

REPORT
ON
THE WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS
OF
WORKERS IN THE
HANDLOOM
INDUSTRY IN INDIA
(1986-87)



GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF LABOUR
LABOUR BUREAU
CHANDIGARH

PREFACE

The unorganised labour which constitutes about 80 per cent of the country's working force, has hitherto remained neglected mainly because of their inability to organise themselves to bargain for their rights under various labour enactments. This vast majority of our toiling population has long suffered at the hands of their employers who exploited them to gain maximum benefit from their hard labour. Due to scanty information about the problems of this sector of labour, various government agencies charged with the task of suggesting effective ways and means to ameliorate their conditions felt handicapped in their work. The National Commission on Labour (1969) had noted this situation when they observed that the unorganised labour, on account of numerous constraints had mostly been left out of the purview of labour laws and even where they applied to such labour, their enforcement had left much to be desired. The task of identification of unorganised labour was not an easy one. In fact, the National Commission on Labour had briefly observed, "The unorganised labour cannot be identified by a definition but would be described as those (workers) who have not been able to organise in pursuit of a common objective because of constraints such as :—

- (a) casual nature of employment,
- (b) ignorance and illiteracy,
- (c) small size of establishments with low capital investment per person employed,
- (d) scattered nature of establishments, and
- (e) superior strength of the employer, operating singly or in combination."

However, the Labour Bureau undertook the task of conducting surveys on working and living conditions of these labour, but the 15 surveys in the industries given below, conducted initially, were localised due to paucity of resources :—

1. Building construction Industry in Delhi.
2. Fire-works Industry in and around Sivakasi (TN).
3. Jari Industry at Surat (Gujarat).
4. Match Industry in and around Sivakasi (TN).
5. Hosiery Industry at Ludhiana (Punjab).
6. Metalware Industry in Moradabad (UP).
7. Metalware Industry in Jagadhari (Haryana).
8. Brick-kilns Industry in Haryana.
9. Brick-kilns Industry in Chandigarh (UT).
10. Brick-kilns Industry in Punjab.
11. Rice-shelling Industry in Haryana.
12. Rice-shelling Industry in Punjab.
13. Cashewnut Processing Industry in Kerala.
14. Agarbathi Industry in Karnataka.
15. Indigenous Sugar Industry in Uttar Pradesh.

However, from the 16th Survey, *i.e.*, in Woollen Carpet Manufacturing Industry, the coverage has been extended to the whole of India with a view to providing an integrated picture of the conditions of unorganised labour in different industries. The present survey of the working and living conditions of workers engaged in the Handloom industry in India, is the 2nd in the series of all India surveys. The sample size being, however, rather too small, the findings of the survey are indicative of only broad trends and need to be treated with caution.

I take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to the organisations of both employers & employees of the Handloom Industry for extending their whole hearted co-operation in the successful conduct of the field work. I would also like to place on record my appreciation for the hard work put in by the whole team of officials in the UOS Division of the Bureau. Their names appear at the end of the report. (Annexure I)

The views expressed in the report are not necessarily those of the Ministry of Labour, Govt. of India.

CHANDIGARH
Dated the 9th Nov. 1990,

(B. P. GUHA)
Director

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