

# SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN AGRICULTURAL LABOUR

## A CASE STUDY OF INKOLLU MANDAL OF PRAKASAM DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

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**Abstract:** India is predominantly an agrarian country .About 69 per cent of its population still depends on agriculture for their livelihood. The direct contribution of agricultural sector to the national economy reflects by its share in total GDP, total employment and so on. It still remains the most acceptable fact that agriculture continues to play greater role in the socio-economic development of the country. The agricultural labourers constitute a considerable proportion of rural work force in the present study area i.e., Inkollu mandal in prakasam District of Andhra Pradesh. Total population is 33.97 lakhs, out of these males constitute 17.15 lakhs and females constitute 16.82. The workforce of the district as obtained from 2011 census was 13.06 lakhs were main workers, 2.30 lakhs were marginal workers, 3.59 lakhs were cultivators and 5.10 lakhs were agricultural labourers. There were 44,374 groups working throughout the district of Prakasam and the number of women participants was 4, 46,760. Nearly 43% of main workers in the district are agricultural labourers. Majority of the agricultural labourers are belongs to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes. There income is low and irregular. The present study an attempt is made to examine the factors influencing the socio-economic status of the agriculture women workers in selected mandal. The present study aims at understanding the factors determine the socio-economic status of selected 220 agriculture women worker households from Inkollu mandal of Prakasam district in Andhra Pradesh.

**Keywords:** Women Agriculture labour, Socio-economic status, Inkollu Mandal, Prakasam District, Andhra Pradesh.

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

Women are the backbone of the village economy of rural India. Women take up different works to eke out their livelihood and the majority of the rural women depend on unorganized sector like agriculture. Many of them are landless, homeless and belong to the socially depressed class of the society despite the seasonal poor nature of employment in the field of agriculture for labourers since the beginning of this century. Indian women live in rural areas, comprising around 5, 00,000 villages. They contribute to the production of about half of our food. They are involved in operation like planning, weeding thinning, manure spreading, harvesting and storage. A woman of landless family also works as a daily wage earner at somebody else's farm.

A large number of rural women primarily sustain their livelihood by working as wage labourers and agricultural farmers. A high proportion of working forces in India are employed in the unorganized sector

mainly in Agriculture, livestock and forestry. Working women are manifested in agricultural activities. The nature of work in agriculture which women labourers perform exposes especially in south India, rice transplanting is done primarily by women labourers due to this women's contribution is very high in Indian agriculture.

A woman in Indian society has been victim of humiliation, torture and exploitation. There are many episodes like rape, murder, dowry, burning, wife beating and discrimination in the socio-economic and educational fields. Indian society is pre-dominated by men, hence women are a victim of male domination in the respective sphere of life; especially in economic life, for instance, over decision making on resources, on utilization of her earnings and on her body. Hence a woman's life lies between pleasures at one end and danger at other end. In daily life women are routinely defined by sex and they are potential victims of kidnapping and rape. The human species has made significant progress in several spheres of life. But man has not grown enough to overcome the self-made mental slavery to the laws of the jungle. Since time immemorial the laws of physical strength thrives at the expense of the weak and has made women the primary under-dogs of an exploitative society. In the lower socio-economic level of society, women do more hazardous manual labour than men. Women do more than half the agricultural works in India. Still men are considered to be the bread winners. This sense of women being inferior is passed on from one generation through psychological conditionings.

## 2. ROLE OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE:

Agriculture in India is the vertical backbone of the country and is regarded as the large cell of the country's economic activity. About 80 percent of the Indian population either directly or indirectly depends of agriculture. Most of women perform various works for their livelihood and agriculture is considered as the biggest unorganized sector, where the large number of rural women takes part actively. The role of rural women is crucial in rural India as they participate in wide range of farm activities by slogging alongside with men in the field as well as taking care of the home and children, there by performing a dual role that of a home maker and of a pattern in the farming activities outside the home.

Indian agriculture continues to be gamble in the hands of monsoons in the spite of the green revolution and other advancements in Agriculture technology. In India, nearly half of the national income is derived from agriculture thus constituting the very foundation for the national economy. The achievement in Indian Agriculture has won national and international appreciation. Agriculture constitutes the main source of livelihood and the main area of work for most people in the developing countries. Most of these countries are at the early stage of development where the majority of women is employed in agriculture. Even in most of the South-East Asian countries, where convention prevents women from working outside the home, care of livestock, processing of the harvested crops, pursuit of craft and other work still provide them with the status of contributing materially to the family income. In most parts of the country, the jobs done traditionally by women are generally those of transplanting, sowing, weeding, harvesting, winnowing and threshing.

Indian women constituting nearly half of the total population of the country play a crucial role both in domestic sphere and agricultural sector. Yet our traditional attitude treats women as second-class citizens in spite of the fact that women have proved their settle in every walk of life. Their contribution is not given due credit. According to an international Labour Organization estimation, the value of unpaid house hold work constitutes 25 to 39 percent of the Gross National product.

The employment profile of women, as per the census of 2011, indicates that 79.40 percent of all economically active women were engaged in agriculture as compared to 63.30 percent of men. A significant trend observed is that over the years there has been an increase in the proportion of agricultural wage labour top total agricultural workers at the all-India level. The fact is that the proportion of women wage labourers is much higher than that of men. At all-India level, the proportion of female workers engaged as agricultural labourers in 1961, 55.32 percent of the rural female workers were cultivators but their proportion declined to 33.03 percent in 2011. Even in the case of male cultivators, the proportion decreased, though not to that extent as it was in the case of women.

Agriculture, the single largest production Endeavour in India, contributing 25 percent to the GDP, is increasingly becoming a female activity. Agriculture sector employs 80% of all economically active

women in the country as compared to 63% of men. It is estimated that there are 75 million women in dairying as against 15 million men and 20 million in other livestock activities as compared to 1.5 million men.

The Women Agricultural Labours belong to the disadvantaged sections of Indian rural society, constituting about 25 percent of the total labour force. Indeed; they should be paid special attention to lessen their aggravating employment situation and provided with other social security fields. We find a declining proportion of cultivators and an increasing proportion of agricultural labourers. However, the occupational structure has remained more or less stagnant over the last three decades. The percentage of agricultural work force was 69.51 percent between 1971 and 2011 with slight increase at percent, i.e., 68.79 percent. Women's role in agricultural operations, animal husbandry and other economically productive activities is very significant. They contribute about 60-70 percent of the labour required for these activities thus playing a pivotal role in sustaining economy. The decision making process is an important segment of every household because it makes implementation of a plan or programme quite easy.

Any intervention for improving the condition of women involved in agricultural activities should begin with an understanding of their role profile in terms of various agriculture and related activities. Analysis of their role, both traditional and current will enable one to identify the areas of intervention. This becomes the input for designing programmes of development by way of opening of new avenues of income generation and matching technologies to the specific tasks. However, in carrying out the programmes, appropriate research and extension, input supply and policy backup is of supreme importance. Once the programme of women's development in agriculture is launched fulfilling all these necessary conditions, it facilitates better performance of the role of the women, thereby enabling them to increase income, reduce drudgery and enhance their status in the society enabling them to increase income.

In order to improve upon socio-economic status of women, areas of possible interventions are, through providing more assured wage labour market, Identification of land based employment avenues and non-farm employment. Education is hypothesized to affect the agricultural productivity in two ways, firstly, via a choice of better inputs and output (allocative effect) and secondly, through a better utilization of existing inputs technical efficiency aspect. It was thought that educational level of both husband and wife have been taken separately to assess the influence on the decision making process of farm. Some of the major causes of women's unequal participation in Agriculture education are:

- **Lack of Time:** - Girls begin helping out at an early age with the household chores that burden women (fetching fuel, water, preparing food, childcare and working in the fields) and these responsibilities increase as they grow older, resulting in a decline in participation in education with increasing age.
- **Customs, traditions and attitudes:** - A combination of mutually reinforcing customs and attitudes place greater value on males than females in many societies. Preferences within families are often for boys to advance their education since social and cultural perceptions confine girls to roles that are thought to require little if any education.
- **Cycle of poverty:** - The poorer a family is, the less likely it is that girls are sent to school because their labour is required at home and in the fields. Extreme poverty in many countries tends to lock illiterate women into a cycle of early marriages and illiterate children.

Women work longer hours and their work is more arduous than men's. Women's contribution to agriculture – whether it be subsistence farming or commercial agriculture – when measured in terms of the number of tasks performed and time spent, is great than men. “The extent of women's contribution is aptly highlighted by a micro study conducted in the Indian Himalayas which found that on a one-hectare farm, a pair of bullocks' works 1,064 hours, a man 1,212 hours and women 3,845 hours in a year”.

### 3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

The second half of the 19th century saw the emergence of a new class in the Indian society-industrial working class inter-alia including women workers. The first attempt at interpreting the economic history of ancient Indian woman was made by **A. N. Bose** in his book. According to him, female slaves were often kept for enjoyment. So far as treatment is concerned, he opined that their masters meted out

horrible and inhuman treatment to women slaves. The nature of their work - manual and physical nature of jobs, encountering hardships in sun and rain - in the unorganized sector has become burdensome.

**Devender Dommati and Krishna Reddy Chittedi (2011)** in their paper on Socio-Economic Conditions of agricultural Women Labour in Andhra Pradesh: A case study of Karimnagar district, expressed that women suffer from a multiple burden on their time due to their home making, child rearing and income earning responsibilities. When they work the whole day in fields and forests, they need appropriate support services like crèches and child care centers. A Gram panchayat mahila fund should be established to enable SHGs and other women's groups to undertake community activities that help to meet essential gender specific needs. The feminization of agriculture, due to male out migration, needs specific attention with reference to gender sensitive farm and credit policies. All research, development and extension programmes in agriculture and all services must be engendered.

**S.A. Dange's** work is a useful attempt to analyze the role of women and their participation and control of productive processes. **R.S.Sharma** well-known historian undertook the study of the socio economic and political aspects of ancient Indian history from the materialist point of view. **Romila Thapar**, another outstanding historian of early India has given some important information regarding slavery and women workers in her various works. **S.Jaiswal's** paper have thrown light on slavery and discusses the possible connections between women's status and their involvement in production within the framework of what she perceives as an emerging class divided society and postulates links between the kinship structure and the modes of production.

### 3.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The overall objective of this paper is laid on analyzing the socio- economic status of the selected agriculture women worker households in selected study area of Inkollu mandal in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh. The specific objective of the study is:

1. To examine the socio-demographic and economic status of the selected agriculture women worker households in the study area.

### 3.2 METHODOLOGY:

The Inkollu mandal of Prakasam district is selected for the study due to the fact that the district has higher proportion of rural population. Inkollu mandal were selected from the Prakasam district purposively to examine the socio-economic conditions of the women agricultural labour. Also this mandal were selected for the study because it is the rural mandal that is having a high proportion of rural population. Two villages are randomly selected from Inkollu mandal depending upon the higher concentration of rural population. In this mandal 220 agriculture women worker households are selected. Among them 110 households are selected from Nagandla village and another 110 households are selected from Pusapadu villages. They are selected from villages located in the semi-urban areas of Inkollu mandal. The total of 220 selected agriculture women worker households from selected mandal. This study was based on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data have been collected through pre designed and structured household schedule in the selected villages during January 2013 to October 2014. The secondary data has been obtained from Annual Reports of the district authorities, District hand book of statistics of different years published by the Chief Planning Officer, Prakasam. Census data are used to collect population data. In analyzing the data apart from tabular analysis with averages and percentages are used at appropriate places. Tabular analysis with percentages is used to explain the general profile and their different economics patterns.

## 4. PROFILE OF INKOLLU MANDAL:

Inkollu is a Mandal in Prakasam District of Andhra Pradesh State, India. Inkollu Mandal Head Quarters is Inkollu town. It belongs to Andhra Region. It is located 45 KM towards North from District

Head Quarters Ongole, 293 KM from State capital Hyderabad towards west. Inkollu Mandal is bounded by Janakavaram Ponguluru Mandal towards west, Venkatapalem mandal towards East, Karamanchedu Mandal towards East, and Chinaganjam Mandal towards South. Inkollu Consist of 23 villages and 13 Panchayats, Bhimavaram is the smallest village and Inkollu is the biggest village. It is the 8m elevation (Solitude).

Telugu is the Local Language here. Total population of Inkollu Mandal is 48,565 living in 12,179 houses, Spread across total 23 villages and 13 panchayats. Males are 24,542 and Females are 24,023. It is Hot in summer. Inkollu summer highest day temperature is in between 32<sup>0</sup>C to 42<sup>0</sup> C. Average temperature of January is 24<sup>0</sup>C, February is 26<sup>0</sup>C, March is 28<sup>0</sup>C, April is 31<sup>0</sup>C, and May is 33<sup>0</sup>C.

#### 4.1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF VILLAGES:

##### I. Pusapadu

Pusapadu is a Village in Inkollu Mandal in Prakasam District of Andhra Pradesh State, India. It belongs to Andhra region. It is located 57 KM towards North from District head quarters Ongole.11 KM from Inkollu, 289 KM from State capital Hyderabad. Telugu is the Local language here. Total population of Pusapadu is 6012. Males are 3072 and Females are 2,940 living in 1506 houses. Total area of Pusapadu is 1653 hectares.

##### I. Nagandla

Nagandla is a Village in Inkollu Mandal in Prakasam District of Andhra Pradesh State, India. It is located 51 KM towards North from District head quarters Ongole and 10 KM from Inkollu. Nagandla is surrounded by Janakavaram Ponguluru Mandal towards South, Martur Mandal towards North, Yeddana Pudi Mandal towards North, Parchur Mandal towards East. Total population of Nagandla is 4388 .Males are 2191 and Females are 2,197 living in 1051 Houses. Total area of Nagandla is 1467 hectares.

#### 5. DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS RELATING TO THE SELECTED SAMPLE:

One important characteristic that bind people together is age. Age of women is expected to have bearing on the understanding of social issues like the size of the family, disability and health related problems and poverty related economic issues. Hence, the analysis of the age wise distribution of agriculture women workers is presented in Table 1.

**Table-1**  
**Distribution of Agriculture Women Workers by Age Composition in Inkollu Mandal**

SI.No.	Age Composition	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Below 25	14	6.36
2.	25-35	81	36.81
3.	35-45	90	40.90
4.	45-55	31	14.09
5.	Above 55	4	1.81
<b>Total</b>		<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Data collected through Field Survey

The above Table 1 presents the distribution of agriculture women workers basing on age in selected mandal. On the whole, it is clear that women in 25 to 45 years age group are in majority in the mandal. In fact in the age group of 25 to 45 years, the individual capabilities are in full vigor and their performance is efficient. Agriculture women workers households in the age group of 35 to 45 are also in large numbers.

The percentage of the agriculture women workers households above 55 years of age is very minimal, while that of those below 25 years of age is negligible. The large concentration of women workers in age group of 25 to 45 years helps them to have clear understanding of different social, economic, family welfare issues concerning all the agriculture women workers households.

## 6. DISTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURE WOMEN WORKERS HOUSEHOLDS ON THE BASIS OF LITERACY:

The literacy levels of agriculture women workers households, to a great extent help to improve their skills and earnings. Data on literacy levels of agriculture women workers is ascertained and presented in Table 2.

**Table-2:**  
**Distribution of Selected Agriculture women workers of Literacy Levels in Inkollu Mandal**

SI.No.	Literacy Level	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Primary	35	16.00
2.	Secondary	33	15.00
3.	Higher	19	8.50
4.	Illiterate	133	60.50
<b>Total</b>		<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Data collected through Field Survey

The above table reveals that only 16.00 per cent of total sample are completed primary education, 15.00 per cent completed secondary education and 8.50 per cent completed higher education and 60.50 per cent are illiterates. The literacy level of the selected sample households partially reflects the literacy status of the sample.

## 7. OCCUPATIONAL PATTERNS:

The information relating to the occupational patterns of the selected sample agriculture women workers are presented in the following Table 3.

**Table-3**  
**Occupation pattern of the sample households in Inkollu Mandal**

SI.No.	Occupation	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Agriculture Labour	186	84.67
2.	Allied Activities	34	15.33
<b>Total</b>		<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Study

The above table reveals the occupational particulars of respondents. In Inkollu mandal women majority respondent's main occupation is agriculture works. 84.67 percent stated that their main occupation is agriculture works and only 15.33 percent are allied activities.

**Table-4**  
**Subsidiary occupation pattern of the sample households**

SI.No.	Occupation	No. of Respondents	Percentage
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1.	Non- Agricultural Labourers	21	30.43
2.	Traders	13	18.84
3.	Artisans	15	21.74
4.	Services	13	18.84
5.	Other	07	10.14
<b>Total</b>		<b>69</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Study

The employment in agriculture is largely seasonal in character. Therefore, majority of the households stated that they are also depending on subsidiary occupations. As per the above Table 4 in Inkollu mandal women 69 members are working as non-agricultural labourers, shop owners, artisans, and other services.

The statistical information relating to the working days of the sample agriculture women workers are presented in the following Table 5.

**Table-5**  
**Working Days Particulars of the Sample agriculture women workers in Inkollu Mandal**

Selected Mandal	Particulars	Days	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Inkollu	Weekly in Days	1-3	81	36.67
		4-7	139	63.33
		<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>
	Monthly in Days	1-15	81	36.67
		16-30	139	63.33
		<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>
	Yearly in Days	1-100	169	76.67
		101-200	51	23.33
		<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Data collected through Field Survey

From the above Table it can be noticed that out of 220 sample agriculture women workers 76.67 percent are able to get the work about 100 man days in a year and 23.33 percent from 100-200 man days. If we look into the monthly availability of working days, the selected agriculture women workers from Inkollu mandal women still in forefront in getting more number of working days in a month. 63.33 percent of them are able to get 16-30 days working day and 36.67 percent of their income is confined with working days of 15 days only. Further it is classified that the working days are on weekly basis. 63.33 percent selected Agriculture women workers are getting work assignment between 4-7 man days and 36.67 percent are in the range of 1-3 working days. The working days which are available on weekly, month and annual basis are not sufficient.

## 8. INCOME LEVELS OF THE SELECTED HOUSEHOLDS:

The income particulars earned by the selected sample from different sources are presented in the following Table 6.

**Table-6**  
**Income particulars of the sample household in Inkollu Mandal**

SI.No.	Income Levels	No. of Respondents	
		Agricultural Income (%)	Non-Agricultural Income (%)
1.	> 5000	7 (3.33)	21 (30.43)
2.	5000-10000	65	31

		(29.33)	(44.93)
3.	10000-20000	64 (28.67)	11 (15.94)
4.	20000-30000	36 (16.67)	06 (8.70)
5.	30000-40000	23 (10.67)	--
6.	40000 above	25 (11.33)	--
<b>Total</b>		<b>220</b> <b>(100.00)</b>	<b>69</b> <b>(100.00)</b>

Source: field survey

Figures in brackets are percentages to total

The above table explains the particulars of the income of the respondents, in selected mandal women out of 150 respondents, majority of the respondents, i.e. (29.33 percent) are earning Rs 5,000 to 10,000 from agriculture. Only 3.33 percent are earning less than Rs 5000 from agriculture. 11.33 percent are earning above Rs 40,000 from agriculture. In the same manner in Inkollu mandal out of 150 respondents only 69 respondents are earning non-agriculture income also. In this mandal majority of the respondents 30.43 percent are earning below Rs 5000. Very less percentage of respondents only 8.70 percent are earning Rs 20,000 to 30,000.

The particulars relating to the improvements in the saving levels of the sample agriculture women workers are presented in the following Table 7.

**Table-7**  
**Particulars of Savings of the Sample agriculture women workers in Inkollu Mandal**

Sl.No.	Particulars	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yes	103	46.67
2.	No	117	28.67
<b>Total</b>		<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Data collected through Field Survey

The above table depicts the particulars of improvement in savings levels of the sample agriculture women workers. Whatever the additional income which is gained may be spent on consumption and remaining amount will be saved for further needs of the family members. Out of 220 sample agriculture women workers, 46.67 percent opined that there is an improvement in saving level due to the government programmes, 28.67 percent of the sample agriculture women workers opined that there is no improvement in their saving in spite of gaining additional employment through government programmes in recent times.

## 9. ASSETS STRUCTURE OF THE AGRICULTURE WOMEN WORKERS:

The details about profits, buying assets and durable goods by the selected Agriculture women workers from the selected mandal are presented in the following Table 8.

**Table-8**  
**Distribution of sample agriculture women workers who owned assets in Inkollu Mandal**

SI. No.	Items	Inkollu		
		Yes	No	Total



		(%)	(%)	(%)
1	Bought assets	94 (42.67)	126 (57.33)	220 (100)
2	Durable goods	141 (64.00)	79 (36.00)	220 (100)
3	Not Applicable	-	-	220 (100)

Source: Data collected through Field Survey

Figures in brackets are percentages to total

From the above Table it can be noticed that among women selected from Inkollu mandal 50.67 percent of sample households reported that they have assets. 42.67 percent of sample agriculture women workers bought small asset like field or ground for various purposes, and 64.00 percent bought durable goods.

## 10. CONCLUSION:

Women were exploited to a greater degree as they were paid less compared to men for similar nature of work and hours spent on work. The conditions of the work in the unorganized sector were unsatisfactory and the problems confronted by them were acute, and that their illiteracy, poverty and indebtedness forced them to work for lower wages and under unjust conditions. The conditions of women agriculture labour in rural areas are no better. Most of them do not have year round employment. They suffer vital disadvantages compare to men in their search for employment opportunity, lower real wages, increased uncertainties and irregularities of employment. There are legal provisions to protect their rights. Such working conditions are hurdle in their overall development leading to under performance and not allowing them to raise their productive capacity in that very profession also. Hence, there is every need to analyze the exiting lacunas in this area and it is felt to study the status of women in the agricultural sector in India which falls under the class of “unorganized sector”.

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