



SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS
OF
WOMEN WORKERS
IN
RAW LEAF TOBACCO, ZARDA AND CIGARETTES,
BRICK KILNS, TILES, STONE DRESSING
AND STONE CRUSHING, ELECTRIC AND
MINIATURE LAMPS, RADIO AND
TELEVISION SETS AND
FOUNTAIN PENS AND
BALL PENS
INDUSTRIES

LABOUR BUREAU
MINISTRY OF LABOUR
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

PREFACE

Most of the labour laws applicable to the organised segment of the industrial sector have special provisions regarding women workers which entitle them some degree of protection with regard to their wages, working conditions, welfare, etc. Nevertheless, many problems relating to their service and other conditions arise from number of factors like indifferent attitude of employers towards women employment, legislative protective provisions being either inadequate or not being properly implemented, women workers themselves being unaware of the legal provisions, etc.

A scheme titled 'Survey of Socio-economic Conditions of Women Workers in Industry' was taken up as a part of the research programme of the Labour Bureau to study the working and other conditions of women workers employed in the organised sector of industry, viz., mines, plantations and factories covered under the respective legislative enactments. Reports on the studies conducted in mines and plantations have since been published. The factory sector industries were to be covered in phases. Report on the first phase of the factory sector study conducted in 'Textiles' and 'Sugar and allied Industries' has also been published. In the second phase of the factory sector study, industries like 'Chemicals and Chemical Products' and 'Food Products (except Tea, Coffee and Sugar)' were covered and a report thereon has since been published. The present report relates to the third phase of the factory sector study conducted in 'Raw Leaf Tobacco', 'Zarda and Cigarettes', 'Brick Kilns', 'Tiles', 'Stone Dressing and Stone Crushing', 'Electric and Miniature Lamps', 'Radio and T. V. Sets' and 'Fountain Pens and Ball Pens' industries.

The main task of organising the study including the field work was borne by Shri Balram, Deputy Director assisted by Shri S. S. Sarwal, Assistant Director and S/Shri N. K. Sarda and K. K. Samajdar, Investigators Grade I. The field study was conducted by S/Shri R. K. Sharma, R. S. Pundir, K. M. Verghese, G. L. Sharma, N. L. Garg, R. S. Chauhan, D. R. Verma and Budh Ram, Investigators Grade II under the supervision of S/Shri Yog Raj and N. K. Sarda, Investigators Grade I. The processing of data and preparation of tables was done by a team of Investigators Grade II including Smt. Krishna Kumari and Shri Ramesh Kumar, Computers. The primary responsibility of drafting the report devolved on Shri S. S. Sarwal, Assistant Director under the guidance of Shri Balram, Deputy Director. Some write-ups were also prepared by S/Shri Yog Raj and N. K. Sarda, Investigators Grade I.

In conducting the field study the Bureau received ungrudging help and active co-operation from the various departments of Central and State Governments to whom I am grateful. I am particularly grateful to the Planning Commission for their valuable suggestions which helped in the finalisation of questionnaires and sample design. The information in respect of the items on which the employers are not statutorily required to maintain records was collected after discussions with them. The co-operation and assistance received from them in the conduct of the study is gratefully acknowledged. My thanks are also due to all the workers of the sampled units who were kind enough to furnish actual information for this study.

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

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SHIMLA
DATED :

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MAIN CONCLUSIONS

Scope, object and coverage

The field data in respect of 138 factories pertaining to as many as 12 minor industry groups and comprising about 16.0 per cent of the total number of factories featuring in the sampling frame were covered for the Factory-level Questionnaire. However, for the purpose of presentation and analysis of data, these 12 minor group industries have been grouped into eight broad categories, viz., 'Preparation of Raw Leaf Tobacco (Stemming, Redrying and other connected operations)', 'Manufacture of Zarda and Cigarettes,' 'Manufacture of Fire Bricks (Brick Kilns)', 'Manufacture of Tiles', 'Stone Dressing and Stone Crushing', 'Manufacture of Ordinary Electric Lamps and Miniature Lamps', 'Manufacture of Radio and Television Sets' and 'Manufacture of Fountain Pens and Ball Pens'. The proportion of factories covered for the Factory level Questionnaire varied between 9.2 per cent for 'Manufacture of Tiles' to 80.0 per cent for the 'Manufacture of Radio and Television Sets'. About 3.5 per cent of the total women employed in the sampled factories were interviewed for canvassing the worker-level questionnaire. The main findings are given in the ensuing paragraphs.

Characteristics of women's employment

1. The industries covered during the present study account for nearly one-sixth of the total women employment in the factories sector. Most of the women workers were employed in unskilled occupations.

(para 2.1.1)

2. Among the industries covered, the industry group 'Manufacture of Raw Leaf Tobacco' employed the largest number of women workers accounting for nearly one-eighth of the total women employment in the factories sector. A special feature of this industry was the preponderance of women workers who constituted as high as 88 per cent of the total employment in the sampled Raw Leaf Tobacco factories and an overwhelming majority (91.6 per cent) of them were engaged as 'Graders/Strippers'. No male worker was engaged as Grader/Stripper, Table Checker or as Maistry. The other occupations in which women were engaged were 'Maistry', 'Table Checker' and 'Redrying Machine Worker'.

(paras 2.1.1 and 2.3.2)

3. In the sampled Zarda and Cigarettes factories, women workers constituted nearly 37 per cent of the total employment and as high as 89.6 per cent of them were engaged as 'General Mazdoor'. About 5 per cent of the total women workers were also engaged as 'Packers'. The employment in both these occupations was shared almost equally by men and women workers.

(Para 2.3.3)

4. The workers employed in Brick Kilns were mostly the migrant labour brought from other areas either within or outside the State. As the migration of these workers is generally on a family basis, this provides an opportunity to women to work in Brick Kilns along with their male members and they constituted as high as 44 per cent of the total employment in the sampled Brick Kilns. Nearly 94 per cent of the total women workers in the sampled factories were engaged as 'Helpers to Brick Moulders' and 'General Mazdoor/Loaders/Unloaders'. Women workers were not employed in operations like earth digging, transportation of mud and preparation of mud mixture for moulding which were generally carried out only by male workers.

(para 2.3.4.)

5. In Tile factories, women's share in total employment was 29 per cent and about 62 per cent of them were employed as 'Carriers/Head Loaders/Wagon Loaders'. Some women workers were also engaged as 'Trimmers/Finishers/Sorters', 'Press Helpers', 'Slab Cutters/Polishers' and 'Mud Mixers'.

(para 2.3.5)

6. The women employment was also appreciable in Stone factories where they constituted about 46 per cent of the total employment. About 65 per cent of the women workers were engaged as 'Labourers' (about 62 per cent of the total employment in this occupation consisted of females). About 27 per cent of the women workers were also employed as 'Stone Crushers' and 'Metal Makers/Breakers'. The other occupations in which they were employed were 'Cleaner', 'Sorter' and 'Supervisor' and these occupations taken together accounted for nearly 8 per cent of the total women employment in the sampled Stone factories.

(para 2.3.6)

7. In the sampled Electric and Miniature Lamps factories, the women formed about 25 per cent of the total employment. About 37 per cent of the women workers were engaged as 'Assemblers'. The remainder were employed in jobs like 'Machine Operator,' 'Checking', 'Packing', 'General Worker/Helper', 'Capping', 'Filament Mounting', 'Soldering/Sealing/Inserting', etc. These occupations taken together accounted for 40.5 per cent of the total women employment in the sampled factories.

(para 2.3.7)

8. About 30 per cent of the total employment in the sampled Radio and Television factories consisted of females. A staggering 69 per cent of the women workers were employed as 'Wire Girls/Component Assemblers/Tape Deck Assemblers'. The other occupations in which they were employed were 'Final Tester/Checker/Quality Inspector', 'Senior Technician/Assistant Technician', 'Space Marking/Transformer Winding', 'Helper' and 'Supervisor'. These

occupations taken together engaged nearly 19 per cent of the total women workers in the sampled factories.

(para 2.3.8)

9. In Pen factories also the proportion of women employment was observed to be considerably high. The women formed about 53 per cent of the total employment in the sampled factories. They were mainly engaged in assembling small pen parts and were categorised either as 'Assemblers' or 'Helpers' who together accounted for nearly 59 per cent of the total women employment in the sampled factories. Women were also engaged in small numbers in jobs like 'Moulding', 'Packing/Checking/Counting', 'Die-Making', 'Drilling/Buffing' and 'Operator' together accounting for about 9 per cent of the total women workers.

(para 2.3.9)

10. The percentage of women employed in skilled jobs or holding professional, technical, administrative, executive, managerial and supervisory jobs was far less than that of the corresponding men workers. No woman worker was employed in skilled jobs in the sampled Brick Kilns and Raw Leaf Tobacco, Tiles and Stone factories while in Zarda and Cigarettes factories barely 0.3 per cent were employed in skilled jobs. As against this, the proportion of the corresponding men workers varied between 2 and 24 per cent. In Lamps and Pen factories also, the proportion of women engaged in skilled occupations was barely 3.7 per cent and 0.3 per cent, respectively as against much higher percentages of 21.9 and 9.7, respectively of the corresponding men workers. However, in the sampled Radio and Television factories 15.5 per cent of the total women were holding skilled jobs and another 45.4 per cent were engaged in semi-skilled jobs as against the corresponding percentages of 24.9 and 18.4, respectively for men workers.

(para 2.4.2)

11. The share of women workers in permanent jobs in some industries was very low. Only one out of 407 women workers employed in the Brick Kilns was permanent as against 6.7 per cent of the corresponding men workers. In the sampled Zarda and Cigarettes and Stone factories also, the proportion of women workers holding a permanent status was barely 18.4 per cent and 11.8 per cent, respectively as against much higher percentages of 78.4 and 28.3 of the corresponding men workers. In Pen factories also, only 47.4 per cent of women as against 65.0 per cent of men workers were found holding a permanent status. The percentage of permanent women workers in the sampled Tile factories although being quite high (83.7) was less than that of the corresponding men workers (94.0). In the Raw Leaf Tobacco factories also, about 59 per cent of the women workers as against 63 per cent of the men workers were reported to be permanent. However, in Lamps and Radio and Television factories, the permanent women workers constituted as high as 97.0 and 93.6 per cent, respectively of the total women employment. More than one-fourth of the women workers in Zarda factories and about one-fifth in Stone factories were also casual.

(paras 2.6.2 & 2.6.4)

12. The rates of accession and separation were generally much higher among women than among the corresponding men workers.

(para 2.8.4)

13. There was not any significant difference between the rates of absenteeism for men and women employed in Stone, Lamps, Radio and Television and Pen factories. However, in the case of Brick Kilns and Raw Leaf Tobacco and Tiles factories, the absenteeism rates for women worked out to be higher than those of men workers. The absenteeism among women employed in Zarda and Cigarettes factories was much less than among the corresponding men workers.

(para 2.10.3)

14. Employers were of the opinion that in most of the occupations in which both men and women workers were employed, women were either as efficient as their male counterparts or were in some cases even more efficient than the corresponding men workers. In only a few jobs like machine operating in Zarda and Electric Lamps factories, stone breaking and crushing in Stone factories and final checking in Radio and Television factories, women employees were reported to be less efficient than their male counterparts.

(para 2.11)

15. The prospects of women graduating from unskilled to semi-skilled, skilled and supervisory jobs were found existent in only a few factories covered under the study. About 122 women workers in Raw Leaf Tobacco, Radio and Television and Electric and Miniature Lamps factories were promoted to next higher grades during the reference year.

(para 2.12.1)

16. The study revealed that in most of the cases the additional financial obligations on account of the protective legislative provisions did not have any adverse effect on women's employment. Most of the employers were not feeling any burden of the small additional expenditure which they were incurring on their women employees in providing separate statutory facilities for them. However, a few employers were found to be biased towards the employment of women and were not prepared to treat them at par with men. Some employers did not allow the women employment in their factories to exceed 30 so that they did not have to provide creche facility. Some employers discouraged the employment of married females as they considered unmarried women more suitable for the jobs.

(para 2.13.4)

Wages and earnings

17. All male and female workers in the sampled Raw Leaf Tobacco, Zarda and Cigarettes, Electric and Miniature Lamps, Radio and Television and Pen factories were employed on time rates. In Brick Kilns, a majority of both men and women were piece-rate workers. In Tile factories, about one-fourth of the total women workers as against more than half of the men workers were employed on piece rates. In Stone Dres-

sing and Stone Crushing factories, about 72 per cent of women workers were employed on time rates and 28 per cent were engaged on piece rate basis.

(para 3.3.2)

18. The periodicity of wage payment was fortnightly in only four Raw Leaf Tobacco factories and daily in one Stone factory. In the remaining sampled units, wage payments to both men and women workers were being made on weekly or monthly basis. No intra-factory difference in the system of wage payment for men and women engaged on the same or similar type of work was observed.

(para 3.4.2)

19. The study revealed that excepting Stone Crushing and Dressing industry, men and women workers engaged on same or similar work within the same factory were generally paid equal remuneration. In Stone factories, however, the women workers engaged as mazdoor, stone carriers, coolies, etc., were invariably getting lesser wages than their male counterparts. Women workers' wages in these occupations varied from Rs. 8.00 to Rs. 15.00 per day as against corresponding men's daily wages of Rs. 10.00 to Rs. 20.00. In one sampled Brick Kiln and in one Tile factory also, the women labourers were being paid lesser wages than those of the corresponding men workers.

(para 3.2.2)

20. In most of the occupations in which both men and women were employed, the average daily earnings of women worked out to be less than those of the corresponding men workers. The extent of difference in the earnings of men and women varied not only from industry to industry and from occupation to occupation but also from factory to factory within the same occupation.

(para 3.8.3)

Working conditions and welfare amenities available to women workers vis-a-vis the labour laws

21. In none of the factories studied, women workers were employed in night shifts. However, in two out of the 24 Raw Leaf Tobacco Factories and one out of the 15 Stone factories, women were found employed in shifts whose timings went upto 10 p.m. There was no discrimination between men and women workers in regard to the daily normal hours of work. Excepting Brick Kilns, in no sampled factory the daily hours of work of men and women workers were found to exceed the statutory limit of 9 hours. However, in Brick Kilns there were no fixed hours of work and women piece-rate workers usually worked for 10 to 11 hours a day from morning till dusk with a break of only one to two hours in the afternoon. The spread-over of work for most of the piece-rate workers employed in Brick Kilns exceeded the statutory maximum of 10½ hours. In two Stone factories also the spread-over of work, including the rest interval, in the case of both men and women workers was 11 hours and 14 hours.

(paras 4.2.2 to 4.2.4)

22. Women workers employed in Brick Kilns and Tiles and Stone factories had to carry heavy loads which in some cases exceeded the prescribed limit of 30 Kg. In the remaining industries, however, the women workers were engaged mostly on light jobs.

(para 4.3.1)

23. Women workers employed in Zarda factories had to handle a considerable amount of dust while attending to jobs like grinding, powdering, sifting, etc., of Tobacco leaves. Women workers engaged in some dusty jobs in Brick Kilns and Tiles factories were also prone to health hazards. Women workers in some Raw Leaf Tobacco factories were reported to be working in over-crowded rooms. Further, most of them had to sit on floor for four to five hours continuously which caused strain to them.

(paras 4.3.1 and 4.3.2)

24. Creches were found to be non-existent even in some of those factories which were statutorily required to provide this facility. In all, 55 factories out of a total of 138 covered under the study were under a legal obligation to provide the creche facility. Of these, only 16 factories were found to have actually provided the facility. Although 11 Zarda and one Cigarette factories, three Brick Kilns, two Pen factories and one Stone Crushing factory were obliged to provide creches, yet none of these had met their obligation. Only about half of the Raw Leaf Tobacco factories, one out of the three Lamps factories and two out of the 10 Radio and Television factories were complying with the law.

(para 4.4.2)

25. The facilities provided in most of the creches were generally deficient in one item or the other. Eight of the 13 creches in Raw Leaf Tobacco factories were functioning in sheds or hutments which were merely temporary structures. These sheds were also not adequately enclosed and thus did not provide effective protection from the vagaries of weather. A majority of the creches functioning in Raw Leaf Tobacco factories were found wanting in sanitation and cleanliness and thus, gave very ugly look. Some of the creches had no wash-rooms and latrines for the children. The quantity of milk being supplied to children was found deficient in six creches functioning in Raw Leaf Tobacco factories. The essential items like soap, towel, etc., for providing a wash to children were non-existent in nine creches. Most of the creches did not have any trained staff for looking after the children.

(paras 4.4.5 to 4.4.7)

26. The utilisation rate of creches was found to be quite low especially for those functioning in Raw Leaf Tobacco factories wherein only 7.5 per cent of the total eligible children of the women workers were utilising the facility. Creches functioning in Radio and Television factories were also being utilised by less than one-fifth of the total eligible children.

(para 4.4.9)

27. Out of a total of 138 factories studied, 44 had no separate washing arrangements for women workers. About two-thirds of the sampled Brick Kilns and about

two-fifths of the Stone and Radio and Television factories had not provided separate washing facility for women. The facility was also non-existent in some Raw Leaf Tobacco, Zarda, Tiles, Pen and in small Electric Lamps factories.

(para 4.5.2)

28. The separate latrine facility for women had not been provided in about three-fourths of the sampled Brick Kilns and two-fifths of the Stone factories. The facility needed improvement especially in Brick Kilns and in Raw Leaf Tobacco, Zarda, Tiles and Stone factories.

(para 4.6.2)

29. The maternity benefits remained out of the reach of most of the casual women workers and also of those engaged in the seasonal factories. Women workers employed in seasonal industries like Brick Kilns and Zarda factories and some of the sampled Stone factories were not getting any maternity benefit either under the E.S.I. Scheme or under the Maternity Benefit Act. In Raw Leaf Tobacco factories, there was an agreement under which a female worker who had worked for not less than 30 days in the previous working season, was entitled for maternity leave during the current season. However, only a few employers were actually implementing this agreement. Other difficulties reported by some of the sampled women workers were the delay in making payments of maternity benefit, inadequate pre-natal and post-natal medical facilities, etc. Some of them who got promotions during the benefit period maintained that the average wages they got for the maternity period under the Employees' State Insurance Scheme were very low.

(paras 4.7.3 to 4.7.5)

30. Out of the 15 canteens functioning in the various sampled factories, only five had separate seating arrangements as well as separate service counters for women.

(para 4.8.2)

31. The Employees' State Insurance Scheme was not applicable to workers employed in the seasonal industries like Brick Kilns, Raw Leaf Tobacco and Zarda factories. In some of the cases, the employers claimed that they had a liaison with the private practitioners and the medical expenses incurred by the workers were partly or fully reimbursed to them by the managements. Although a majority of the sampled women workers were satisfied with the medical facilities available in the ESI hospitals/dispensaries, yet some of them complained that sometimes the medicines prescribed by the doctors were not available in the dispensaries and hence they had to purchase them from the market. Some of them reported that neither the doctors paid adequate attention nor the medicines of good quality were supplied to them.

(para 4.9.2)

32. Six factories out of a total of 138 factories studied had provided recreational facilities on a voluntary basis. However, none of these six units had provided separate recreational facilities for their women employees. Some women workers expressed the need

of providing recreational facilities in the form of newspapers, books, radios, video shows, etc.

(para 4.9.4)

Socio-demographic characteristics

33. The proportion of women workers in the age group '45 years and above' was relatively high in the sampled Zarda and Cigarettes and Tile factories, being 35.5 per cent and 33.6 per cent, respectively whereas in the case of remaining industries studied, as high as 84 to 98 per cent of women workers in the selected factories were below the age of 45 years. In Radio and Television and Pen factories, where the managements generally preferred to employ unmarried girls, an overwhelming majority of women workers were below the age of 34 years. Seven female children (1.8 per cent) were found to be employed in the Brick Kilns on the reference date. About 5.2 per cent of female employment in the sampled Brick Kilns and 3.4 per cent in the Tile factories consisted of adolescents. A few female adolescent workers were also reported to be working in Raw Leaf Tobacco and Stone factories.

(para 5.2.2)

34. The proportion of married women was very low, viz., 15.8 per cent, in the sampled Pen factories. In the remaining industries studied, the proportion of married women varied between 60 and 93 per cent. The proportion of widowed, separated and divorced women workers was the highest (16.5 per cent) in Zarda and Cigarettes factories.

(para 5.3.2)

35. As high as 98.5 per cent of the sampled women workers in the Brick Kilns and 95.7 per cent in the Stone factories were illiterate. The position regarding literacy among the sampled women workers was also far from satisfactory in Raw Leaf Tobacco, Zarda and Cigarettes and Tile factories where the percentage of illiterates was as high as 83.5, 80.8 and 63.9, respectively. However, in Electric and Miniature Lamps, Radio and Television and Pen factories, where generally educated persons were employed, an overwhelming majority of the women workers were literate.

(para 5.4.2)

36. More than half of the children of the sampled women workers in Brick Kilns and more than one-third in the Stone factories were not attending school. This was mainly due to the fact that these industries were of seasonal nature and the workforce employed therein was of migratory character.

(para 5.4.4)

37. Not even a single male or female worker employed in the sampled Brick Kilns was reported to be the member of any trade union. The extent of trade unionism among the workers was also not satisfactory in the sampled Stone factories where only 13 per cent of the total women workers were found to be the members of trade unions. In the remaining industries studied the proportion of women workers who were members of trade unions varied from 25.7 per cent

in Zarda and Cigarettes factories to 86.0 per cent in Lamps factories. Women workers were not organised to the same extent as the corresponding men workers in Zarda and Cigarettes, Tiles and Lamps factories. Only five selected women workers in Raw Leaf Tobacco factories and one in Tiles factories were found holding executive jobs in the working of trade unions. No sampled woman worker in the remaining selected factories was found holding either a post of an office-bearer or any other responsible position at the decision and policy-making levels of trade unions.

(paras 5.6.2 and 5.6.3)

38. No selected woman worker in the sampled Brick Kilns and Stone factories was aware of the beneficial provisions contained in the important Labour Acts like the Factories Act, 1948, the Maternity Benefit Act/ESI Act and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976. In Tiles factories also, 58 out of a total of 61 women workers studied were completely ignorant about these provisions. In Raw Leaf Tobacco and Zarda and Cigarettes factories also, as much as 91 to 92 per cent and 85 to 86 per cent, respectively of the sampled women workers had no knowledge of the beneficial legal provisions mainly due to their illiteracy. The position was, however, much better in Lamps, Radio and Television and Pen factories in which a large number of women workers were literate and educated.

(para 5.7.2)

Economic and living conditions

39. The average household size of the sampled women workers' families varied between 4.0 and 5.7 in the industries studied. The average proportion of earners was higher for the families of women workers who were traditionally employed as unskilled manual workers in the industries located in rural or semi-ur-

areas, e.g., Brick Kilns and Raw Leaf Tobacco, Zarda, Tiles and Stone factories.

(para 6.2.2)

40. The average monthly family income was the lowest (Rs. 581) for the households of the sampled women workers studied in the Raw Leaf Tobacco factories. However, the households of those sampled women workers who were employed in Electric and Miniature Lamps, Radio and Television and Pen factories were better off than those studied in other industries. The households studied in Radio and Television factories revealed the highest average family income, being Rs. 1972 per month.

(para 6.3.2)

41. Most of the workers in Brick Kilns were found residing in small temporary hutments which had been erected by them around the brick kilns out of the material supplied by the employers. In most of these cases the condition of temporary hutments was highly unsatisfactory because of the poor roofing material supplied by the employers. In Stone factories also, most of the houses allotted to the sampled women workers by their employers were kutcha. About one-fourth of the sampled women workers studied in Zarda factories were also residing in the houses provided by their employers. In the remaining industries covered, almost all the sampled women workers were residing in 'owned' or 'rented' houses.

(para 6.4.3)

42. The facility of a separate kitchen, bathroom or a latrine was non-existent in most of the sampled houses studied in Brick Kilns and Raw Leaf Tobacco, Zarda and Cigarettes and Stone factories. The position was, however, better in the case of Tiles, Electric and Miniature Lamps and Radio and Television factories wherein a majority of the sampled women workers' dwellings were reported having these facilities.

(para 6.4.6)