



## Problems and Challenges of Women Workers in Unorganized Sectors

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### Abstract

This paper mainly focus on the problems and challenges of women workers in unorganized manner. Unorganized sector comprises of major part of Indian Economy. In unorganized sector, those enterprises and employments are involved which are unregistered under any legal provision. More than 90% man power contributes in unorganized sector globally. In, Indian scenario, 86% of human resource is employed in unorganized sector. 91% of women workers in unorganized sector are rendering their services. This study focuses on presenting real picture of current conditions of women workers in India who are involved in different kinds of unorganized occupations. This paper throws light on their role, nature of work, living standards and their problems which they are facing frequently in unorganized sector. This paper outlines the acts and schemes by Indian government framed for empowerment of women economically and to prevent them from exploitation.

**Key Words:** Unorganized Sector, Women Workers, Exploitation, Problems, Empowerment, inequality, discrimination.

### Introduction

The Indian constitution assures equality of men and women. Besides of so many efforts from past years, female section of society is deprived in compared to male section. They are not given first priority in social and economic decisions in her own family. According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report, the report analyzed that women are involved in doing 67% work of world; still they are socially and economically deprived. They are receiving only 10% of the universal income and have 1% part in global assets. This discrimination also persists in their work place in unorganized sector. In informal sector, women workers don't get same wages for same nature of work for same hours done by men. They are exploited at workplace. They are some acts i.e. The Unorganized Workers Social Security Act, 2008, Domestic Workers Welfare and Social Security Act, 2010 etc. but due to their improper implementation, women workers are forced to work and live in miserable conditions in unorganized sector

### **Definition of unorganized sector**

Although, it is difficult to give a concise and holistic definition of unorganized labour. Unorganized labour stands for scattered and fragmented workforces working individually sometimes loosely associated, in various occupations. Unorganized labour is not formally cohesive in any recognized association and union with defined ideology, goals and areas of specialization. The unorganized sector of the economy in India is the largest sector in term of employment of the workforce. It consists of agriculture and such related activities as forestry, livestock and fishing as well as non-agriculture. The bill of National Commission for Enterprises in the unorganized sector, 2006 presented by the government of India, broadly divided the works of unorganized sector into self-employment and wage workers.

### **Unorganized Sector: An Overview**

According to the National Commission For Enterprises in the unorganized sector (NCEUS), government of India defined the unorganized sector which consists all unincorporated enterprises owned by individuals or households less than 10 total workers involved in sale or production of goods and service on proprietary and partnership. (Report on conditions of work of work and promotions of livelihood in the unorganized sector Academic foundation, 1 Jan. 2008 P.1774) The unorganized sector lacks all features of organized sector. It can be notified by the salient features i.e. seasonal employment, no employer and employee relations, no well-defined rights and lack of social security. Domestic paid workers, street vendor, construction laborers, agricultural laborers and home based workers are engaged in unorganized sector.

### **Nature of Unorganized Sector:**

- a) No restriction on entry and exit.
- b) Ownership is in family hands in unorganized sector
- c) Autarchy and resilience.
- d) It may be legal or illegal.
- e) No record of income.
- f) Ignorance of government towards this sector.

### **Research Methodology**

The study is descriptive in nature and based on secondary data. So secondary sources have been used for data collection. In this regard, data is collected and reviewed from various reports, journals, books and official websites relevant to area of the present enquiry.

### **Objective of the Study**

This paper has an attempt:

- a) To study the role of women workers in unorganized sector.
- b) To understand the nature of work of women workers in unorganized sector.
- c) To outline the problems of women workers in different industries of unorganized sector.

- d) To outline some act and laws of government to prevent women workers from exploitation.
- e) To find out the measures to empower the women in unorganized sector.

### **Role of Women Worker**

In unorganized sector 96 % of women are employed. In the unorganized sector, women workers in construction industry brick making, domestic paid works, household industries etc. In rural informal sector women workers are involved in agriculture, dairy, fisheries etc. (Dr. Vandana Dave 2012).

Women are working in very risky and insecure work conditions. They are not benefited with adequate wage and medical facilities. They are exploited in many ways. There are no proper laws for making their working conditions better and to prevent them health hazards. Local factors fixed their wages, working hours (Jenna.N, n .d)

Women work for long hours without proper safety and security; they even don't get proper overtime for extra hours and leave. There is no social security for women workers in unorganized sector. (National Commission for Enterprises in Unorganized Sector, NCEUS, 2004, para 1.4 g.h.i.)

The main concerns are highlighted in study of commission tour:

1. Lack of concern of government towards women workers.
2. How women are still unnoticed at all level (Bhatt. E. 1998)

### **Review of Literature**

**Vasudev and Romica (2012)** this article analyzed the problems and challenges of women workers in unorganized manner. The Vasudev and Romica administered a study on women workers in organized sector and unorganized sector. They tried to find out the status of women worker in their family, their participation in financial decision and in home responsibilities.

Usha P.E., defines the impact and key factors of women workers in unorganized sector in their study. It is found in study that in textile sales sector, women works are getting very less wages than minimum fixed wages for their work. They are divested from service advantages i.e. increment, pension, P.F. and insurance. They belong to lower class and they face exploitation in different manners.

**Unni (1989)** inferred by their study that women workers bear more work but still they are most underprivileged section of the workers. They work for 12 to 14 hours daily but still their work are not counted as economic activity. Their work is not a part of National Product.

**Saran and Sandhewar (1990)** explained the problem of female worker employed in unorganized sector. Study disclosed the fact that women workers are facing problem of exploitation, low wages, and long working hour's i.e. migrant worker for 14-16 hours and local workers work for 8-10 hours. Some factors such as illiteracy, socially backward classes and obligations are usual.

They were struggling with many problems reprimand, fraud, menacing, assault and sexual exploitation in unorganized sector.

**Sultania (1994)** carried a micro level on women workers involved as contract laborers They analyzed the features, description, contracting, reasons of inequality and its impact on women. They found that women worker are sexually, socially, economically exploited in construction industry .The feature of illiteracy, lower wages, men's supremacy, long working hours i.e. 10-12 hours per day, absence of medical and leave benefits were found present.

**Anand (1998)** examined the attributes of migrant women construction workers and taken interference strategy to smoothen the services and make them aware about their rights and usage. According to Anand, NGO and other organization are very crucial units in creating awareness, unionism and cooperativeness for raising better wages and their working conditions.

**Srinivasan (2000)** focused on women's occupation and its trend in their study. He came to the conclusion that in unorganized sector, women workers had not right to raise voice and there is no legal support.

**Singh (2002)** concluded after study on domestic paid workers of Ranchi district, that due to ignorance and lack of education, they are deprived and exploited. There were also loopholes in recruitment system. They were not getting proper wages, medical facilities and leaves. They were not professional trained. They were unaware about alternative income sources. Bargaining powers was also lacking in domestic workers. Fatalism and credulity were all around them. It is reported in the study, the large no of dependent as a cause of their lower living standard and indebtedness.

**Das Kabita, Das B.K. Mohanty, Subhransubala (2012)** conducted his study to know intensity of social security of women workers in unorganized sector in Odisha. They selected Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj and Cuttack district for his sample survey. They enquired 1000 random selected women from each district about measures of taken by government of Odisha, The findings showed lack of social security measures in unorganized sector.

**Geetha K.T. (2010)** focused on socio economic study of women workers in urban organized sector. In his study primary data collected through interview schedule which is conducted on 100 women. Study concludes that women workers were overwhelmed with work and deprived in unorganized sector .The study endorsed for preparing policies for improving working and living situation of working women in unorganized sector.

### **Categories of women workers in unorganized sector**

1. **Rag pickers:** Rag picker is a person who salvages reusable or recyclable materials thrown away by others to sell or for personal consumption. There are millions of waste pickers worldwide, predominantly in developing countries. The global population of urban dwellers is expected to double

between 1987 and 2015, with 90% of this growth occurring in developing countries. The United Habitat Report found that nearly one billion people worldwide live in slums, about a third of the world's urban dwellers.

2. **Domestic workers:** In 1977-78, there were some 1.68 million female domestic workers, while the number of male workers was only 0.62 million. A study of domestic workers in Delhi (Neetha 2004) [8] shows that although domestic work has brought higher incomes to many women and their families it is still far from decent work being characterized by long working hours, low wages and hardly any social security. Domestic workers are more vulnerable than other kinds of workers because they are not officially classified as workers at all and are therefore not covered by laws that apply to workers.

3. **Coolies:** Women coolies basically do the job of loading/unloading of packages being received at railway stations to warehouses and from warehouses/ go downs to further distribution centers.

4. **Vendors:** This is the most scattered category, which includes women engaged in selling different types of commodities, like broomsticks, cane baskets, utensils, petty cosmetics, bangles, vegetables and those running roadside tea stalls, etc. Nearly 40% of total vendors are women and 30% of these women are the sole earning members in their families.

5. **Beauticians:** A large number of women are employed as beauticians. A large portion of the beauty saloons/parlours fall under the unorganized sector and are characterized by informal employment. According to a study on Human Resource and Skill Requirements in the Unorganized Sector: mapping of human resource skill gaps in India till 2022 carried out by National Skill Development Corporation, Mumbai, the demand for personal care/ body care would drive the demand for beauticians.

6. **Construction labourers:** The construction industry provides direct employment to at least 30 million workers in India (but recent expansions has resulted in a higher number: trade unions estimate that there were roughly 40 million migrant construction workers in India in 2008. Women work mainly as unskilled workers.

7. **Garment workers:** The garment industry is a subsector of the textile industry and also generates many jobs for migrant workers. India's readymade garment exports increased significantly as a share of total exports (12% or Rs 254780 million in 2001-02). The women work as helpers to male/femaletailors (called as masters). These workers include those involved in knitting clothes/woolens.

### **Problems of women in unorganized sector**

A large number of women from rural areas migrate to cities and towns all over India. Most of these women and girls are illiterate and unskilled. They work in inhuman conditions in cities as their living standard is extremely poor. It is a recognized fact that there is still no society in the world in which women workers enjoy the same opportunities as men. According to the 2001 census about 96% of women workers in India are in unorganized sector. The women unorganized sector are facing so many problems:

1. **Lack of education:** Illiteracy is the biggest problem because they do not get time to educate themselves. In childhood, they have to start working early which do not allow them to go school.
2. **Insufficient skill & knowledge:** Majority of female do not have proper training and skills aligned to their task. This result is excessive stress and inefficient working.
3. **Exploitation of the female labour:** Female worker are more vulnerable to exploitation by employer. They can be easily threatened of their job for indecent favours.
4. **Insecure job:** Absence of strong legislation controlling the unorganized sector makes the job highly insecure in this sector.
5. **Non sympathetic attitude of employer:** Temporary nature of employment in this sector does not allow the bond between the employee and employer to establish and become strong.
6. **Extreme work pressure:** Female are overworked, they work twice as many hours as worked by their male counterpart. In agriculture sector the condition is the worst. When measured in terms of number of tasks performed and the total time spent, it is greater than men as per one study in Himalayas which found that on a one-hectare farm, a pair of bullocks' works 1064 hours, a man 1212 hours and a woman 3485 hours in a year.
7. **Irregular wages payment:** There is lack of controlled processes in unorganized sector which results in to untimely payment of wages to the workers. When it comes to payment to female, it is even worst.
8. **Wage discrimination:** Female do not get similar payment to the male for same work.
9. **Seasonal employment:** Many of the unorganized sector industries are seasonal. These industries includes fruits processing, pickle making, agricultural sector, construction sector etc. They have to fetch another employment when there is no work during offseason.
10. **Physical problems:** The working conditions are not healthy. Work place is not ergonomically designed. This results into workers facing fatigue resulting physical problems. Female workers are mostly on such tasks where they need to remain in one position such as agriculture. This results on to saviour problems such as backache and knee-ach.

#### **Problems and Challenges of Women Workers in Unorganized Sector**

- a) There is no sustainability of employment of women workers in unorganized sector.
- b) They are not getting proper training in unorganized sector.
- c) They don't get right to raise their voice and interrupt in financial decision in their own family.
- d) Exploitation is the main problem of female workers in unorganized sector.

- e) In unorganized sector women are exempted from maternity benefit and child care facilities.
- f) Women workers frequently face discrimination due to gender inequality
- g) In unorganized sector women workers do not have benefit of minimum wage act or factories Act.

### **Acts and Programs for Women in Unorganized Sector**

Government of India has formulated some act and programs for women workers in unorganized sector-

1. **Domestic workers and social security Act, 2010:** Women and child are more vulnerable exploitation so government has formulated this act for providing them better working conditions including registration.
2. **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA):** MGNREGA has played a remarkable role in employment of women workers in organized sector. It has created better working conditions same wage to women and men.
3. **Unorganized sector workers Act 2008:** The workers felicitation center (WFC) irresponsible for implementing the act. Under this act , various schemes are
  - a) Janani Suraksha Yojna
  - b) National Family Benefit Scheme
  - c) Rastriya Swasthya Bima Yojna
- 4 **Cooperative intervention:** Cooperative provides employment and opportunities provided to women worker for earning income. Corporative tries to make balance in individual need and communing needs by empowering them.

### **Measures for empowerment of women in unorganized sector:**

1. Providing basic education to women so that they become aware about the schemes and facilities about the schemes for them.
2. Make women aware of technical and financial assistance available to women entrepreneurs, and to encourage them through concessions and incentives.
3. Adequate training should be provided to women workers
4. There should be proper guidelines for recruitment process working hours and for health hazards.
5. A supervisory body should be established to monitor the proper implemented of legislation and provision related to women workers
6. There is need of more effective poverty alleviation program.
7. Co-operative should be promoted because they are important role in improving the socioeconomic conditions of women workers
8. Government should focus on promoting gender equality and empowerment of women

### **Conclusion**

Women workers have dual responsibility of home and work. There are various reasons for pitiable conditions of women in unorganized sector i.e. gender discrimination, poverty, lack of basic knowledge, ignorance of government, inadequate laws which are failing to prevent them.

For the betterment of women in unorganized sector, government need to prepare statistics records of employed women. On the basis of this record government has to prepare programs for educating women for their rights. Central and state government had launched many schemes for providing support to women but there are not sufficient to overcome the problems of women workers. There is need of effective implementation of these schemes and laws for empowering the women workers.

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