
UNIT 11 LABOUR : WOMEN

Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Extent and Nature of Women's Work Participation
 - 11.2.1 Women's Work Participation
 - 11.2.2 Nature of Work Done by Women Workers
 - 11.2.3 Categories of Women Labour
 - 11.2.4 Factors Affecting Women's Work Participation
- 11.3 Women Workers by Various Sectors of Employment
 - 11.3.1 Unorganised Sector
 - 11.3.2 Organised Sector
- 11.4 Labour Laws for Women Workers
 - 11.4.1 Equal Remuneration Act
 - 11.4.2 Minimum Wage Act
 - 11.4.3 Maternity Benefits Act
- 11.5 Women's Work Participation : Challenges and Response
 - 11.5.1 Mobilising and Organising Efforts
 - 11.5.2 Institutional Efforts : Anti-Poverty Programme
- 11.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.7 Key Words
- 11.8 Further Readings
- 11.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

11.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through the unit you should be able to :

- describe the nature and extent of women's labour force participation;
- explain reasons for the 'invisibility' and under enumeration of women's labour contribution in the home and outside;
- examine reasons for over concentration of women in certain sectors of economy;
- discuss various legislations for the protection of women labour;
- narrate the need for organising the poor rural and urban women; and
- analyse the various policies for training and income generation for poor women.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit aims to introducing you to various dimensions of women's labour and factors affecting their productive roles in the Indian society. The unit discusses the nature and extent of women's involvement in key sectors of

economy, socio-economic determinants of women's labour force participation, their access to productive resources, and opportunities for skill development through training and education within the family and outside. The unit also looks into government interventions and direct measures to alleviate poverty and responses of the rural and urban women's organisations to improve their access to resources and bargaining capacities.

The unit begins with an analysis of the context of women's paid and unpaid labour within and outside home. It also analyses the socio-cultural, developmental and locational (rural-urban, agro-climatic zones) factors responsible for variations in women's labour utilisation patterns. In the units on Women's Status and Women and Work in Block 7, ESO-02, we discussed at length about various facets of women's work participation. In this unit we shall look into those issues in relation to social problems in India. You may like to look into those units before start working on the present one.

11.2 EXTENT AND NATURE OF WOMEN'S WORK PARTICIPATION

Women play an important role in the Indian economy and are engaged in a variety of occupations in rural and urban areas. The report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (1974) pointed out that "the status of any given section of population in a society is ultimately connected with its economic positions which (itself) depends on roles, rights and opportunities for participation in economic activities".

The Report further observed that "sex inequality cannot in reality be differentiated from the variety of social, economic and cultural inequalities in India society". The inequalities inherent in our traditional social structure based on caste, community, class and gender, influence women's economic roles and opportunities. Their participation is also affected by the state of development and rural urban locations. In an earlier unit (ESO-12, Unit 31) Women and Work you have learnt that traditional role expectations, differential socialisation of girls and boys and sexual division of labour affect women's labour force participation. In this unit we shall begin with a brief discussion on the nature and extent of women's work participation.

11.2.1 Women's Work Participation

Accurate data regarding the extent and nature of women's work is limited because of the limited definition of 'work' in the Census which excludes much of the work women do within the household for the family's survival and maintenance. The data is also not comparable because of changes in the definitions of 'worker' from Census to Census and lack of uniformity in the classification of workers by age, sex and educational levels. Earners and earners' dependents have been classified differently in various census. Again, the 1971 census used the labour time disposition criterion over the reference year, and defined workers as only those who spent the major part of their time in economic activities. Thus all irregular, marginal and part-time workers come under the category of non-workers. However, the marginal, irregular workers were more likely to be concentrated among women, children and aged persons. Therefore, the census report does not give the real picture (Chattopadhyay, M. 1982:44).

The Labour Bureau has brought out a document titled Statistical Profile on Women Labour. Many of these sources underestimate women's labour

contribution in so far as the work that women do on family farms and home-based family occupations remains unpaid and ‘invisible’ to data collectors. No economic value is given to work such as collection of fuel, fodder and water, collection of minor forest produce for subsistence and household maintenance activities as it does not come under the purview of market economy. Sexual division of labour relegates women’s primary responsibility to providing goods and services to the family. For the poor women, all work is for subsistence and survival of the family.

Even if one does not take into account the above mentioned aspect of the women’s contribution to the economy there exists a difference in assessing the workforce participation of women.

Table 1: Workforce by Gender and Rural-Urban Location: All India, 1993-94 to 1999-2000

| Population Segment | Usual status crude worker Population ratios (per 1000) | |
|--------------------|--|-----------|
| | 1993-94 | 1999-2000 |
| <i>(in '000)</i> | | |
| <i>Rural</i> | | |
| Males | 553 | 531 |
| Females | 328 | 299 |
| Total | 444 | 419 |
| <i>Urban</i> | | |
| Males | 520 | 518 |
| Females | 154 | 139 |
| Total | 347 | 337 |
| <i>All Areas</i> | | |
| Males | 544 | 527 |
| Females | 283 | 254 |
| Total | 418 | 395 |

Note: Usual Status = principal status + subsidiary status.

Source: Sundaram, K., ‘Employment and Poverty in 1990s: Further Results from NSS 55th Round Employment—Unemployment Survey, 1999-2000, Economic and Political Weekly, 11 August 2001, pp. 3039-49. cf. India Development Report. 2002.

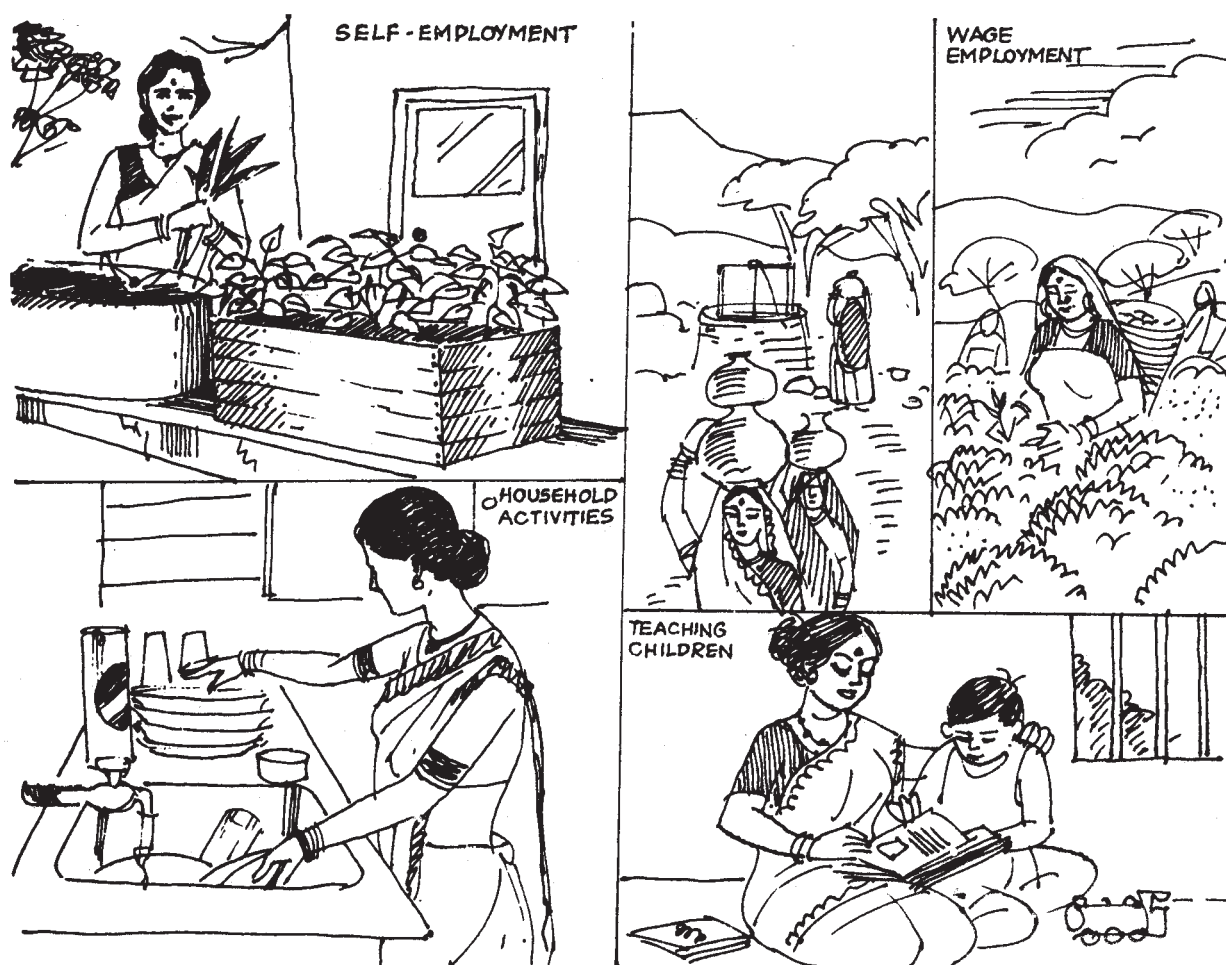
Majority of the women workers are employed in the rural areas and in agriculture. Amongst rural women workers 87% are employed in agriculture as labourers and cultivators. Amongst the women workers in the urban areas 80% are employed in unorganised sector like household industries, petty trade and services, building and construction etc. The employment of women in the organised sector (both public and private) as on March 2000 was about 4.9228 million. This constitutes 17.6% of the total organised sector employment in the country. The distribution of women employees in major industries reveals that community, social and personal services sectors continued to absorb the majority of women employees. The lowest employment of women was noticed in electricity, gas and water sectors. In the factory and plantation establishment women workers constituted 14% and 51% respectively of the total workers in 1997. In mine establishments, women workers constituted 5% of the total workers (India 2003). According to the Human Development Report in South Asia female labour force constituted 32% of the total labour force in India in 2000.

According to 2001 Census of the total female population 25.7% are workers (main and marginal). Again of the total workers 32.5% are cultivators and 39.4% are agricultural labourers, 6.4% work in the household industry and 21.7% are other category workers.

According to Dr. Asok Mitra 'the under-reporting of female work force participation rates in the Census varies from 30 to 40 per cent'. The measurement and analysis of female labour force participation suffers from underestimates, inadequate attention to unpaid work at home and outside, and lack of support services to reduce their drudgery i.e. provision of drinking water, fuel and fodder, childcare etc. All these have adverse impact on the status of women labour force.

11.2.2 Nature of Work Done by Women Workers

In the unit on Women and Work in ESO-02 we discussed in detail the nature of women's work participation and work done by women workers. It was pointed out that women's work had been subjected to invisibility because of the census bias and conservative estimate of work done by women. Here let us describe the nature of work done by women.



Women and Work

The NSSO has identified the following household activities in which women are regularly engaged. Maintenance of kitchen garden, orchards etc, work in household poultry, work in household dairy, free collection of fish small game, etc., free collection of firewood, cattle feed. etc., husking paddy, preparation

of gur, grinding of foodgrains, preparation of cow dung cakes for use as fuel, sewing, tailoring, tutoring of children, bringing water from outside the household premise, bringing water from outside the village.

However, a major part of the work done by women in the household is not recognised as work since these are not paid in the economic sense and not visible in the public eye as well.

11.2.3 Categories of Women Labour

On the basis of their work status, women labour can be grouped under the following three categories:

- **Self-employed** both within and outside home.
- **Wage Workers** outside home e.g. agricultural workers, construction workers, factory workers, contract workers etc. and inside home (home-based workers engaged in work on out put basis)
- **Unpaid Family Labour** on their own farm or family occupations like weaving, pottery, handicrafts etc.

Let us discuss these categories in detail.

i) Self-employment

They constitute the predominant sector of employment in our country. According to the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) in 1987, 57.3 per cent of total workforce was absorbed by this sector. The choice of activity depends on family situation, women's control over the means of production, skills, technology and work organisation.

A significant number of self-employed women are working outside the home (57 per cent) with irregular income and many a time operating from the pavements (vegetable sellers, vendors, hawkers etc.).

The distribution of female work participation by status of employment indicates that there is a pronounced declining trend in the importance of the self employed category in both rural and urban areas and an overall increase in the casualisation of the women work force from 31.4 per cent in 1972-73 to 40.9 per cent in 1997 in rural India with a marginal decline to 39.6 per cent in 1999-2000. In urban India there is a reversal of this trend with an increase in work participation rates of females under regular employment category and a decline in casualisation. Further, as per the NSSO 55th Round on Employment and Unemployment in India 1999-2000, women tend to enter the labour market later than men. Work participation of males is considerable higher in the age group of 15-29. In rural areas female work participation rate has been the highest at 58.6 per cent in the age group of 40-44 and is above 50 per cent in the age group 30-54. In urban areas female work participation rate is highest at 28.5 per cent in the age group 35-39 and is 38.3 per cent in age group 40-44. Early marriage and multiple child bearing depress the female work force participation rates in the 15-29 age group. In most developed and developing countries, the age group 15-25 exhibits a peak in women's work force participation rates.

In the construction sector the proportion of casual labour is high. The proportion of women workers has increased from 9.1 to 9.91 per cent during 1971-1981.

The increase is primarily in rural areas as numerous public works programmes for employment generation were taken up under anti-poverty programmes of the government.

Box 1**Wage Disparities**

The average earnings of female casual workers are extremely lower than the average earning of regular wage earners and salaried workers. The wage inequality between men (Rs. 10.27) and women (Rs. 4.49) is higher in rural areas than in urban ones. Women workers are mostly employed as piece-rate workers doing manual work for contractors and middlemen. They provide cheap labour to industries and contractors.

Average Wage Salary Earnings Per Day for Casual Wage Labour (in Rupees)

| | Rural | | Urban | |
|----------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| 0-5-14 | 5.68 | 3.57 | 5.19 | 3.50 |
| 15-59 | 10.53 | 5.11 | 5.11 | 5.30 |
| 60+ | 9.35 | 3.77 | 9.94 | 4.65 |
| All ages | 10.27 | 4.89 | 11.09 | 5.29 |

Source : NSSO, 1987 (Quoted in National Commission on Self-employed Women, 1988)

Usual, Weekly and Daily Work Status by Sex

| | Male | Female | Male | Female |
|---------------|------|--------|------|--------|
| Usual Status | 2.12 | 1.41 | 5.86 | 6.90 |
| Weekly Status | 3.72 | 4.26 | 8.69 | 7.46 |
| Daily Status | 7.52 | 8.98 | 9.23 | 10.99 |

Source : NSSO, 1987

It is again to note that the incidence of unemployment and under-employment is higher among women casual workers than among men.

An important category of working women, is home-based workers. They are engaged in a variety of activities like bidi-making, food processing, garment making, agarbati making, spinning, toy making, fish processing, pottery, cane and bamboo work, lace making Zari work etc. No reliable statistics are available regarding the number of home-based women workers as their work is not always 'visible'.

Home-based workers fall in two categories: the self-employed, and those engaged in piece-rate work.

There is a large section of women who are doing piece-rate work. The employers have tremendous advantage in giving out work to women on a piece-rate basis as they don't have to invest in tools and machinery or any extra cost for providing the work benefits. There are not trade unions and hardly any legislation to protect their rights relating to wages, social security benefits (health and maternity benefits) etc. A lot of child labour is used in home-based

production activities. The industrial units specially smaller ones have financial advantage in not employing them directly. You will read more about child labour in the next unit (Unit No. 12).

iii) **Unpaid Family Workers**

Women provide unpaid labour on family farms, home-based small industries, family maintenance activities. The average hours of unpaid work done by women within and outside home varies from 6-8 hours per day. Women from poorer households have a heavier burden of work.

11.2.4 Factors Affecting Women’s Work Participation

Women’s work participation rate in general has been declining over the decades. The decline has occurred due to several factors:

- a) Absence of a comprehensive and rational policy for women’s development aiming at improving their employability through education, training and improving their access to resources (land, credit) and technology.
- b) The perception of ‘male as the bread winner’ of the family conceals the fact that in low-income households woman’s earning is crucial for the sustenance of the family. This perception adversely affects investment in women’s education and training. Employers also visualise women workers as ‘supplementary earners’.
- c) Structural changes in the economy e.g. decline in traditional rural industries like pottery, blacksmithy, weaving and handicrafts due to competition from modern industries have increased the dependence of women on agricultural sector and have adversely affected the status of women workforce.
- d) Lack of assets (land, house) in their own name in order to have access to credit and self-employment opportunities has been the important hurdle in the upward mobility of women workers.
- e) The heavy demand on the time and energy of women for subsistence tasks (fuel, fodder and water collection) and burdens of child-bearing and rearing in addition to participation in labour force, leave them little time for education, training and self development. Besides working as labourer, they spend 6-8 hours per day on collection of fuel, fodder, water, child care and other domestic chores. Efforts to reduce women’s drudgery have been highly inadequate.
- f) Division of labour between women and men and technological changes in the production system also work against women. They are the first to lose their jobs and the last to be hired. Higher illiteracy and low skill development among women also result in low wages and insecure or casual employment.

Check Your Progress 1

- i) What are the different categories of women labourers? Use about five lines to answer.

.....

.....

.....

.....

 ii) Tick mark the correct box (true or false)

a) In India most of the women workforce are self-employed.

True

False

b) More women are employed in the non-agricultural sector.

True

False

c) Men and women get equal wages in all sectors of employment.

True

False

11.3 WOMEN WORKERS BY VARIOUS SECTORS OF EMPLOYMENT

Almost 90% of women workers are in the primary sector which include agriculture (87%) and livestock, forestry, fishing, plantation and orchards (1.8%). Agriculture remains the major sector of women's work.

Women engaged in agricultural operations work on an average about 12 hours a day on the farm in taking care of the cattle at home. There is a division of labour between the tasks men and women do in agriculture. Although it is not rigid and there are regional variations, however, some patterns are uniform. Women do not plough the field due to social taboos. Women are mainly engaged in sowing, weeding, transplanting and spraying chemical pesticides. In agriculture, women work mostly as casual labour. As agriculture labourers they comprise 60% of all agricultural workers.

Other activities where the number of women workers exceeds the number of male workers are cashewnut processing, cotton and wool spinning and weaving, manufacturing of bidis, tobacco processing, canning and preservation of fruits and vegetables.

Activity 1

Identify about 20-25 workers in your neighbourhood and place their work in the different types of economic activities as discussed in earlier sections. Analyse the gender differentials. If possible, exchange your note with your colearners at the Study Centre.

Let us examine the nature and extent of women's work participation in terms of various sectors of employment. You may be interested to know about the unorganised sector first.

11.3.1 Unorganised Sector

The nature and extent of women's work participation in the rural unorganised sector is qualitatively and quantitatively different in the rural areas from that of the urban areas. Hence we should discuss the rural and urban areas separately for a better understanding.

i) Rural Unorganised Sector

A little over 87 per cent of women are employed in the unorganised sector in rural and urban areas. Employment in this sector is characterised by lack of job security, low wages, long hours of work; and unhealthy working conditions. There are very few workers' unions to bring pressure on employers to provide more humane conditions of work. Inadequate legislation for these workers and totally ineffective enforcement of the few legislations enacted to protect their interests further aggravate their situation.

Women workers in this sector are mostly illiterate. They are drawn from the poorer sections and they lack opportunities to improve their skills through training and education. A large share of work in the rural unorganised sector is done by women.

Government programmes to increase employment and productivity are focused more on men; and women are seen as beneficiaries rather than active participants. The predominantly male bureaucracy and extension workers are not very sensitive to women's needs and problems. Land ownership and division of labour often works to women's disadvantage.

ii) Urban Unorganised Sector

A large number of women are engaged in services. Forty per cent of the self-employed women are in the service sector and 30% are in petty trades. Eight per cent of the women are engaged in construction activities. A majority of the self-employed women are in petty business selling pan-bidis, fruits and vegetables, leaf, cane and bamboo products and sale of firewood etc. A significant number of self-employed women (57%) are working outside the home with irregular income and many a time operating from the pavements. Domestic service is another area where a large number of women workers are engaged as part-time or full-time workers.

In manufacturing, the percentage share of female workers in traditional industries i.e. food, tobacco and textiles has not changed. In some industries like cashew processing, coffee curing etc. it has declined due to mechanisation. Women have been employed more where 'putting out system' is common like garments, engineering products, plastics, rubber and tobacco processing.

11.3.2 Organised Sector

The organised sector (both public and private) accounts for about 13.0 per cent of the female labour force. In the public sector as well as major industrial groups in coal, iron ore and metal mining, women's employment during the last two decades has either remained static or has declined. There has been a sharp decline in the number of women workers in coal mining, particularly after the nationalisation of the industry. There are reports that the public sector coal mines have encouraged women to 'retire voluntarily' after nominating a male from the family for the job.

In both public and private sector there is an extensive use of women contract and casual labour with a view to avoid provision of labour laws i.e. providing child-care centers, minimum wages and maternity benefits.

Here we can sum up the main characteristics of female labour working in various sectors of economy as follows:

- i) Low overall participation rate of women vis-a-vis men.
- ii) Regional variations in female work participation rate.

- iii) Large concentration of women workers in the agricultural sector and household industries in all states.
- iv) Majority of women i.e. 87% are working in the ‘informal sector’ which is characterised by low wages, non-unionisation, bad working conditions and irregular work.
- v) Women are mostly engaged in low productivity and lowpaid occupations. Wage discrimination is widely prevalent in such jobs. About 89% of women in rural areas and 69.48% of women in urban areas are unskilled workers.

The entry of majority of women from socially and economically disadvantaged section into the labour market as unskilled workers had to be understood in terms of the factors leading to it.

In the units on Women’s Status and Women and Work of Block 4. ESO-02, you have learnt that not only that women’s labour within the home is unpaid and undervalued but also traditional role expectations, differential socialisation of boys and girls and gender role stereotyping have an adverse impact on women’s roles and educational opportunities. Society’s perception of their contribution and value of caste and community also have a significant influence on women’s labour participation.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) Which are the activities where women exceed the number of male workers? Use about three lines to answer.
.....
.....
.....
- ii) What are the employment characteristics of informal sector? Answer in about four lines.
.....
.....
.....
.....
- iii) Mention a few important occupations for women in the informal sector in the rural areas. Use about four lines to answer.
.....
.....
.....
.....

11.4 LABOUR LAWS FOR WOMEN WORKERS

Invisibility of women’s work, marginalisation of women workers by the process of development and their concentration in the unorganised or informal sector (about which you have learnt earlier) make it difficult for women to benefit from labour laws enacted to protect them and regulate their working conditions.

Labour laws are enacted to provide safe working conditions like health and maternity benefits prevent their exploitation and regulate wages.

Since majority of women are in the unorganised sector, we will discuss the legislation which affects this group of women workers.

11.4.1 Equal Remuneration Act

This Act states that there should be no wage discrimination between male and female workers when they are engaged in the same type of activity. In other words men and women would get the same wages if the nature of work is similar.

The Act applies to workers in the organised sector, it has been largely ignored in the unorganised sector. Women in agriculture, construction, household industry etc. continue to receive lower wages than men. However the Act has been effective in the organised sector, especially in plantations where nearly half the workers are women and also in mines and factories. Wage differences between the sexes have been abolished in these industries.

11.4.2 Minimum Wages Act

For workers in the unorganised sector, this law provides a mechanism for fixing up minimum rates of wages which should reflect the basic minimum needs of the workers.

While notifying minimum wages, certain types of work done by women are classified as ‘light work done by women’ and ‘heavier work done by men’. This is one of the methods to fix lower wages for women.

In addition women in the organised sector are entitled to maternity benefits. Employers are also expected to provide creche where more than 30 women are employed.



11.4.3 Maternity Benefits Act

This Act provides that women workers are entitled to 24 weeks of leave with full pay during pregnancy. Usually the female worker is allowed to take leave for 4 weeks before the birth of the child and 8 weeks leave after the birth of the child. They are also allowed to take leave for 6 weeks for abortion.

It is usually being argued that one of the reasons for the decline in the employment of women in the organised sector is that the employers have to pay maternity benefits to female employees. Since the number of women employed in the organised sector is very small, the amount paid as maternity benefit is very low in comparison to other social security benefits paid to male employees.

The National Commission on Self Employed Women suggested that maternity benefits and child care should be recognised as a package and a fund should be created to provide necessary assistance to women. Various women’s organisations have been demanding that child care should be included under the basic needs programme of the government and suitable steps should be taken to implement it.

Activity 2

Interview 10-15 working women engaged in the informal sector and find out if they are aware of any of the three Acts we have discussed. If possible exchange your note with your colearners at the Study Centre.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) Write a note on Equal Remuneration Act in about four lines.

- ii) The Maternity Benefit Act provides that women workers are entitled to:
 - a) 12 weeks of leave without pay during pregnancy
 - b) 12 months of leave without pay during pregnancy
 - c) 12 weeks of leave with full pay during pregnancy
 - d) 12 days of leave with full payment.

11.5 WOMEN’S WORK PARTICIPATION : CHALLENGES AND RESPONSE

In recent years there have been significant efforts to organise women workers. Efforts have been also made by the government to launch various programmes. Let us discuss the efforts made and initiatives undertaken for the mobilisation and upliftment of poor women who form the bulk of the workforce in our country.

11.5.1 Mobilising and Organising Efforts

Increasing emphasis is now given to organisation and mobilisation of unorganised women workers in order to give them voice and collective strength for the improvement of their working conditions and wages. A few organisations like Self-employed Women's Association (SEWA), Ahmedabad, Working Women's Forum (WWF), Madras, Annapurna Mahila Mandal (AMM), Bombay and several grassroots organisations have mobilised urban and rural poor women workers in order to strengthen their bargaining capacities and improve their access to credit and other resources. SEWA is a trade union of over 40,000 poor women workers in Gujarat. WWF has a membership of 15,000 women and has now spread its activities to Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Women have struggled for land ownership, minimum wages, access to forest produce, water resources, rights of hawkers and vendors etc. The revitalisation of women's movement in the 1970s and 1980s, has resulted in an increasing awareness about women's rights and their participation in local and larger struggles.

Housing, water and sanitation are the other major concerns of poor women workers. They have also organised for legal and policy changes and against sexual exploitation of women workers. The Report of the National Commission on Self-employed Women, widely known as Shram Shakti has observed that "today we are witnessing the gradual rise of a movement of poor women organising on issues, asserting themselves, articulating their needs and bringing themselves to the forefront of our political consciousness..... It has been possible only because of many earlier movements and attempts to organise by these women." Such example are however, few and far between. Some of the trade unions and most of the political parties have also set up women's wing within their organisations.

The attempts of poor women to organise themselves are often met with strong oppositions by vested interests in both rural and urban areas. The National Commission on Self-employed Women recommended a strategy to promote organisations of women and suggested that the government should play an active and positive role by insisting that all government project, schemes and programmes for the poor should have a component of organising as this will help in building a people's base.

11.5.2 Institutional Efforts : Anti-Poverty Programmes

Anti-poverty programmes were launched by the Government in the Fourth Five Year Plan. It was much later in the Sixth Five Year Plan that a separate strategy was considered for employment and income generation for poor women. The report of the CSWI (1974) stressed the fact that the 'poor' are not a homogeneous group. Since then several studies have highlighted the unequal burden of poverty on women due to their familial responsibilities and the need to provide for the subsistence needs of women.

The major anti-poverty programmes in the country are as follows:

- i) **Programmes for providing self-employment** through loans for productive assets. The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) has fixed a target of 30% women beneficiaries to be covered under the programme. In 1982-83 a separate programme for Development of Women

and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) was taken up to provide self-employment to rural women.

- ii) **Programmes of wage-employment** like National Rural Development Programme, Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme. The employment generated under this programme is mainly through public works programmes like repair of roads and construction activities.
- iii) **Special Programmes** for tribal areas, hilly areas and drought prone areas.
- iv) **Training Programme** for upgrading or imparting new skills for generating self-employment (Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment);
- iv) **Distribution of surplus land to the poor.** In these schemes under the land reform programme mostly male head of the households have been given land.

One of the major problems with anti-poverty programmes was that poor women, handicapped by illiteracy, socio-cultural factors (as most of them are SC/ST) and inability of these agencies to imaginatively plan and implement these programmes, could not benefit from these schemes. Due to predominantly male ownership of land and other productive assets, women were not able to give bank guarantee and take advantage of the credit schemes.

There were also programmes in identifying viable activities and adequate planning for economic programmes for women and giving them support in terms of technology, training, raw material and marketing of goods.

The government estimates of surplus land distributed to the landless poor show that a very small portion has been acquired and distributed except for West Bengal and Kerala. Most of it is uncultivable or needs lots of input like fertilisers, irrigation and good soil management etc. The land was distributed to the 'male heads of households' ignoring the fact that many households were headed by women and they play an important role in marginal and landless households. It is estimated that about 30-35 per cent of households are headed or managed by women where men have migrated to towns.

Check Your Progress 4

Tick mark the correct answers.

- i) Which one of the following is not an organisation involved in the mobilisation of working women?
 - a) Self-employed Women's Association
 - b) Working Women's Forum
 - c) Annapurna Mahila Mandal
 - d) None of the above.
- ii) The Committee on the Status of Women recognises that
 - a) poor women are a homogenous group
 - b) poor women are not a homogeneous group
 - c) poor men bear more burden of poverty than women
 - d) none of the above is correct.

- iii) Which one of the following is responsible for not giving women sufficient access over the anti-poverty programmes launched by the government?
- a) Illiteracy
 - b) Predominantly male ownership of land
 - c) Inability of the agencies to plan imaginatively
 - d) All of the above.

11.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have acquainted you with the major problems of the women workers in India. The unit began with a broad discussion on the nature and extent of women's labour force participation in India. There we discussed the various categories of women labourers, nature of work done by women labour, and the socio-economic factors affecting their work participation. Problems of women workers working both in the organised and unorganised sectors are discussed in this unit. There are various labour laws viz. Equal Remuneration Act, Minimum Wage Act, Maternity Benefits Act. We also discussed these laws in relation to contemporary women's work participation in India. Lastly we discussed the efforts made to organise the poor women workers and the broad welfare measures undertaken to improve women's work condition and work participation in India.

11.7 KEY WORDS

- Home-based Production** : Commodity produced based on family labour mainly.
- Self-employed** : Those who occupied independently in their own economic activities are categorised as self-employed. They may be the cultivators, artisans, vendors, petty shopowners, businessmen etc.
- Wage earners** : Those who work to receive wage for their work from their employers are categories as wage earners viz., agricultural labourers etc.

11.8 FURTHER READINGS

Jose A.V.(Ed.), 1989. *Limited Options : Women Workers in Rural India*. Asian Regional Team for Employment Promoton, ILO : New Delhi.

Singh Andrea M. and Anita K. Vitanen (Eds.), 1987, *Invisible Hands: Women in Home-based Production*, Sage Publications: New Delhi.

SinghaRoy, D.K. 1992. *Women in Peasant Movements: Tebhaga, Naxalite and After*, Manohar; New Delhi.

11.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Women workers can be categorised under three broad headings: (a) Self-employed both within and outside home; (b) Wage workers outside home and (c) Unpaid family labour work on their own farm or family occupations like weaving, pottery and handicrafts etc.
- ii)
 - a) False
 - b) True
 - c) False

Check Your Progress 2

- i) According to a report prepared by the Government of India, Women outnumbered men in the following activities: dairying, small animal husbandry and handloom.
- ii) Employment in the informal sector is characterised by lack of job security, low wages, long hours of work and unhealthy working conditions.
- iii) Agriculture, dairying, fisheries, animal husbandry, khadi and village industries, handicrafts, sericulture, handloom etc.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) This Act states that there should be no wage discrimination between male and female workers when they are engaged in the same type of activity.
- ii) c)

Check Your Progress 4

- i) d)
- ii) b)
- iii) d)