

# A Socio-Economic Condition of Women Agricultural Labourers in Bihar with Special Reference to Jehanabad District.

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## ABSTRACT

Women work force participation rate in India has been increasing after reform period. Women have a multi-dimensional role. They have a major role to play in the development process also. For the last few years programmes for women have been receiving particular attention under community and rural development programmes. The desirable socio-economic development can be achieved only when women in large are stimulated and motivated to accept and adopt new techniques. The largest number of women in India is engaged in farming operations either as cultivators or as supervisor or as agricultural labourers. They are the main decision makers and participants in various agricultural operations like seed sowing, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, threshing, application of manure, storage of seed and food grains and post harvest home level processing. Apart from all these they also involve in bringing fodder from field, chaff cutting, feeding and cleaning of cattle, maintaining cattle shed and compost making. In this paper an attempt has been made to study the socio economic condition of female agricultural labourers and suggest suitable measures for improving their living condition. The present study focuses on women agriculture labourers in Jehanabad where marginal agriculture labourers has been increasing since 1991 compared to male counterpart due to globalization effect.

**Key Words:** Agricultural labourers, Rural households, Sanitation, Socio-economic status, Economic activity.

## Introduction:-

Women make essential contributions to the agricultural and rural economies in all developing countries. Their roles vary considerably between and within regions and are changing rapidly in many parts of the world, where economic and social forces are transforming the agricultural sectors. Rural women often manages complex households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. Their activities typically include producing agricultural crops, tending animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintaining their homes. Many of these activities are not defined as “economically active employment” in national accounts but they are essential to the

wellbeing of rural households. It is clear that women play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development.

### **Review of Literature:-**

Sharma (1982) conducted field study in Punjab state which is advanced state in agriculture where role of female agriculture labourers is less and in Himachal Pradesh which is a hilly state where male labourers have migrated much and hence role of female agriculture labourers is high.

Duvvury (1989) evaluated the trends in female labour force participation in India. India in the recent has witnessed an upsurge in research on various aspects of women's existence, with the early focus on the social facets of their status giving way of analyses of women's location within the sphere of economic production, a shift that was prompted by the alarming decline in female participation. It reviewed literature on Women in agriculture, highlighting the lacunae and pointing to possible areas of fruitful future research. The impact of technological change and the process of capitalist agriculture have had unequivocally negative implications for women of agricultural labour and marginal peasant household. They constitute the poorest of the poor and have been a target of various governmental programmes in the drive to alleviate poverty.

Jha (1997) examined the socio-economic conditions of agricultural labourers and female workers after new economic policy in 1990s. In their field studies in some villages of Purnea district in Bihar, real wages for agricultural labourers have declined by 15% to 25% during 1991 to 1997. It is argued that new economic reforms took the hindmost attitude fits in well with the so-called reform-strategy of the relentless marketers.

Kapadia (1997) studied on poverty in rural Tamil Nadu, specifically women agriculture labourers. It focused on access to employment run the risk of implicitly being an approach that neglected the gender dimension of poverty. In the context of inequitable gender relations within households, poor women may have access to employment, but still be sharply subordinated, so that they have very little control over their earnings.

Sharma et al. (1999) stated in their paper have attempted to study the magnitude of female labour participation in agricultural and livestock enterprises and also the contribution of female labour to farm income. In the cultivation of major crops and in livestock rearing, the contribution of female labourers among the total labour requirements is more than half except for marketing operations. It is high as 75 per cent in the case of inter-culture and harvesting. In case of livestock enterprise also, the contribution of female labourers is around 70 per cent for indoor activities. The result further showed that the contribution of female labourers to total income in all the operations is higher than that of male labourers. The study suggests that training should be given to females of tribal area in farm/non-farm operations for enhancing farm/gross household income.

Tuteja (2000) conducted a study on the effect of contractual labour arrangements on agriculture women workers in rural Haryana. The study highlights the urgent need for assessing and modifying labour policy and rectifying the neglect of analysis of women worker's position after the prevalence of contractual labour arrangement. The study of Vepa (2005) analysed the declining economic stake of women in agriculture despite their increasing contribution benefit.

Chavan and Bedamatta (2006) examined the trends in agricultural wages with comparison to male-female agriculture labour force in India from 1964-65 to 1999-2000, using data from Agricultural Wages in India and Rural Labour Enquiry in 1990s. It found that the differences between the average wages of male and female agricultural labourers have widened over the years. In most of the states, the daily wages of male agricultural labourers exceeded the minimum wage levels while that of women was below the minimum.

Yadav and Kaushik (2006) conducted a study in Rewari district of Haryana state on the role performance of farm women in wheat crop. The study revealed that the total days of different activities in a season ranged from one day to 20 days, maximum days being spent on weeding followed by harvesting. The total time spent by women was maximum on harvesting (75 hrs), followed by weeding (50 hrs), irrigation (24 hrs) and storing (10.5 hrs). Least time was spent on threshing, winnowing, plant protection, fertilizer application and sowing (less than 10 hr/season). The study concludes that as women mostly do jobs that are tedious, monotonous and requiring manual labour while technical activities are taken over by men, women need to be trained in technical aspects as well to handle farming operations independently.

Sundaram (2007) in their study principally focused on the changes in the size and structure of the workforce especially male and female agriculture labour force and the changes in labour productivity, wages and poverty in India in the first quinquennial of the 21st century, to understand women's work status in India's rural areas and to examine the trends and nature of women's employment.

Srivastava and Srivastava (2010) examined the women employment status in rural India. The study analysed data from large-scale national surveys. The paper argues for policy interventions to increase work opportunities and enhance wages for rural women workers.

Srija and Vijay (2015) examined how agricultural economy transformed to an industrial economy, a decline in participation of female labour force and its experience has been in India especially among rural females who account for the major share of the rural population. The study found that the womenfolk in India are being mostly illiterate or with low levels of education face shortage of work in the home turf and have inhibitions in working as manual labour in the non-agricultural sector.

From the literature review, there are number of studies on agriculture and labour force, which are based on agricultural work, wages and economic contributions of working women to household income and pattern of expenditure and savings of agricultural women labour and awareness of social security measures of agricultural women and their role in decision making. In the backdrop of literature, the present study overviews the trends and pattern of women workers in Jehanabad district of Bihar. The study attempts to examine the role and position of female agriculture labourers in Jehanabad district of Bihar.

## Objectives

- 1) To analyse the socio-economic condition of female labour force in Jehanabad district of Bihar.

- 2) To suggest suitable measures for the betterment of female labour force in Bihar in general and Jehanabad district in particular.

## Methodology

The present study is on empirical investigation based on sample interview of female agricultural labour force in Jehanabad district of Bihar. The present study is based on both secondary and primary data and a systematic random sampling method has been adopted for the survey. The primary data has been collected from the Jehanabad district. The sample size comprised of 50 female workers in Jehanabad district of Bihar.

## Result and Discussion.

**Table-1 : Educational Status of Labourers**

Sl. No.	Educational Level	No. of Labourers	Percentage
1	Illiterate	20	40
2	1 <sup>st</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup>	22	44
3	5 <sup>th</sup> to 7 <sup>th</sup>	08	16
4	Above 7 <sup>th</sup>	None	00
	Total	50	100

Source : Field Survey

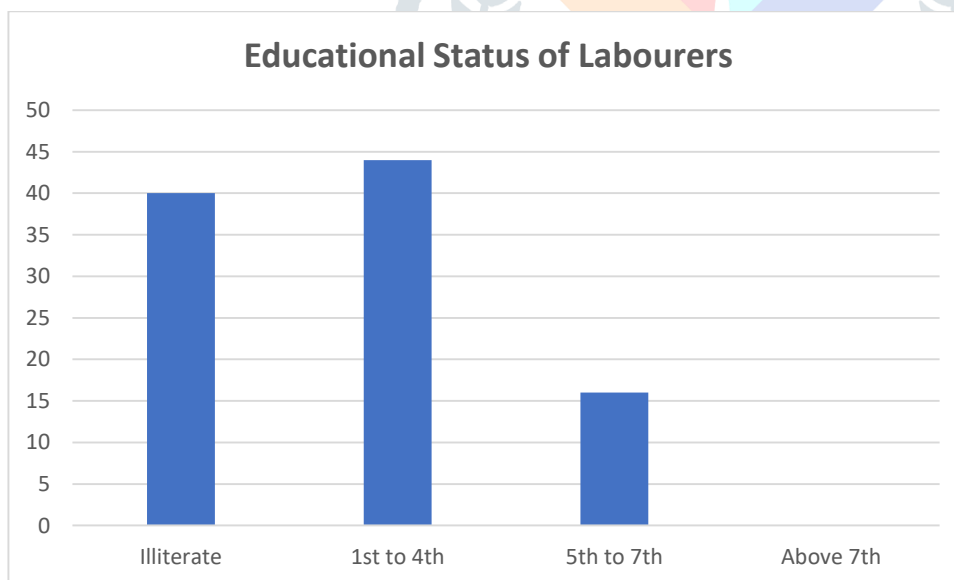


Table 1 shows that out of 50 respondents 40 percent of the respondents are illiterate followed by 44 percent and 16 percent of the respondents who have studied 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> standard and 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> standard respectively. But none among 50 respondents have studied above 7<sup>th</sup> standard.

**Table 2 : Access to Potable Drinking Water**

Sl. No.	Access Position	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Access within house premises	29	58
2	Access outside house premises	21	42
	Total	50	100

Source : Field Survey

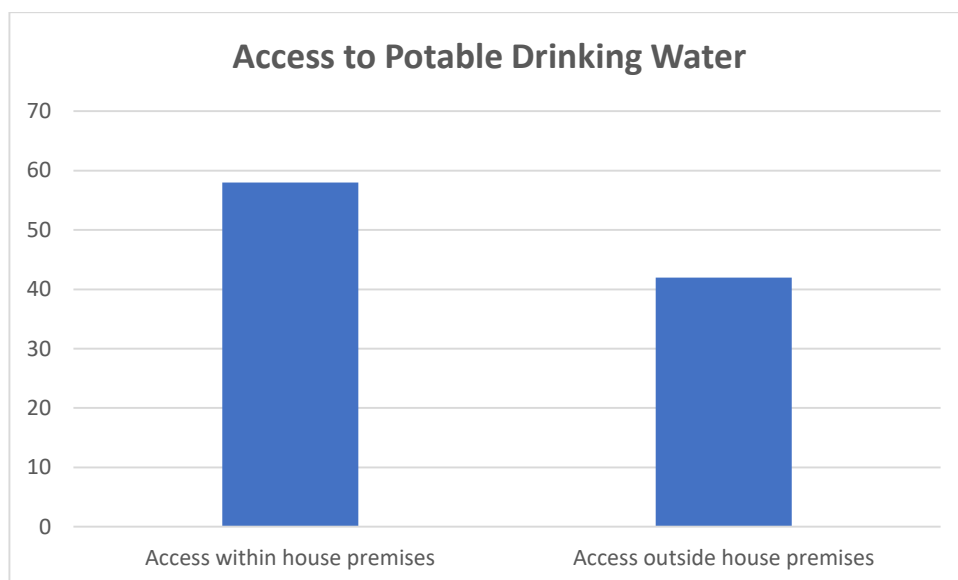


Table 2 states that out of 50 respondents, 29 (58 percent) have access to potable drinking water within their house premises, but rest of the 21 (42 percent) have access outside house premises that is that they have to depend on bore wells, street taps and nearby pond or lake for their day to day activities.

**Table 3 : Access to Sanitation**

Sl. No.	Access Position	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Within house premises	31	62
2	Outside house premises	19	38
	Total	50	100

Source : Field Survey

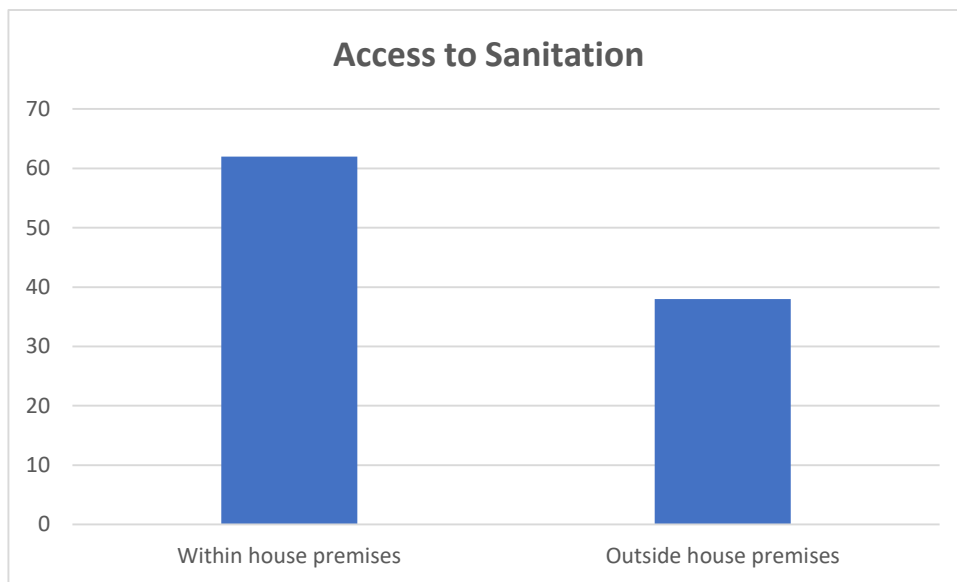


Table 3 reveals that out of 50 respondents 31 (62 percent) have access to sanitation facilities within their house premises but remaining 19 respondents (38 percent) do not have access within their houses, so they have to make use of open ground for their natural calls.

**Table 4 : Income Level (Monthly)**

Sl. No.	Income Level (Rs)	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	1000 to 2000	33	66
2	2000 to 5000	17	34
3	Above 5000	00	00
	Total	50	100

Source : Field Survey

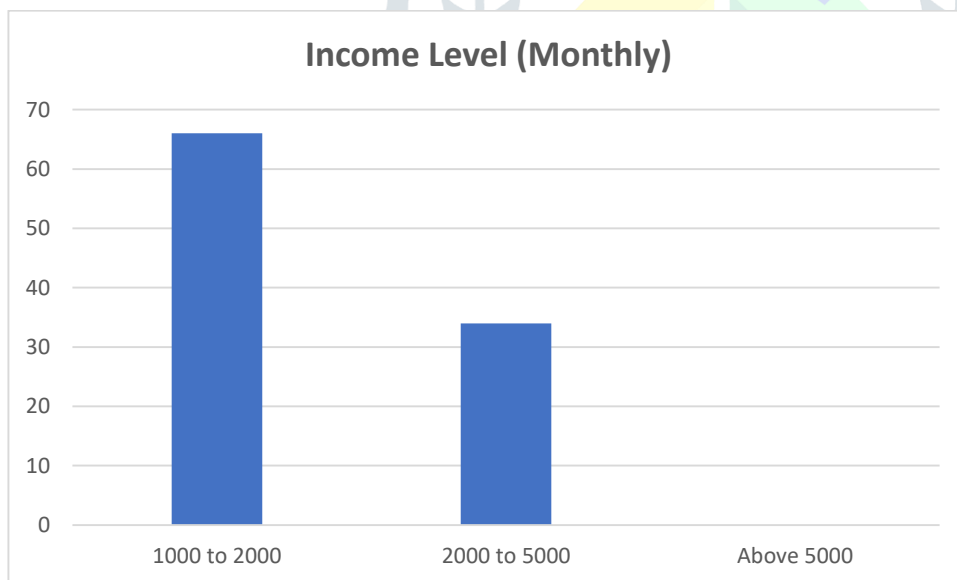


Table 4 states that out of 50 respondents, 66 percent of them earn within 1000 to 2000 of income per month, but 34 percent of the earn between 2000 to 5000 Rs as their monthly income. None of the respondents have their monthly earnings more than 5000 Rs.

**Table 5 : Savings Level (Monthly)**

Sl. No.	Savings Level (Rs)	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	No. savings	32	64
2	Up to 500	16	32
3	500 to 1500	2	4
4	Above 1500	00	00
	Total	50	100

Source : Field Survey

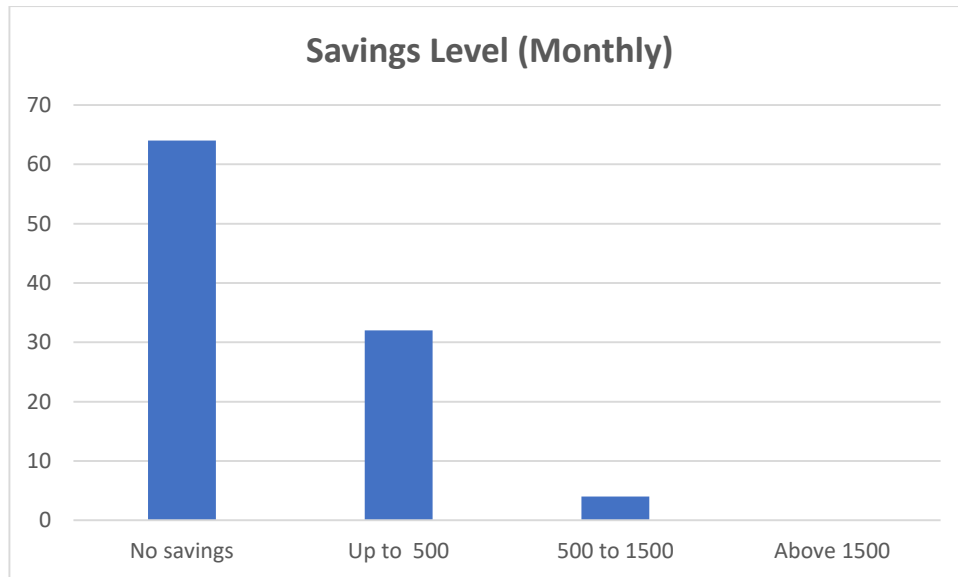


Table 5 states that out of 50 respondents, 64 percent have no savings at all, they spend the income earned by them for their day to day activities, hardly 4 percent of the respondents save between 500 to 1500 per month and 32 percent of them save very meagre amount up to 500 from their income earned per month.

### Findings of the Study

- 1) Majority of female agricultural labourers are illiterate; it shows those females who have studied beyond secondary level goes for industrial and corporate sector where they get good salary.
- 2) About 42 percent of female agricultural labourers respondents do not have potable drinking water facility within their house premises, thus they have to depend upon bore wells, street taps, nearby pond and lake for their domestic purposes.
- 3) Again, 38 percent of the respondents do not have access to sanitation within their houses, and have made them to depend on open ground, which is more unhygienic and hazardous to health and society.
- 4) Majority of them (66 percent) of respondents earn between 1000 to 2000 Rs as their monthly income which is not even sufficient for their basic needs, thus large number of female agricultural labourer's standard of living condition is very low.
- 5) Since income of 64 percent of respondents is not sufficient for their basic requirements, obviously their savings will also be **NIL**. It is such a pathetic condition of female labourers to lead their life without savings which is necessary for future unforeseen condition.

## Suggestions of the Study

- 1) Proper education system should be developed in rural areas for effective teaching to the female agricultural labourers. Female teachers should be appointed to teach the female and children in such areas.
- 2) Government should provide job oriented training to female agricultural labourers.
- 3) Agricultural policy of the state should be restructured as per requirements of female agricultural labourers.
- 4) State and local bodies should look into the matter of safe drinking water and sanitation facilities. For this purpose, cleanliness of the area must be taken into consideration with top priority.
- 5) To improve the saving level of women agricultural labourers, Government should provide better agricultural inputs at subsidized rates.
- 6) There must be provision of higher interest rates on deposits of women agricultural labourers.
- 7) Equal remuneration must be implemented in strict sense so that they could be empowered economically.

## Conclusion

Gender development is a necessary condition both for economic growth and human development. Women workers contribute significantly to household income and their earnings are crucial especially for landless and marginal farm household. The propionate contribution of females is, however, found to decline with increasing farm size. This is because the participation rate of women in agriculture is mostly governed by the economic condition of their family. Women from poor families accept any economic work to assist their family even under very inferior working conditions. They are mainly supplementary earners and their stay in labour force is of temporary nature, which declines with the improvement in the economic conditions of the family. It is matter of fact that development provides education and training to women and can enhance the productivity of all farm inputs. The study found that there is positive correlation between female illiteracy rate and female agricultural labourers' participation in the state of Bihar is that is education effect has positive impact on women empowerment in the State of Bihar. Hence, policy makers should not ignore productivity of domestic activities. Because women are very important segment in development at local to global levels. Unless women have control over their earnings and expenditure decisions, the benefits in terms of empowerment will remain limited. Empowerment of women is a continuous, multi-dimensional process depending to a large extent on the change in the value system,; attitude and socio-economic structure prevailing in the country, Experience, awareness, education and competence, willingness, confidence, self-motivation, encouragement from family and society contribute to empowerment of rural women. The movement towards empowerment of women needs to be accelerated. The immense potential concealed within this female labour force is yet to be recognized.



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