

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN COIR INDUSTRY IN KERALA

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Abstract

The coir industry was started during British rule in India and was developed by Portuguese. The coir industry is controlled by coir board under the Government of Kerala. In Kerala Economy coir industry is one of the traditional agro based industries plays an important role providing employment to 3.6 lakhs percents in rural areas of whom 76% are women coir making units are widely seen in Alappuzha district in Kerala. In rural areas, where there is shortage of big industries then self employment or entrepreneurship works only an alternative for employment, self employment is an employment generator for rural masses. Coir Industry in Kerala majority of workers are female they get very low wage rate Social Economic conditions of coir women workers were very poor. Coir Board of India undertaken by the Government of India looks into the marketing of coir products in domestic as well as international markets coir industries are lacking the modern amenities and technologies, it is becoming more tough for the industries to do good business and survive in the competitive market.

Key Words: Coir, Coir Board, Coir Products, Micro and Small Scale Industry, Self Employment Programme.

Introduction

The coir industry is main small scale industry in Alappuzha and Kollam. Kerala ranks first in coir products for last five decades. The coir industry was started during British rule in India and was developed by Portuguese. The coir industry is controlled by coir board under Government of Kerala. The total coir fibre production in India is 2,50,000 tonnes. The history of coir industry in India started with the Kerala state which dates back to the 19th century. The most commonly seen tropical trees in Kerala is the coconut tree.

In Kerala Economy; coir industry, one of the traditional agro based industries, plays an important role by providing employment to 03.60 lakhs person in the rural areas of whoms 76 % are women coir making units are widely seen in Alappuzha district in Kerala. This industries thrives well in the coastal districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam and Ernakulam. Mats, Matting, Carpets, Upholstery, Stuffed Pillows, Couches, Brushes, Yarn and Cordage including large sized cables bats and bonnets are some of the coir products produce in Kerala.

Coir is the only natural fibre that does not get cultivated solely to extract the coir whereas jute and sisal are grown only to produce the fibres and in turn; the spun and woven products. Fibres like jute, sisal, cotton etc. are derived from short cropping plants where as coir originates from the near perennial coconut palm.

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Labour force participation among women in most of the developing countries is rising in recent years. Education is identified as factor contribution to women empowerment. But in Kerala, female work participation rate appears to be lower and showing a declining trend despite its achievement in the field of female education. Rising female education should be followed by a rising level of work participation rates.

In Alappuzha district majority of the workers are on contract. They have no principal employer and are not directly employed. They are paid piece rate wages, which approximate Rs.133/- to Rs. 200/- per day. Their wages are better than that of those who work for small producers which prevents them from joining common struggles on issues concerning the coir industry as a whole. But even the piece-rate is exploitive if the length of every piece is allowed to increase. A minimum wage is fixed for 96 pieces of coir but the exporters can decide the length of the yarn. Ultimately a worker ends up spinning 120 to 140 pieces of coir a day.

History of Coir Industry in Kerala

The coir production was started in 19th century in India. The coir industry in Kerala is being shutdown or moved to other state. The coir industries are commonly operated in coastal regions of Kerala. The traditional way is practiced mainly in rural areas and they do not support modern ways of coir spinning. Alappuzha is the nerve centre of Kerala famous for coir industry. We can see coconut husks being beaten into fibre for making beautiful mats and other coir products. Both men and women are actively involved in the production of coir. The women are mainly involved in the yarn spinning sector and the men in the product weaving sector. Coir industry enjoys status has the largest cottage industry in Kerala, giving important to over a million people. Kerala also has a very fine natural labour located at Kochi. Ancient time Kochi had found a place in the minds of European as a trading centre because of its ports and spices.

Coir Board of India

The Coir Board is a statutory body established by the Government of India under the coir industry act 1953 for the promotion and development of the coir industry in India. It is based in Kochi and Alappuzha. The head office of the coir board is in Kochi and the research and training office is in Kalavoor (Alappuzha). The coir industry is one of India's traditional industries that is still economically important. The board worker for the promotion, research, education and training of the industry. The coir industry employs more than seven lakhs people, a majority of whom are from rural areas, who belongs to economically weaker section of society

Financial Assistance Schemes

The board is implementing several financial assistance scheme for coir sector in all coconut growing states

(1) Mahila Coir Yojana

Mahila Coir Yojana is the women oriented self employment programme in the coir industry, which aims to providing self employment to rural women artisans in regions providing coir fibre. The conversion of coir fibre into yarn on motorized ratts in rural house hold provides scope for large scale employment, improvement in productivity and quality, better working condition and higher income. The scheme is being implemented by the Government through the coir board under its coir vikas yojana.

(2) Coir Udyami Yojana

Coir Board under the Ministry of MSME has been implementing the central sector scheme namely coir udyami yojana in the coir sector during 11th five year plan period onwards. This is a credit linked subsidy scheme. The scheme provides assistance for setting up of any type of coir units. The maximum assistance cost of project under the scheme upto Rs. 10,00,000/- plus working capital which shall not exceed 25% of the project cost. The pattern of assistance under the scheme is 40 % of the project cost as Government of India subsidy 55% as loan from bank and 5% as beneficiary contribution. Assistance under the registered under societies Registration Act 1860, productions co-operative society.

(3) Coir Vikas Yojana

Under the scheme development of production infrastructure the board is extending financial assistance for setting up of coir units and modernization of existing units. Under the scheme the board is giving subsidy to the bank.

Review of Literature

Satya Sundaram in his article "Coir Products in Demand" had pointed out that the major problems of coir industry in Kerala such as inadequate knowledge of the product and its end uses, non availability of local skill and lack of accessibility to technology, lack of innovation, unskilled workers, low rate of wages, advantages of coir products are not explained to the people proper channels of distribution is not available, agents are not appointed and target is not fixed.

Women working in the coir sector belonged to the economically poor and socially backward sections of the society (CSR 2002)

Methodology

Data and the information for the study of women empowerment in coir industry were collected through primary data and secondary data such as Journals, Magazines, Annual Reports websites

Analysis

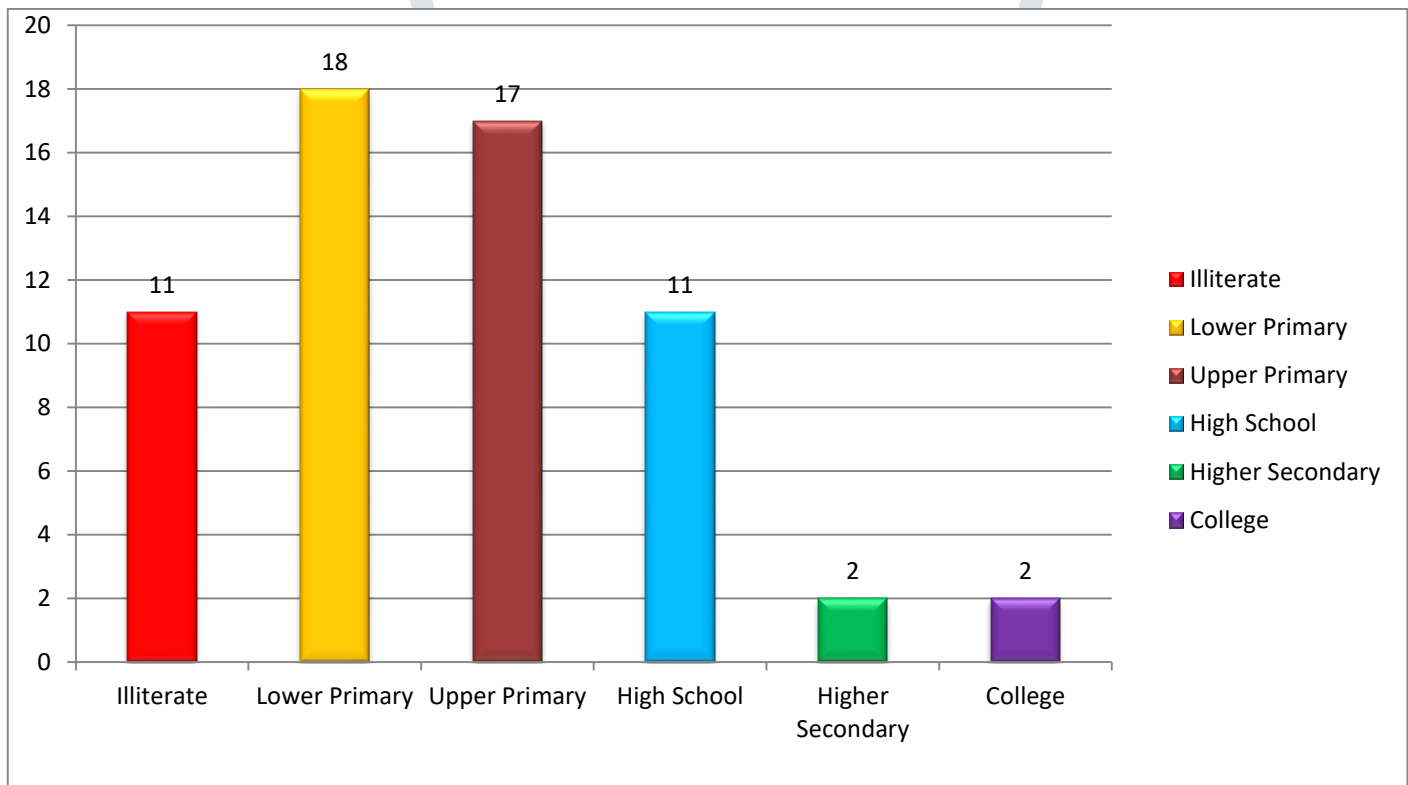
Head of Family

Male	52
Female	08
Total	60

Source: Primary Data

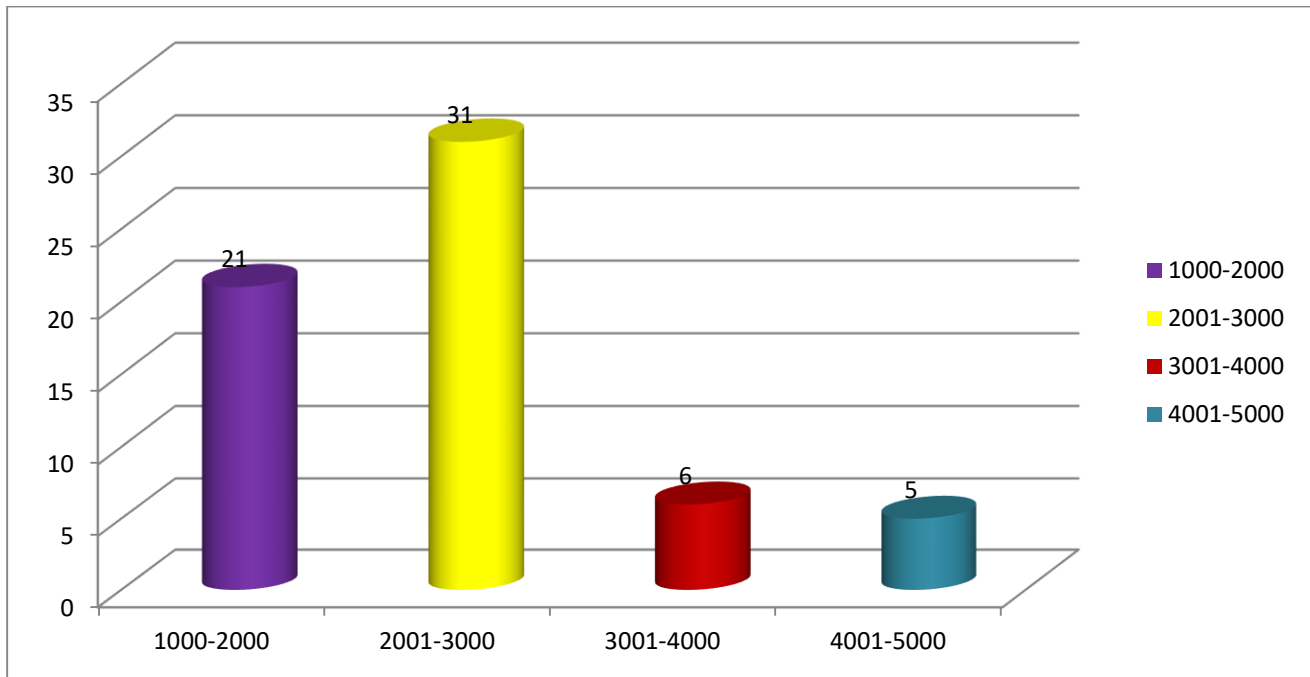
Majority of the families were male headed

Educational Status



Majority of the respondents attained Lower Primary, Upper Primary and High School.

Monthly Income



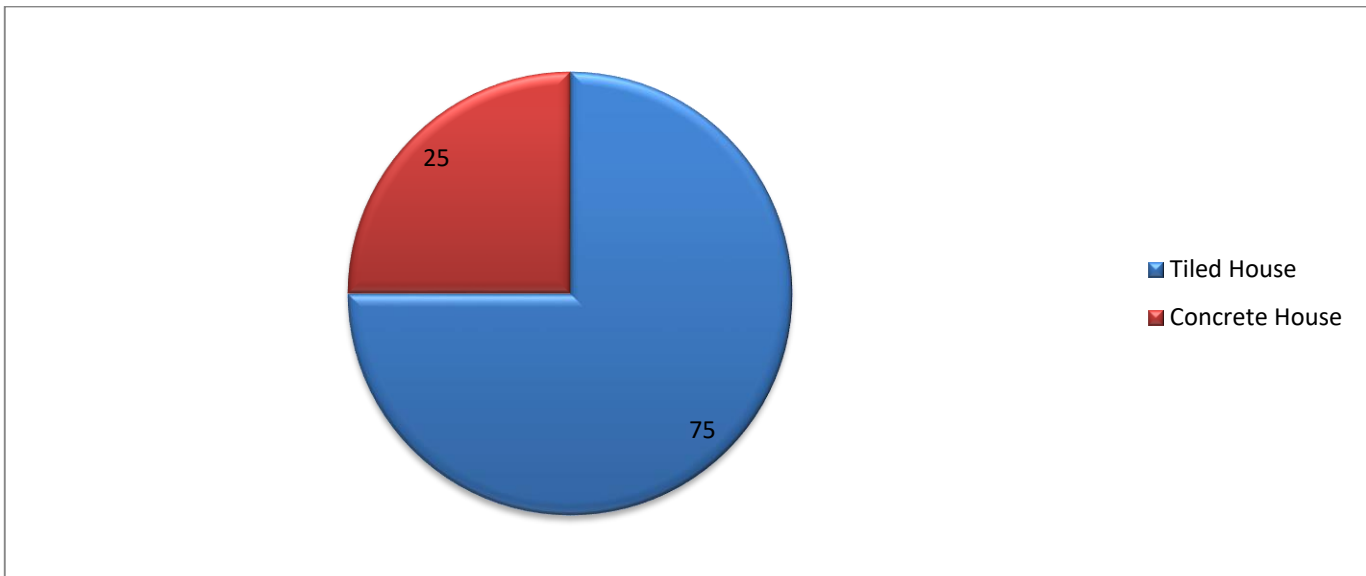
51% of the families monthly income is 2001-3000 and only 6.67% of them included in 4001-5000.

Availability of Land

Area	Number of Families %
Below 10	63.33
10 - 20	31.67
21 - 30	5
Above 30	---

63.33 % of family owned less than 10 cents of land. 31.67 % had 11 to 20 cent of land.

Housing Condition



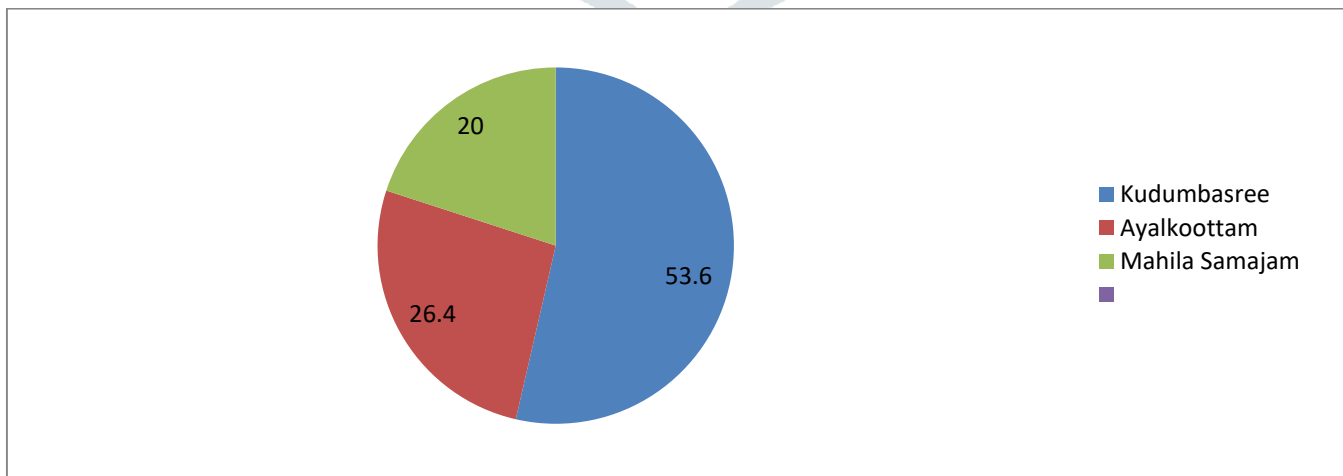
75% of family have tiled house and 25% have concrete.

Loan taken from Bank

Co-operative Bank	13
Bank	14
Kudumbasree	12
Money Lenders	01
Nil	20

It was seen that families borrowed money from bank and private firms.

Social Participation



All respondents are the members in social organization. They attend the meetings organized by the respective group.

CONCLUSION

In coir industry in Kerala majority of workers are female. They get very low wage rate. They facing various problems like economic and social backwardness. The coir industries are regulated by a regulation board called Coir Board of India undertaken by the Government of India, vide coir Industry Act of 1953 the main role of the coir board is to promote the coir industries and increase their productivity. It also looks into the marketing of coir products in domestic as well as international markets coir industries are lacking the modern amenities and technologies, it is becoming more tough for the industries to do good business and survive in the competitive market. Many micro and small scale coir industries are losing their way and are failing to survive. Mahila Coir Yojana (MCY) is the first women oriented self employment programme in the coir industry, which aims to providing self employment to rural women artisans in regions producing coir fiber. The scheme is being implemented by the Government through the coir board under its plans scheme "Training, Extension, Quality Improvement, Mahila Coir Yojana and Welfare Measures". A number of marketing problem faced by coir industry like transport expenses, sales man expenses, investment of agent, middlemen charges, substitute goods, market rate fluctuations and inadequate storage facilities for coir and coir products are some of the hardships faced by the industry. For a long period of time Indian rural communities especially women workers of coir industry have been facing number of social economic problems. So various planners and administrators of the coir board of the Government must consider the threats faced by women workers to protect their interest as well as the interest of the nation to march towards a prosperous future.

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