

# Economic position of women in the workplace

## Introduction

The modern woman takes pride in the fact that she plays a more dominant role in the family and society today. So she has taken over partially the burden of earning for the family, but we must not forget that even though we are in the forefront of leading the globe we still have deep rooted moral and ethical values. We are still very much attached to our traditions and culture. Since traditional times the women of the house has been the care giver in the family. Cooking, cleaning and looking after the family has primarily been her responsibility. She is still carrying this burden and now is doubly loaded trying to prove her mettle.

India has the largest number of professionally qualified women and working women. Modern women are well educated, they have left the same domains of their homes and kitchen and stepped into the so called 'man's world, equipped with the armor of their knowledge and talent. They have succeeded no doubt and yet they do two thirds of the work get 10% of the income and own 1% of the means of production.

A look at the statistics reveals a grim picture. Women population constitutes half of the country's population accounting for 496 million in absolute number as per 2001 census. Sex ratio is 900 female to 1000 male in urban India and 946 to 1000 in rural India with a national average of 933 female to 1000 male where as 1015 females to 1000 male is the ideal situation.

National Family Health Survey show that almost 58% of our pregnant women are anemic and 33 % have body mass index (BMI) below the desired level. Almost half of the children in India are born low birth weight, indicating the

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poor care and concern over the motherhood. National average of 301 MMR (maternal mortality ratio -number of dying mothers, in 1 lakh live births) based on Sample registration system data) compared to the millennium development goal target of less than 100 by 2015 unveils the challenge.

As far as Education is concerned, over 35% of the female population in India was still illiterate as per census 2001. Still there are 242 districts in the country where female literacy rate has not gone beyond 50%. Over 50% of the girl children are still outside formal education. The country has enacted a right to education act to ensure basic education to all within the age group of 6 to 14.

Access of women to employment and direct income is also limited- their contributions to direct income are limited to 26% of the total. When access to power is seen, it is very limited for women- even with up to 50% reservation in elected positions, women's control over Panchayati Raj institutions are limited- and there is no reservations for assembly and parliament positions, leading to a situation near to absence of women in leading governance roles, though with some exceptions. State wise data on all these indicators gives a further grim picture, except for some select states like Kerala, wherein some of the bigger states like Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan have a long way to go.

## Position of women in the workplace

A large number of women in India work (whether they are educated or uneducated) in the organised or unorganised sectors. However

there is a serious under-estimation of women's contribution as workers, as most of their works is at all seen as economic activity and counted as work.

In the organized sector, only 18.7% workers are women. In the unorganised sector, women's share goes up to 38%. Only one area where female presence and status in work is somewhat equitable is the software industry wherein 30% of the workforce is female, who are at par with their male counter parts in terms of wages, position at the work place etc.

In rural India, agriculture and allied industrial sectors employ as much as 89.5% of the total female labour, most of them informal and unorganised. In overall farm production, women's average contribution is estimated at 55% to 66% of the total labour.

The women population characterized by low literacy rate (54.16%), low work participation rate of 25.68% and low level of development participation during 2001 census. More than 90% of the women in rural areas and 69% in urban areas were found having no technical skills. Women continued to be "treated as a source of cheap and secondary labor that can be hired and fired to suit the requirements of the employer"

### **Pay Parity in India**

According to the Global Gender Gap Report of 2010 among the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) economies India ranks lowest on gender parity, this includes pay parity (i.e. difference between wages of men and women). The recent survey by the World Economic Forum (WEF) puts Indian among the bottom 10 countries in the world in terms of women's participation in the economy.

As per the WEF report the average annual income of a woman engaged in cooperate sector in India is US\$ 1,185, where as that of her male counterpart is US\$ 3,698. This clearly brings

out the fact that an average woman's is paid less than one third of the average man's pay in India. The WEF report further bring out in terms of "economic participation and opportunity" for women, India has fared worse than last year, Overall, in terms of gender equality India achieves a score of 59.4%, but in terms of economic participation and opportunity, it scores 39.8% which is very dismal. India's general participation of women in the workforce stands at 36%, where as for professional and technical workers, the figure is 21%. As per the report of the Annual Survey of Industries for the year 2004-05, the gender wage gap for regular workers in the formal was 57%, where as for casual workers in the formal sector it is 35-37%. In agriculture sector, where the women participation rate is more than estimated 60%, the hourly wage rates of women in 50 to 75% of male rates. The discrimination and biases against women witnessed in social spheres gets mirrored on to economic spaces not only through direct, legitimate routes but also via the resilience in perceptions and mind sets among the agents of the labour markets that reconfigure to retain elements of gender imbalance.

### **Laws Regarding Gender Wage Discrimination**

Both at the national and international levels various laws have been made with main focus on Preventing discrimination against women workers. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) has passed a law asking states" to ensure that men and women have equal social, religious and cultural rights. The law of covenant also focuses on the fact that the remuneration should be equal for equal work and there should not be any kind of discrimination on the basis of sexes (CESCR, 1990). The International Labour Organization has framed Conventions (laws) to protect the women labour from discrimination. In case of wages it has formed Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100) which ensures equal remuneration to both male

and female laborers. This Convention has been ratified by 163 countries (C100, 1951). Further to reduce the wage gaps the ILO has a policy of setting minimum wages, which is widely used by ILO (ILO, 2003a). If one looks at the Indian scenario, there are many provisions in the constitution which clearly talks about women labour equality. Although article 15 of the Indian constitution guarantees that states will not discriminate on the basis of sex but still discrimination can be seen in every part of the country. The equal remuneration act also known as TERA was passed in 1976. It was basically the first legislation which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in India. As per TERA, male and female employees who are performing "same work" will be paid equal remuneration. "Same Work" has been defined as one which requires similar skills, efforts and responsibilities which are performed under similar condition. Article 39 as defined by the Indian constitution also guarantees the principle of equal pay for equal work for both men and women. The fair wage committee established in 1948 accepts the principle of equal wages. As per this committee, the equal pay principle does not apply when "Male Work" and "Female Work" is distinguished.

**Statistics**

**Table 1 Wage rate ( in Rs. Per day) for persons of age 15-59 years (2009-10)**

All India Category Of workers	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Casual labor in MGNREGA public works	90.93	87.2	-	-
Casual labor in other types of work	98.33	86.11	-	-
	101.53	68.94	131.92	76.93
Regular Wages/Salaried Persons	249.15	155.87	377.16	308.79

**Table 2 Average salary per day received according to education level (2009-10)**

All India General Education Level	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Illiterate	135.72	66.47	156.6	92.56
Literate up to middle school level	160.04	80.32		
Up to Secondary and Higher Secondary level	267.14	151.54	293.26	217.61
Diploma/ Certificate	355.48	291.01	481.26	369.73
Graduate and Above	403.05	285.98	634.92	499.98

Source :NSSO 66th Round(June 09-June 2010) CSO Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation GOI

**Table 3 % of Females participating in the manufacturing sector in India**

Year	%
2000-2001	18.05
2001-02	19.08
2002-03	19.62
2003-04	19.49
2004-05	20.36
2005-06	19.81
2006-07	20.66
2007-08	19.78
2008-09	20.05
2009-10	19.81

**Findings and Conclusions**

Gender disparity and wage discrimination is found throughout India but it is more intense in the rural areas .The main reason for this is the lack of knowledge, awareness and illiteracy among the rural women. In urban areas women are getting education and thus are becoming more and more aware of their rights and thus we see in urban areas the disparity has somehow shown a declining trend but the rural women are still illiterate and have no idea of the schemes launched by government for their welfare. Further being illiterate and thus unskilled, they are not able to get skillful jobs and are confined to low a skilled job, which further increases disparity in rural areas. However, mere increases in participation