subsides after June. The rainy season is from September to November. The Cauvery is the chief source of water for irrigation.

Agricultural labourers are the unorganised class. They do not have a security of employment. There is no law to regulate the working conditions of agricultural labourers. The benefits of medical facilities and social security are totally denied to them. Women workers have no maternity benefits. Lack of trade unionism causes no bargaining power. In the absence of a protective law, the rights of agricultural labourers are ignored and they are thrown at the mercy of the landlords and other rural vested interests.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

One of the most serious and depressing problems of India in rural economy is socio- economic conditions of agricultural workers. They are large in number and they are growing and living under the poverty line. They happen to be the most backward, the most exploited and most neglected class of the rural economy. Women labourer is an important segment of the total workforce in India. More than 90 percent of the working women in our country were engaged as wage labourers in the unorganized sector. Even after six decades of the development planning very little change has been seen in status of the women in our country. Most of the women are under employed and destitute and have a lot of domestic work load and they are ill paid and their contributions are unorganized. Hence it is necessary to study living and working conditions of the women Agricultural labourers.

### OBJECTIVES

- To study the socio – economic conditions of agricultural women labourers in the study area.
- To examine the working conditions of agricultural women labourers
- To analyze the problems faced by agricultural women labourers suggest suitable measures to improve their conditions.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Swamikannan and Jeyalakshmi (2015) study about women labour in Indian agricultural sector and found that female work participation rate has declined drastically during last few decades, which shows that female workers are moved from agricultural to non-agricultural activities because wage differences between male and female workers for the same type of work discourages female workers .

Lal and Khurana (2011), in their research paper entitled “Gender Issues: The role of women in agriculture sector” discussed about multidimensional roles and obstacles faced by women in terms of employment, wages, dual responsibility, education level. Though women share is very high in

agricultural and they are spending more hours for work on farm than men still they are paid less than males for the same work. Women are undervalued because of the predetermined notion that women's basic role is of homemaker. Therefore, they finally concluded that because of the lack of knowledge about their rights, rural agricultural women labors are exploited by their landlords.

V. Vetrivel, R. Manigandan (2013) in "An empirical study of agricultural labour in India" states that almost half of the world's agricultural workforce comprises of women. They are contributing from production to sale as well as preparation of food. Though traditionally role of women worker in agricultural was under-estimated. Women are working as paid labour or unpaid family member in agriculture in developing countries but they are still facing gender inequalities.

Chandrama Goswami (2013), in "Female agricultural workers in Assam: A case study of Darrang district" concluded that poor women are contributing more to household income by working as a labour even under poor working conditions and with lower wages to improve the economical conditions of the family. There were no land ownership amongst female and even they do not have any right on their earnings. Women accept to work in farms because they can get employment without proper training or education and it is temporary in nature. It was also proved that in spite of having more shares of females as agricultural labour than men, they get lower wages than males.

## METHODOLOGY

The study is based on primary data. Primary data is collected from the women agricultural labourers in Dindigul Block, Dindigul District. Dindigul Block has 14 Blocks of the total Blocks, Out of this Reddiyarchathiram Block was selected for indepth study. Reddiyarchathiram Block has 24 Panchayats with 250 villages. Since agricultural activities are concentrated in that area. Reddiyarchathiram. In these villages more of women agricultural labourers engaged in this work. Since 5 villages selected for the study, through these 20 women agricultural labourers of each village were selected through simple random sampling method. The size of sample used in this study was 100 samples.

## SOCIO ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF WOMEN AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS

AGE	NO.OF RESPONDENTS
Below 25	29
25-35	43
35-45	19
Above 45	9
TOTAL	100

Out of the 100 respondents 43 per cent of the respondents are in the age group of 25 to 35, 29 per cent of them between the age group of below 25, 19 per cent of them belonged to the age group of 35 to 45 and 9 per cent of them were between the age group of above 45.

## EDUCATIOAL STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS

EDUCATIONAL STATUS	NO.OF RESPONDENTS
ILLITERATE	48
PRIMARY LEVEL	36
HIGH SCHOOL	11
HIGHER SECONDARY	5
TOTAL	100

Out of 100 respondents 48 per cent of them has completed illustrated, 36 per cent of them were educated up to primary level, 11 per cent of them were high school and only 5 per cent of them were higher secondary.

### WAGE LEVEL OF THE RESPONDENTS

WAGE LEVEL	NO.OF RESPONDENTS
Below 100	56
100-120	29
120-140	10
Above 140	5
TOTAL	100

Out of 100 respondents 56 per cent have been between below 100/- per day, 29 per cent have been between 100-120/-per days, 10 per cent of them have been between 120-140/-per day and only 5 per cent of them have between above 140.

### MONTHLY INCOME OF THE RESPONDENTS

INCOME (Rs.)	NO.OF RESPONDENTS
BELOW 1500	17
1500-2000	32
Above 2000	51
TOTAL	100

Above the represents 51 respondent's are getting monthly income is under category of Rs above 2500 and 17 respondent's monthly income Rs above 2500.

### WORKING CONDITIONS OF AGRICULTURAL WOMEN LABOURERS. WORKING HOURS OF THE RESPONDENTS

WORKING HOURS	NO. OF THE RESPONDENTS
6 HOURS	12
7 HOURS	32
8 HOURS	56
TOTAL	100

Out of 100 respondents 56 per cent of the respondents for 8 hours, 32 per cent of them work for 7 hours and only 12 per cent of them work for 6 hours.

### TYPE OF AGRICULTURE OF RESPONDENTS

TYPE OF AGRICULTURE	NO. OF THE RESPONDENTS
MANN WING	10
SOWING OF SEEDS	17
PICKING	14
HARVESTING	9
TRANSPLANTING	24
WINNOWING	29
TOTAL	100

Out of 100 respondents 29 per cent of the respondents were engaged in winnowing, 24 per cent of the respondents were engaged in transplanting, 17 per cent of the respondents were engaged in

sowing of seeds, 14 per cent of the respondents were engaged in picking, 10 per cent of the respondents were engaged in Mann wing and 9 per cent of the respondents were engaged in harvesting.

### PROBLEMS OF THE RESPONDENTS

PROBLEMS	RANK
Health problem	III
Compulsory complication of work	II
Seasonal employment	V
Long distance	IV
Low wage	I

### PROBLEMS OF WOMEN AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS

#### LOW WAGE:

The major problems were low wage. More of labourers was have borrowed small amount of wages. Women labourers were work less than wages at working place.

#### SEASONAL EMPLOYMENT:

The second problems were seasonal employment. Sometimes women labourers was engaged in agricultural work. But other times not employment.

#### HEALTH PROBLEMS:

Third problems were health problems. Women labourers was headache pain, stomach pain, back pain, knee pain, etc.

#### COMPULSORY COMPLICATION OF WORK:

The women agricultural labourers faced by the problems were compulsory complication of work. Women labourers were compulsory finished work at working place.

#### LONG DISTANCE:

The fifth problems were long distance. Women labourers was long hours of reached in the working place

### FINDINGS

The important finding of the study reveals that,

- Among 100 respondents, 43 respondents were under the age group of 35-45 and 29 respondents between the age group of 25-35. The respondents between the age group of 25 - 45 were very active in agricultural.
- The study reveals that 40 percent of the women agricultural labourers are from SC community and 21 percent of the respondents are from MBC community.
- 100 percent of the agricultural women labourers are Hindu.
- The analysis on the marital status shows that 84 percent of the respondents are married people and 7 percent of the respondents are widow / Divorced
- The study shows 82 percent of the respondents have nuclear family and only 18 percent of the respondents to joint family
- The study reveals that 95 percent of the respondents have the family size below 5 and only 5 percent of the respondents have the family size of above 5.
- 36 percent of the respondents studied till primary education and 48 percent of the respondent were illiterates.



- 59 percent of the respondents were living in the concrete house and 29 percent of the respondents thatched house, 9 percent of the respondents were living in tilled house and only 4 percent of the respondents were living in terraced house
- 77 percent of the respondents were living in the own house and only 9 percent of the respondents leased house and 14 percent of the respondents were living in rented house.
- 39percent of them were hold in 05-10 cents and 35 percent of the respondents hold in 0-5 cents and only 6percent of the respondents hold in above 6 cents.
- 56 percents of the respondents have wage between Rs 80-100 per day and 29 percent of the respondents wage have between 100-120 and only 5percent of the respondents wage have between above 140.
- 60 percent of the respondents have earning income members between 1-2/- and only 13 percent of the respondents have income earning members between 3-4
- 78 percent of the respondents have daily wages.
- 48 percent of the respondents are earning income from other sources animal husbandry and 30 percent of the respondents are earning income from other sources of poultry farming.
- 56 percent of the respondents are casual labourers and only 6percent are permanent labourers
- 56 percent of the respondents for 8hours and only 12percent of the respondents for 6hours.
- 62 percent of the respondents are facing seasonal employment and only 6 percent of the respondents are facing regular employment
- Above the represents 51 respondent's are getting monthly income is under category of Rs above 2500 and 17 respondent's monthly income Rs above 2500.
- The analysis reveals that 66percent of the respondents have borrowed from the money lenders and only 7percent of the respondents have borrowed from the bank.
- 35 percent of them were family earning between Rs 3000-4000 and only 15 percent of the respondents were family earning between 1000-2000.
- The analysis reveals that in workers having different agricultural activities 29 percent of the respondents work in winnowing and 24 percent of respondents work in transplanting and only 9percent of the respondents work in harvesting.
- The study reveals that majority of the respondents facing low wage problem

### SUGGESTION

The following suggestions are made with a view to realize the objectives of the women agricultural labourers more fruitfully.

- Better minimum wage scheme should be implementated in agriculture.
- The government should come forward to help the women agricultural labourers
- Women agricultural labourers receive a monthly income below Rs2000 taking into account the rise in price level because of intiatiions prevailing in the economy, some strategies should be taken to increase their income.
- Better health facilities should be providing for the women agricultural labourers by the government through public health centres.
- Government should come forward with loan facilities for women agricultural labourers
- Women agricultural labourers can give more awareness about family planning
- Unlike industrial labour, women agricultural labourer has no social security, no earned leave, no sick leave, no pension etc. so security should be given to the women agricultural labour.
- While security should be given to the women agricultural labourers so that the problems of starvation and dependency in their old age can be avoided

Numbers of schemes has been intiated in planning period for providing employment to rural poor. the important one, being the rural work programme(RWP), cresh scheme for rural employment (CSRE), Employment Guarantee scheme(EGS), food for work programme (FWO), Rural labour employoyment Guarantee Programme(RLGP) and training of Rural youth for self employment

(TRYSEM) and other similar programme to help the down trodden, second step should be taken by the government to implement these programme seriously.

### CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the main factors responsible for poor conditions of women agricultural labourers are ignorance, negligence, illiteracy and poverty of labourers. While socio consciousness gained strict laws are made, the exploitation labourers. May not come to an end near future we have to do a lot for the liberation of labour force in Indian agriculture, otherwise it will become a main constraint for socio-economic development of women agricultural labourers.

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