

# Discrimination of gender in agriculture sector in Andhra Pradesh

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## Abstract

Human resources in an economy constitute a significant input in the production process of goods and services. The study of human resources, their quality and problems is of immense use in manpower planning in both developing as well as developed economies. Due to low employment potential in other sectors; most of the population is forced to be dependent on agriculture. Employment in agriculture is mostly seasonal and intermittent in character. The labourers suffer with seasonal unemployment. During the periods of peak agricultural activity, the demand for labour is high and during the off season they have to face acute unemployment problem. In the areas where multiple cropping is practiced, the labourers get employment throughout the year with minimum period of unemployment. The low wages are responsible for their sub human standard of living. It is highly difficult for an agricultural labourer to make their both ends meet with these low wages. The chronic imbalance between labour supply and complementary resource in agriculture is normally expected to result in fixing up of wages subsistence levels over large parts of the country. Female labour use will be high in case of paddy than male labourers. The intensive and difficult nature of operation in case of sugarcane requires mostly male labour. Since, agricultural sector experiences excessive dependence of population eking out their livelihood. In the absence of alternative work, they joined the ranks of agricultural labour to earn their living. Their low standard of living permits them to be satisfied with subsistence and low wage.

**Keywords:** Agriculture, agriculture labour, crop wise employment, wage rates, wage differentials, minimum wages, agriculture co-operatives.

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Human resources in an economy constitute a significant input in the production process of goods and services. The study of human resources, their quality and problems is of immense use in manpower planning in both developing as well as developed economies. Most of the population is depending upon agriculture which is contributing to about half of the national income in our country. The character of Indian economic development reflects in the nature and magnitude of agricultural development of the country. Agricultural labour constitutes an overwhelmingly predominant% in the rural workforce. Agricultural labourers

constitute the largest role of the labourers and they constitute one of the biggest slices of Indian population. The agricultural labour is provided mostly by backward classes and other depressed classes who are economically poor and socially downtrodden since the days immemorial. Most of the scheduled caste population is depending upon the wage paid employment in agriculture to eke out their livelihood. The agriculture labourers have to work in cold and hot weather from sunrise to sunset. Their wages are low when compared to industrial labourers. They are generally custom bound. They suffer from many social handicaps

and majority of these handicaps are interconnected with economic problems which overweigh other problem. The low incomes only enable them to have low levels of living. The low standard of living further causes social disabilities and malnutrition. This ultimately results in low efficiency of labour leading to low labour productivity in agriculture. These agricultural labourers are suffering due to unemployment, underemployment and low wages. Due to low employment potential in other sectors; most of the population is forced to be dependent on agriculture. Employment in agriculture is mostly seasonal and intermittent in character. The labourers suffer with seasonal unemployment. During the periods of peak agricultural activity, the demand for labour is high and during the off season they have to face acute unemployment problem. In the areas where multiple cropping is practiced, the labourers get employment throughout the year with minimum period of unemployment.

The low wages are responsible for their sub human standard of living. It is highly difficult for an agricultural labourer to make their both ends meet with these low wages. In certain occupations women workers are paid lower wages than men. The inevitable result is that they are mostly semi-starved, not having sufficient physical strength to perform all agricultural operations in a proper manner. The chronic imbalance between labour supply and complementary resource in agriculture is normally expected to result in fixing up of wages subsistence levels over large parts of the country. The productivity of Indian agriculture is marginally lower than many countries in the world, which limits the employer's capacity to pay, so that few can afford to raise the wages above the prevailing level. Agricultural labourers are paid on a daily basis or yearly basis depending upon the type of labour they provide. The agricultural labourers are paid usually on daily basis. In case they are employed regularly for three or four days for one operation of a single farmer, the amount will be paid in one installment calculated on daily basis. Wages are also paid on piece rate basis in operations like sowing, harvesting, transplantation and works connected with it. A few workers coming together as a group enter into an agreement with the cultivator to complete agricultural operations. They will be paid the entire amount agreed upon immediately after the activity is finished. The amount

will be shared by the labourers among themselves. Sometimes, particularly in the case of groundnut harvest, wages are paid in kind proportionately with the produce harvested labourers. The agricultural labourers are conscious of the fact that there are various factors that determine the method of wage payment. Naturally if the prices of the food commodities are low the labourers will demand cash wage and if the prices of food commodities are high they demand wage in kind. It is believed generally that kind payments may increase or decrease in quantity as well as in quality with a good or bad harvest. But it has not proved to be correct. But we can safely generalize that tradition and custom play a dominant role in the method of wage payment. In India, population, agricultural labour and total workers are fast growing from 1901 to till today. The agricultural labour and total workers purely depending on wage paid employment. In the areas where multiple cropping is practiced, the labourers get employment throughout the year with minimum period of unemployment. Although several years of planned development have passed, still the conditions of agricultural labour are miserable and the meager incomes are resulting in low standard of living. Agricultural labour is provided mostly by BC/SC/ST and other depressed classes who are socially handicapped from the earlier days and are leading a life of misery. So the present study has been undertaken with the purpose of studying employment and wages positions of agricultural labourers in Andhra Pradesh. The objectives are:

### Objectives

To study the pattern of employment and wages of agricultural labour for different crops through operations wise and

To find out the nature of employment and wages for male and female labour through the operations wise.

### Hypothesis

The pattern of employment and wages of agricultural labour depend upon crops and operation patterns,

The nature of employment and wages are different in males and females in operations wise.

To examine the objectives of this study, relevant data were collected from both primary and secondary

sources. The primary data included information collected directly from the sample respondents through a field survey in the study area of Andhra Pradesh. The schedules were pretested and necessary improvements were made before conducting the survey. In addition to primary data, a good bit of information was collected from secondary data. Both the sources were use put to for the study.

### Sample Design

A multi-stage stratified random sampling frame is used for collection of the primary data. Andhra Pradesh has been broadly divided into three regions, namely Coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telangana. From each region and each district the percentage of agriculture labour to total labour was prepared. From each region, one district was selected. They are namely Srikakulam, Anantapur and Mahabubnagar. On the basis of proportion of agriculture labour to total labour, the Mandals were stratified into those with proportion of agriculture labour below 50% and those with proportion of agriculture labour above 50%. From each stratum, one mandal was randomly selected. From each mandal two villages are selected randomly. In every district 4 villages were studied, the total of 600 sample respondents was selected on random basis. The study was conducted during the year 2012-13 with a scientific outlook to find out the causes responsible for the prevailing employment and wages of agricultural labourers. As well as wage differentials among men and women. Therefore all the necessary and appropriate statistical tools were used.

### Employment of Agricultural Labourers

Agricultural labourers do perform various activities and these activities can be conveniently classified as agricultural and non-agricultural activities. Agricultural activities are concerned to work as agricultural labourer concerning with performing agricultural operations. Non-agricultural activities are the works performed in sectors other than agriculture and self-employment refers to performing work of their own. The employment of agricultural labourers (male and female) in operations wise is presented in the Table 1 and 2. The employment of male agriculture labour employment activities are

presented in Table- 1

**Table 1. Employment of Agricultural Labour (Male) in Various Activities**

| S.No | Classification of working                                    | No. of man days worked |
|------|--|------------------------|
| 1.   | As Agricultural Labour Working Days                          |                        |
|      | 1) Ploughing   | 1,704                  |
|      | 2) Preparatory operations                                    | 1,777                  |
|      | 3) Sowing  | 276                    |
|      | 4) Weeding   | 461                    |
|      | 5) Harvesting and threshing                                  | 1,367                  |
|      | 6) Sugarcane cutting and Jaggery making operations           | 1,740                  |
|      | 7) Other   | 1,043                  |
|      | TOTAL  | 8,595                  |
|      | Average No. of days Employed per labourer                    | 260.45                 |
| 2.   | Non-Agricultural Work  |                        |
|      | Total working days   | 467                    |
|      | Average No. of days per casual labourer                      | 22.24                  |
| 3.   | Particulars of Labour in Self-Employment                     |                        |
|      | Total working days of self-employed labourers                | 329                    |
|      | Average No. of days worked per labourer in self – employment | 19.35                  |

Source: Filed Data.

From Table 1 it is found that the average number of days of employment of casual male labourers in agricultural activities is found to be 260.45 days and in non-agricultural activities and self-employment they are employed for 22.24 and 19.35 days respectively. All together the total number of days employed in all works put together comes to 302.04 days. The extend of the days of employment of male labourers are not so favourable when compared to female labourer. On the whole the male as well as female agricultural labourers are more engaged in agriculture and the employment in non-agricultural work is not considerable. The employments of female agriculture labour various activities are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Employment of Agricultural Labour (Female) in Various Activities**

| S.No | Classification of Working  | No. of Man Days Worked |
|------|--|------------------------|
| I.   | As Agricultural Labour Working Days                                |                        |
|      | 1) Preparatory operations  | 593                    |
|      | 2) Sowing and Transplantation                                      | 1,984                  |
|      | 3) Weeding   | 3,271                  |
|      | 4) Harvesting and Threshing  | 3,072                  |
|      | 5) Others  | 363                    |
|      | TOTAL  | 9,283                  |
|      | Average No. of days Employed per labourer                          | 201.80                 |
| 2    | Non-Agricultural Work  |                        |
|      | Total working days   | 363                    |
|      | Average No. of days employed per labourer                          | 19.15                  |
| 3    | Particulars of Labour of Self-Employment                           |                        |
|      | Total working days of self-employed labourers                      | 497                    |
|      | Average No. of days working days per labourer in self – employment | 41.41                  |

Source: Filed Data.

From Table 2 it is evident that the average number of days of employment of female labourers in agriculture stood at 201.80 days and in non-agricultural work and self employment they are engaged for 19.15 and 41.41 days respectively. Altogether the total number of days in all the works put together comes to 262.36 days. From this we can safely state that the position of employment of casual male labourers is not unfavourable. The employment levels in the agriculture labour for crop wise is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Cropwise Employment Levels of Agricultural Labour**

| S.No. | Name of the crop | Total Man days Worked |        |
|-------|------------------|-----------------------|--------|
|       |                  | Male                  | Female |
| 1     | Paddy            | 2,380                 | 4,516  |
| 2     | Sugarcane        | 3,544                 | 2138   |
| 3     | jowar            | 180                   | 515    |
| 4     | Ground-nut       | 2,209                 | 1645   |
| 5     | Chillies         | 22                    | 95     |
| 6     | Cotton           | 39                    | 56     |
| 7     | Tobacco          | 318                   | 265    |

Source: Field Data.

In Table 3 the employment of agricultural labourers according to crops were presented. The total man days worked by all the agriculture labourers were classified according to crops. It is evident that sugarcane largely requires male labour than female labour while paddy requires mostly female labour than male labour. This can be attributed to the nature and intensity of operations which vary from crop to crop. In case of paddy it has become a tradition to employ female labour for transplantation, weeding and harvesting. The family labour of the cultivators does not participate to work in these operations as it is a tradition in the villages to use hired labour. So female labour use will be high in case of paddy than male labourers. Where as, the intensive and difficult nature of operation in case of sugarcane requires mostly male labour. In the case of groundnut, the requirements of hired labour are high. Due to heavy seasonal rush of work and the urgency to harvest immediately after the rains, most of the cultivators use immigrant labour in order to complete the activity quickly, as use of the agriculture labourers in the villages is not in proportion to the area sown under groundnut. When we take the overall view in the case of food crops female labour use is high and in the case of commercial crops employment of male labour is high.

## Wage Rates

The wage structure prevailing for different operations in agriculture in the study area. The wage rates in operations wise are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Wage Rates of Agricultural Labour**

| Name of the operations                               | Wages (Rs) |        |
|--|------------|--------|
|  | Male       | Female |
| Ploughing  | 300        |        |
| Sowing   | 300        | 250    |
| Transplanting  | 300        | 250    |
| Weeding  | 250        | 200    |
| Harvesting   | 350        | 300    |
| Threshing  | 300        | 250    |
| Sugarcane cutting and Jaggery preparatory operations | 400        | 350    |
| Any other  | 300        | 250    |

Source: Field Data.

Table 4 shows that the paid wages for harvesting are usually paid in kind. If the valuations of the payments in kind and of perquisites are taken into consideration at the prices prevailing in rural retail markets, it is found that the wage in cash ₹ 350/- rupees per day during harvest times. In the case when the labourers provide their own bullocks to the cultivators they will be paid ₹ 800/- per day. In case when he attend to the work without his own bullocks he will be paid ₹ 350/- only. Wages for harvesting operations are generally paid in kind. In time of sugarcane cutting and jaggery making operations labourers are paid ₹ 400/- per day when the work is difficult and ₹ 250/- per day in less strenuous operations. In addition they are provided with one meal a day respectively.

In the case of harvest of ground nut they are given an ₹ 350/- per day of the harvested produce. In paddy harvesting operations they are paid in cash only. In some cases especially in times of transplantation and weeding some female labourers form into a group to enter into an agreement with the farmers and get the work done and the contracted amount will be shared among themselves by participating women labourers equally. In the case of contract work they will work for longer hours. After that work is over they engage in some other work and their daily earnings will be high during such days. For some operations which need intensive and hard work they will be often

paid high. In the case of seedling removal operations they may enter into contract for finishing the work or work on a daily basis. When they enter into such contact the seedlings will be prepared into bundles of a definite size. Usually, customary labour will attend to the threshing operations. They receive paddy for the work done which is higher than the wage.

## Wage Differentials

There is no uniformity in wage rates of agricultural labourers. There are many factors which are contributing to the differences in wage rates. There are considerable disparities in wages between regions, between different crops, as well as between male labour and female labour. The differentials between the wages of men and those of women are much more than what they are in an industry. This is due to the fact that wage differentials in agriculture are based not merely on the demand and supply position, but also on social considerations. The wages vary even from operation to operation. Wages offered for ploughing differs from wages offered for weeding. Disparities in wages between different regions arise on account of diversity of socio-economic conditions and differences related to traditions. Generally wages offered in the peak season are high and wages offered in the slack season are low. Wages also in turn depend upon the hours of work. If the hours of work are more, the wages are high to some extent as in the case of sugarcane cutting and jaggery making operations. But this trend is extremely limited. In the slack periods also the cultivators are habituated to give usual wages and do not reduce the wage rate. The agricultural labourers get higher income when work is available throughout the year. The agricultural labour need not work compulsorily especially when they fall ill or have to attend to some important work of their own. Also they have freedom to choose any work they like. But the agricultural labour has less security against the vicissitudes of seasonal unemployment to which they are always exposed.<sup>8</sup>

## Minimum Wages

In order to ameliorate the conditions of this rural agricultural labour suffering from low levels of living due to low earnings and strenuous working conditions, Minimum Wages Act of 1948 has passed by the government which has fixed minimum

wages in certain agricultural employments. The state governments are directed to fix the wage rates and revise the rates at frequent intervals depending upon the agricultural conditions prevailing. The second schedule of the Act covers agricultural workers in this respect. It defines employment in agriculture as follows. Employment in agriculture, that is to say, in any form of farming, including the production, the cultivation, growing and harvesting of any agricultural or horticultural commodity, the raising of livestock, bees, of poultry and practice performed by a farmer of on a farm as incidental of in conjunction with farm operations.

The fixation of minimum wage has not shown any beneficial impact on the wage conditions of agricultural labourers in the villages. They do know nothing about minimum wages legislation so far. So, mere enactment of minimum wages will not solve the problems relating to wages. As such the wages are governed by several socio-economic factors. A study has to be made identify the factors responsible for low wages and to take steps to improve these factors which can favorably influence the wage structure of the labourers. Hence an attempt has been made to identify the factors influencing agricultural wages and wage differentials in this study.

All the state governments have fixed minimum wages for agricultural workers. The process of implementation is beset with numerous administrative difficulties, which arises from factors such as vast areas to be covered, the small nature of holdings, illiteracy among employers and employees, fluctuating economy of agricultural operations due to vagaries of nature, system of payments in kind, prevailing customs and traditions and lack of organization among workers, lack of administrative machinery for implementing the minimum wage in agriculture.

### Conclusion

Since, agricultural sector experiences excessive dependence of population eking out their livelihood. In the absence of alternative work, they joined the ranks of agricultural labour to earn their living. Their low standard of living permits them to be satisfied with subsistence and low wage. Inadequate employment opportunities further aggravate the problem. The slow pace of industrialization is not

able to absorb surplus manpower in agriculture. Until this pressure is wiped out from transforming surplus labour available in agriculture, no sustained growth in the economy can be possible. The first possible solution to free the rural economy from this undesirable situation is to improve villages and small scale industries which can absorb most of the rural manpower. If the rural economy is industrialized with the type of industries which are more labour intensive, they can generate rural employment.

The serious problem which agricultural labour is facing may be said to be seasonal unemployment. The seasonal unemployed labour can be utilized for the productive works like the development of rural infrastructure. This will help to increase the income of the labour household and reduce the intensity of poverty. In order to improve the conditions and availability of employment opportunities, development of irrigation will be a partial solution. The assured irrigation enable the farmers to grow more crops and more varieties of crops, they will have favorable effect on the employment of agricultural labour. As most of the farmers are illiterate, they are not responsive to developmental efforts of the government. These programmes should be demonstrated to the villagers to enable them to understand their beneficial effects and as such practice them.

Labour co-operatives should have to be encouraged to solve the problems of these labourers. These co-operatives can enable the labourers take up rural development programmes like road building, construction and other activities which will provide employment and income to them. Those co-operative should be established in several parts of the region to create increased demand for labour leading to rise in wages. The co-operatives should be provided with labour intensive activities which alone can provide more employment and higher wages. Working of these co-operatives should be checked to make them work without corruption and immorality. As most of the agriculture labourers are landless, possible distribution of surplus lands will ensure the labourers to get some land of their own that provides at least some security to their standard of living. Land reforms should have to be implemented drastically in order to cope up with the situation.

Agricultural development will be the best possible

solution to improve the conditions of these labourers. Higher yield will enable the farmer to increase the wage rates which raise the standard of living of labourers. Most of the farmers are now trying to use high yielding varieties of seeds and chemical fertilizers. Some of them are using tractors for cultivation purposes. The government should adopt strict measures for proper distribution of chemical fertilizers and High Yielding Varieties of seeds which, now, most of the small cultivators with no political status can hardly have a chance to get. Farmers are buying the fertilizers in the local market where the price is eventually high, which leads to high input costs and reduces the income of the farmers and it will have its indirect effect on agricultural labour. The small peasant is suffering due to exploitation by revenue authorities and also due to improper distribution of fertilizers etc.

Low economic standards of the agricultural labourers are the primary cause for their low social status. Credit facilities should be extended to the agricultural labour to have dairy farming, poultry and such other activities which will help these labourers to have their standard of living and social status. As most of the agricultural labourers in the interior regions are not aware of the facilities, they need to be educated in this matter. Improvement in the agricultural marketing facilities and ensuring remunerative prices for the agricultural produce will enable the farming community get reasonable incomes. The fluctuations in the prices of agricultural commodities are adversely affecting the incomes of the farmers which lead to changes in the cultivated area and cropping pattern. Assured reasonable prices can help to increase the farmers capacity to pay for the labourers. Controlled prices of the essential consumption goods and their proper distribution will have favorable effect on the levels of living of the labourers. Measures taken by the government to improve the conditions of agricultural labourers. The measures are the welfare programmes are implemented like, Cash scheme for Rural Employment (CSRE), Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Project (PIREP), Food for Works Programme (FWP), National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGP), National Scheme

of Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) and Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). 10

The following suggestions can be made for the improvement of socio-economic positions of the agricultural labourers,

Better implementation of legislative measures  
 Creating alternative sources of employment,  
 Protection of women and child labourers, Public works programmes should be for longer period in year, Improving the working conditions, Regulations of hours of work, Improvements in agriculture sector, Credit at cheaper rates of interest on easy terms of payments for undertaking subsidiary occupations, proper training for improving the skills of farm labourers, and Co-operative farming.

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