

## An Analytical Study of Socio-Economic Condition of Women Agricultural Labourers in Meerut District

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### Abstract

In Indian matrix, women agriculture labourers perform extensive farming jobs, still their ingress to resources is very low than their male counterparts. Women labours contribute about 70% of the total required labour in the agriculture field. The majority of the woman labour subsist their livelihood by working on agriculture field either as cultivators or as agriculture labour. Traditionally, agriculture is weather oriented less profitable sector, allowed to migrate large number of men from rural to urban areas to get higher paid jobs for their life span. During migration of men, female take responsibility of the family so they move towards agriculture labour sector while they get utmost less payment. Their participation and contribution in the farm sector are unaccounted and unrecognised in the mainstream of Indian's economic. Thus, the present research paper is highlighting the socio-economic conditions of women agriculture labour. An attempt has been made to find out the problems faced by women agriculture labour at domestic and work place level in pathauli Panchayat, Sarurpur block, Meerut district and their perspective towards rural developmental programmes.

**Key words:** Women Agriculture Labour, Socio-Economic Condition, Development Programmes, Decision-making, Discrimination.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

India is a agrarian centric economy and agriculture is considered as a backbone of the country. It is the largest sector of the state economy where 54.6% of the population is tie up in agriculture and allied activities (census 2011) and contributed around 17% of India's Gross Value Added (GVA) at 2011-12 basic prices. The share of agriculture in GDP has decline rapidly in the recent year.

It is well known to everyone that the women agriculture labourers are almost neglected class in the Indian society. They get surprisingly low wages for their hard work under the worst situation than their male counterparts. A large number of women performed in agriculture and allied activities in addition to their domestic task in rural area. They have performed multi- dimensional role and play a pivotal role in the development process also. For the last few year government pays particular attention to women development through social change, gender budgeting and provide special provision for women in rural developmental programmes but still they are underprivileged. The socio-economic development of women labour can be achieved only when a large number of women are initiated and motivated to adopt training and development programmes, new agriculture techniques, farm related education and adapt according to environmental change.

Agriculture women in India are not enjoying independence in their decision-making relating family affairs despite of significant contribution in Indian economy. Their movement outside home is also restricted, which compelled them to work within nearest boundaries at low wages and insufficient employment."We have been doing farming for ages. My mother- in- law did it, I am doing it, my daughter and daughter-in-law will do it. But what we need and will cherish is an identity of our own. There is not identity of being a women farmer." Bholi Devi, Harpur village, Bihar. This is the one voice in millions of women agriculture labour in India whose voices are not often go heard, and who struggle to recognize their identity at grounds level due to social constraints. The vision of empowering Indian's women will not be completed until empowering to those, who live India's last edge. It is essential to fill the gap between men and women in order to speed up the growth in agriculture sector. Contributions of women in agriculture are most significant not only in India but also across the world. The UN's food and agriculture organisation (FAO) estimates that "if women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20-30%. This could raise total the agricultural output in developing countries by up to 4%, which could in turn reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12-17% that's 100-150 million people". Therefore, an inclusive approach from plan to execution is essential to bring women agriculture labourers into the mainstream as well as empowers them with direct benefits of the developmental policy.

In addition to, a significant number of women agriculture labour is belong to other backward class(OBC), scheduled caste(SC), and scheduled tribes(ST). Hence, they are related to aggrieved class. Women labourers have nothing besides their labour to exert for earning livelihood. They are not well established and can not exercise their rights properly. Due to all these reasons their financial status and recognition as a farmer in the mainstream has failed to build notwithstanding five-six decades of developmental programmes and efforts.

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The literature review provides an opportunity to the researchers to gain comprehensive knowledge into the technique and approaches used by other researchers and helps the investigator to design the research.

**Scourge(1957)** stated that the women's participation in agriculture Sector is more than men, they performed exhausted and long duration activity in the agriculture field as well as get lower wages in comparison of the men also.

**Chaudhari and Gonorkar (1992)** denoted that the agriculture women faced many difficulties in agriculture majority of the women agriculture labour engaged in agriculture activities such as harvesting, threshing, uprooting of seedlings, storage of production, transplanting weeding, hoeing and cleaning. Further they conclude that majority of the women labour faced difficulties like low wages, insufficient irrigation and loans even though their contribution is very high in comparison of the men in agriculture.

**Chandra Sekhar C P and Jayati Ghosh (1999)** in "Feminisation of India's agricultural workforce" pointed out that the increased strength of women agriculture labour may be caused by migration of men from low wages agriculture sector to high wages industrial sector.

**Sobha (2001)** finds that only rural women depends on agriculture activities for their livelihood. Most of them belong to other backward class and schedule class having poor financial position. Moreover caste plays a dominant role to assign employment as a agricultural labourers for women belonged to lower cast, therefore socio-economic condition give a great impact on women in our society.

**Tahir Munir Butt et al. (2010)** in the paper "Role of Rural Women in Agricultural Development and their constraints", found that the rural women play an important role in agriculture such as live stock production, crops production, cultivation, gardening and cottage industry too but they have insufficient access to new technique, education and training services, information resources, agricultural extension and other resources. It has been concluded that male dominated society, cultural practices, conventional belief system were prime social constraints faced by rural women.

## **3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To examine the problems faced by women agricultural labour in Meerut District.
- To analyses the socio-economic condition of women agricultural labour in Meerut District.
- To study the awareness regarding welfare schemes for agriculture labourers.
- To explore the usage of women developmental schemes by the female agriculture labour.

## **4. METHODOLOGY**

The study was mainly based on the primary data. A structured questionnaire and observation technique has been organized by the researcher to collect the primary data with special reference to Pathauli Panchayat which is located in Sarurpur Block, Sardhana Tehsile in Meerut District. In addition, secondary data have also been used for intensive study.

A Purposive random sampling technique was used to collect the sample to accomplish the requirement of the study. Earlier 70 women agricultural labour were selected randomly as respondents for the present research in the selected panchayat but later on only 50 female agricultural labour were responded in a right manner, so we selected 50 women agriculture

labour among them to examine their socio-economic condition and their awareness regarding developmental schemes.

### Major Findings

After the field survey, the data has been classified and interpreted in a simplified manner to be familiar with the state of women agricultural labourers in the Pathauli Panchayat.

**Table No-1: Classification of the Respondents according to their Age**

Age in years	Frequency	Percentage
15-30	15	30
30-45	18	36
45 & above	17	34
Total	50	100

*Source: Primary data*

From the field study table-1 explains the age-wise distribution of the sample respondents. In age wise distribution 18(36%) women agriculture labourers out of 50 are belong to the age group of 30-45 year followed by 15(30%) belongs to 15-30 year age group and remaining respondents 17(34%) are belongs to the 45 & above age group in the study.

**Table No-2: Classification of the Respondents according to their Education**

Education	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	18	36
1st-8th	15	30
8th-12th	17	34
Total	50	100

*Source: Primary data*

From the survey table-2 explains the distribution of the respondents regarding their educational status. Table shows most of the respondents i.e. 18(36%) out of 50 are belongs to the illiterates category, 15(30%) respondents have studied either Primary or Middle school level only and 17(34%) of the women agriculture labour have studied up to Secondary level in this research.

**Table No-3: Classification of the Respondents according to their Caste**

Caste	Frequency	Percentage
OBC	41	82
SC	07	14
Other caste	02	04
Total	50	100

*Source: Primary data*

From the survey table-3 explains the caste-wise distribution, majority 41(82%) of the female labourers are belongs to the other backward class in this study. Further, nearly 07(14%) respondents are in scheduled cast and remaining of the respondents i.e. 02(04%) belongs to the other caste.

**Table No-4: Classification of the Respondents according to their Monthly income**

Monthly Income (Rs.)	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 3000	33	66
3000-5000	12	24
5000 & above	05	10
Total	50	100

*Source: Primary data*

Based on field investigation table-4 shows the response of the respondents about monthly income and it is noteworthy that the majority 33(66%) of the respondents out of 50 are able to earn less than 3000 per month, Further 12(24%) belongs to 3000-5000 category and rest of the respondents getting 5000 and above on monthly basis.

**Table No-5: Classification of the Respondents according to their size of familye**

Size of family	Frequency	Percentage
Small (1-3)	28	56
Medium (3-5)	17	34
Large (5 & above)	05	10
Total	50	100

Source: Primary data

Table-5 shows classification of the respondents according to their size of family and found that nearly 28(56%) the respondents out of 50 are having 1 to 3 member in family followed by 17(34%) having 3-5 (medium) members in the family and remaining respondents i.e. 05 (10%) belongs to the large (5 &above) family in this study.

**Table No-6: Classification of the Respondents according to their House**

Type of House	Frequency	Percentage
Pucca House	08	16
Semi-pucca House	36	72
Kutchra House	06	12
Total	50	100

Source: Primary data

On the basis of survey table-6 reveals that the majority of the respondents i.e. 36(72%) out of 50 are living in the semi-pucca house followed by 08(16%) belongs to pucca house and rest of the respondents are used kutchra house for their livelihood in the study.

**Table No-7: Classification of the Respondents according to their Mode of Savings**

Mode of Savings	Frequency		Total	
	Yes	No	Number	%
SHG	31(62%)	19(38%)	50	100
Banks	21(42%)	29(58%)	50	100
Insurance	03(06%)	47(94%)	50	100
Cooperative society	09(18%)	41(82%)	50	100
No savings	13(26%)	37(74%)	50	100

Source: Primary data

From the study, the table-7 explains the response of the respondents about their mode of savings. It is observed that nearly 31(62%) respondents out of 50 have to be the possessor of savings through SHGs. further 21(42%) in banks 03(06%) in insurance, 09(18%) in cooperative society respectively. Besides, it is noteworthy that 13(26%) respondents out of 50 not have any savings. Moreover from the study, it is observed that most (55%) of the respondents have not any type of land holdings for their livelihood and followed by (40%) of the women agriculture labour holdings their own cultivable land as marginal farmer in the study area.

**Table No-8: Classification of the Respondents according to awareness on Rural Developmental Schemes**

Rural Developmental Schemes	Frequency		Total	
	Yes	No	Number	%
SHG	31(62%)	19(38%)	50	100
MGNREGA	47(94%)	03(06%)	50	100
Cooperative	41(82%)	09(18%)	50	100
DRDA	06(12%)	44(88%)	50	100
KCC	38(76%)	12(24%)	50	100
SGSY	07(14%)	43(86%)	50	100

Source: Primary data

Table-8 reveals the response of the respondents according to the awareness on rural development schemes. It is noticed that the greater part of the respondents are very much aware regarding rural development schemes such as SHG 31(62%); MGNREGA 47(94%); Cooperative 41(82%); DRDA 06(12%); KCC 38(76%); SGSY 07(14%) respectively. Alongside, it is noteworthy that a great number of respondents are unaware regarding DRDA(88%), SGSY(86%), and KCC(24%) respectively.

**Table No-9: Classification of the Respondents according to their usages of developmental schemes**

Development Schemes	Frequency		Total	
	Yes	No	Number	%
MGNREGA	39(78%)	11(22%)	50	100
SHG	31(62%)	19(38%)	50	100
SGSY	07(14%)	43(86%)	50	100
DRDA	06(12%)	44(88%)	50	100
KCC	09(18%)	41(82%)	50	100

Source: Primary data

From field survey, table-9 denotes that a great number of respondent 39(78%) out of 50 have reap the benefits from MGNREGA followed by 31(62%) of respondents used SHG facilities, 07(14%) SGSY; 06(12%) DRDA and 09(18%) KCC respectively. Although it is heartening to note that a significant number of respondents have not utilized any advantages of development schemes such as 43(86%) SGSY; 44(88%) DRDA; 41(82%) KCC respectively.

**Table No-10: Classification of the Respondents according to their Problems faced at Domestic Level**

S. No.	Type of Problems	Frequency		Total	
		Yes	No	Number	%
1.	Victim of domestic violence	28(56%)	22(44%)	50	100
2.	Intake nutrient-rich food	25(50%)	25(50%)	50	100
3.	Decision-Making power	14(28%)	36(72%)	50	100
4.	Nurture family properly	20(40%)	30(60%)	50	100
5.	Alcoholic spouse	31(62%)	19(38%)	50	100

Source: Primary data

Based on the survey table-10 found that great number of strength i.e. 28(56%) faced domestic violence through their family members. With regard to decision-making power, nearly 36(72%) respondents have no rights to make decision on their own for their family. Further, it is heartening to note that the half 50% of the respondents have not consumed nutrient-rich food for their survival and half 50% respondents are long way away from an ideal diet followed by 30(60%) women agriculture labour are not able to nurture their family properly while going to work. Regarding alcoholic habit of spouse near about 31(62%) respondents open up about their husbands' drinking habit on daily basis.

**Table No-11: Classification of the Respondents according to their Problems faced at Work Place**

S. No.	Types of Problems	Frequency		Total	
		Yes	No	Number	%
1.	Work Overloading	38(76%)	12(24%)	50	100
2.	Get fair wages	07(14%)	43(43%)	50	100
3.	Get sufficient employment	12(24%)	38(38%)	50	100
4.	Sex wise discrimination	47(94%)	03(06%)	50	100
5.	Wage discrimination at work	50(100%)	-	50	100

Source: Primary data

The table-11 shows problem faced by respondents at their work place. Most respondents 38(76%) out of 50 were exploited by overloading from work. Further, only 07(14%) women agriculture labour get fair and sufficient wage and 12(24%) get sufficient employment for their livelihood. Moreover, almost all respondents faced discrimination at work place on the subject of sex and wage such as 47(94%) sex and 50(100%) wage respectively.

**Table No-12: Classification of the Respondents according to their Preference to Non-Agriculture work and their Perspective on Development schemes**

Variable	Sub-Group	Frequency		Total	
		Yes	No	Number	%
Preference to non-agriculture work	MGNREGA	50(100%)	-	50	100
	Industrial Labour	38(76%)	12(24%)	50	100
	Construction Work	32(64%)	18(36%)	50	100
	Domestic Service	28(56%)	22(44%)	50	100
Perspective on Development schemes	Manage daily life affairs	04(08%)	46(92%)	50	100
	To get sound economics position	11(22%)	39(78%)	50	100
	Supportive and helpful	26(52%)	24(48%)	50	100
	Upgraded social condition-through wages	34(68%)	16(32%)	50	100

Source: Primary data

Based on investigation table-12 explains that more than half respondents have shown their preference for working other than agriculture activities such as MGNREGA 50(100%); Industrial labour 38(76%); Construction work 32(64%); Domestic service 28(56%) respectively. Further, it is

noteworthy that merely 04(08%) women agriculture labourers are able to manage their daily life affairs during working on agriculture sector followed by only 11(22%) respondents are enabled to get sound economics position through agricultural work and to overcome their economics crisis. Moreover 48% of the respondents felt that these development schemes are not enough for support and help due to lack of feasibility and around 68% of the respondents felt that these schemes have upgrade their standard of living through wages in this study.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

It is verified by the field survey of this research study that female agricultural labourers play a vital role in agricultural activities and economic activities through their wage earnings. The study denoted that women who have engaged in the agriculture operations either as cultivators or as agriculture labourers mostly belong to the age group of (30-40) and (45& above). It is noteworthy that majority of the illiterate and lower income group (>3000) of women labourers are engaged in farming and they belong to the other backward class (OBC) and oppressed class of the society. The study revealed that maximum of the respondents around three-fourth of the total respondent lived in semi-pucca house even through about 26% of the respondents not have any savings due to Little earning. They just live from hand to mouth.

Moreover, in India just after independence Central Government as well as State Government took many forwarding steps to provide socially and economically stability to the India's last Periphery therefor, keeping this in mind the government had put key objective of first five year plan was to promote agriculture growth and launch many developmental Programmes time to time for rural development . This study ensure that maximum of the respondents have award and exploited the opportunity provided by the government's developmental programs such as - SHG , Co-operative Society, MGNREGA etc. But it is heartening to note that a maximum number of respondents have not award regarding the same, so some Development Scheme such as DRDA, KCC, SGSY respectively have not become so popular. The research also found that more than half respondents are unable to nurture their family properly during agricultural work. The half of the respondents have not taken nutrient rich food for their persistent life due to poor financial position and 56% of the respondents are victim of the domestic violence which leads them unpeaceful mind. Apart from the 66% of the female labour performed excessive work without any consideration in the agriculture field and also faced discrimination in order to cast, religion, sex and compensation at workplace. About more than three-fourth of the respondents have not got fair wages and sufficient employment to fulfill their basic needs. During out of season of agriculture activities most of the agriculture oriented female labour preferred to go for non-agricultural work such as MANREGA, industrial labour, construction work and domestic service etc. Even though, majority of the agriculture labourers have agreed that the rural developmental programmes and agriculture activities have improved their social-economic status but not at significant level. These programmes are not enough helpful and supportive for their smooth survival. Hence, government should launch many other programmes and schemes which provide direct benefits to them such as Training and Development Institutes especially for women labours, Kisan Mela at every district level so that they could be familiar with the new technologies, Sought out for eliminating gender discrimination and fix minimum wages and working hours to protect their interest.



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