

## Agriculture Labour's Socio-Economic Conditions (A Study In Krishna Dist., 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 India. In the present study area i.e., in Krishna District of Andhra Pradesh. total population is 4517398, out of these males constitute 2267375 and females constitute 2250023. Nearly 44% of main workers in the district are agricultural labourers. Majority of the agricultural labourers are belongs to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes. Their income is low and irregular. Since they possess no skills or training and then have no alternative employment opportunities either. Therefore they are a suppressed class because of all these reasons their economic lot has failed to improve even after six decades of planning. Qualitative data were also collected through focus group discussion. Study shows that main cause of labour shortage is rural out-migration and MGNREGA work. The consequence of labour shortage in agriculture is changes in cropping pattern and land market. The farmers are adopted various strategies to overcome labour shortage in agriculture such as use of family labour, increased use of machinery and hired labour from outside the village. Farmers (especially small and medium farmers) unable to pay wage rate as equal to the MGNREGA wage rate due to low income from agriculture. As MGNREGA is a labour bank in the rural areas, these labour should involve in agricultural work in the field of farmers that the best strategy to overcome labour shortage in agriculture.

**Keywords:** Labour shortage, MGNREGA, wage rate, family labour, migration

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### I. Introduction

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was made in 2005. The aim of the scheme is to enhance livelihood security of the households in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed employment in every financial year of every household whose adult members volunteer to do the unskilled work. This scheme was launched from Anantapur district, Andhra Pradesh by the UPA government in Feb 2nd 2006. It aimed at providing livelihood security by guaranteeing 100 days in a year of unskilled manual work to every rural household. It had provisions of unemployment allowances in case the work is not provided within 15 days. Initially it is launched in 200 districts, it was extended to 130 more districts in 2007. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) completes ten years of implementation on 2nd February 2016. The achievements of a decade are a cause of national pride and celebration. Since the start of the programme, the expenditure on the programme has amounted to Rs. 3,13,844.55 crore and out of this 71% has been spent on wage payments to workers. Of the workers, the percentage of Scheduled Caste workers has consistently been about 20% and Scheduled Tribe workers has been about 17%. A total of 1,980.01 crore person days have been generated, out of which the percentage worked by women has steadily increased much above the statutory minimum of 33%. A total of 150 interviews were conducted with randomly selected MGNREGA beneficiaries. Interview schedule, structured discussion and observation methods have been also used to collect primary data from the field. In terms of MGNREGA's outcomes, the study reveals that the scheme is benefitting the poorest households and tribes in particular especially in terms of providing a safety net and as a tool for poverty alleviation and empowerment.

The data provided by the census of India reveals that in 1981, about 69 per cent of the total workers were engaged in agriculture and allied activities; during 1991, the share of agriculture in total employment slightly declined to 68 percent. In absolute terms, agriculture provided employment to 256 million persons in 1997, thus bringing percentage of economically active population in agriculture to 61 per cent. It was increased in 2011 census to 263.02 million (72.57% of total main workers i.e. 362.45 millions). It is really disturbing that the proportion of agricultural labourers has increased and the cultivators have indicated a decline.

One of the most distinguished features of the rural economy of India has been the growth in the number of agricultural workers, cultivators and agricultural labourers engaged in crop production. The phenomena of underemployment, under-development and surplus population are simultaneously manifested in the daily lives and living of the agricultural labourers. They usually get low wages, conditions of work put an excessive burden on them, and the employment which they get is extremely irregular. Agricultural workers constitute the most neglected class in Indian rural structure. Their income is low and employment irregular. Since, they possess no skill or training, they have no alternative employment opportunities either. Socially, a large number of agricultural workers belong to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Therefore, they are a suppressed class. They are not organised and they cannot fight for their rights. Because of all these reasons their economic lot has failed to improve even after six decades of planning.

## **II. Problems Of Landless Agricultural Labour**

The problem of agricultural landless labourers is increasing year after year and in order to evaluate the economic conditions of this class. The First Agricultural Labour Enquiry was conducted in the year 1950-1951 by the Ministry of Labour. The enquiries revealed the following problems of agricultural landless labourers.

### **Low wage rate**

The main problem is wage in this sector. Though agricultural wages have been revised upward several times since independence, the legislations are poorly implemented. For instance wages in U.P, Bahar, Orisa and M.P ranges from Rs.20. to 30 per day per man compared to the wage range between Rs. 7.50 and Rs. 9.50 in Punjab and haryana there is exploitation by landowners low wages generate the vicious cycle of poverty.

### **Large sized families**

The number of members increased in the families is other problems of landless agricultural labours. Their income earning available sources only in the field of agriculture land.

### **Low social status**

The incomes of agricultural labourers are very low. Hence their standard of living is not improved way social status of the labourers are very low level compare with other income group of people.

### **No social security**

Agriculture workers in the country do not have any social security. The existing legislations are also not enforced permanently by concerned authorities.

## **III. Review Of Literature**

**MGNREGA as Strategies to Overcome Labour Shortage in Agriculture:** Another suggestion of the farmers is that MGNREGA workers should be available agriculture work in the farmers' field. As we have discussed earlier that MGNREGA has positive and negative impacts on agriculture and rural households as on one hand remittances from MGNREGA are being used in agriculture and household expenditure and on the other it is responsible for the increasing wage rate in agriculture. MGNREGA gives equal opportunity to men and women in terms of work and wage rates. Women are happy with MGNREGA because of on time payment of wages, whereas in agriculture they get lower wages than men (Sivanandan, 2012).

**MGNREGA** was implemented in three phases since 2006. It has improved rural socio-economic conditions among landless and marginal farmers, as well as improved environmental related components. These components are water and soil conservation (Tiwari *et al.*, 2011).

**Aparna** (2012) also showed the impact of MGNREGA on input use, labour production, and in improving irrigation and infrastructural facilities and have therefore increase land rent. Card holders have used their money to introduce chemical fertilizers and machinery in their fields.

From the above review, there is no particular study, which is based on agricultural work, wages and economic contributions of working to household income and pattern of expenditure and savings of agricultural labour.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To examine the problems faced by the landless agriculture labourers and to offer suitable solutions.
2. To examine the causes of landlessness and study the general level of wage differential function among the landless agriculture labourers.
3. To estimate the extent of poverty of landless agricultural labourers
4. To find out the structure of income and expenditure patterns of the landless agriculture labourers.
5. To analyze the levels of assets and liabilities of landless agriculture labourers.

## **IV. Methodology**

The present study is based on aggregated data about the agricultural labourer of Nuzvid Mandal of Krishna District collected from government and semi-government sources. But it cannot answer satisfactorily the question such as – which factors are responsible for difference in income, consumption and indebtedness of

the agricultural labourers in the mandal. To obtain answer to such questions it is necessary to make a comparative analysis of the sources of income, pattern of consumption and indebtedness of the agricultural labourers at the household level. This in turn calls for field study with individual household as unit of observation and accordingly field survey was carried out as a part of the study in a few selected villages in the mandal based on random sampling. The ultimate aim of the field survey is to find out the source, composition and pattern of income and consumption of the agricultural

labourers. The Nuzvid Mandal of Krishna District of Telangana State is purposively selected for the study in view of the strong agricultural labour concentrated in the area. Therefore totally 200 households were selected. Simple percentages and averages were worked out to analyze the general characteristics of the samples

**Table-1: Caste-wise Distribution of the Respondents**

<b>Caste</b>	<b>Digavalli</b>	<b>Ravicherla</b>	<b>Sunkollu</b>	<b>Total</b>
Backward Class	52 (32.09)	50 (30.87)	60 (37.04)	162 (40.50)
Scheduled Caste	22 (18.33)	44 (36.67)	54 (45.00)	120 (30.00)
Scheduled Tribe	--	--	34 (100.00)	34 (8.50)
Other Castes	--	10 (71.42)	4 (28.58)	14 (3.50)
Minority	46 (65.72)	24 (34.28)	--	70 (17.50)
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b> <b>(30.00)</b>	<b>128</b> <b>(32.00)</b>	<b>152</b> <b>(38.00)</b>	<b>400</b> <b>(100.00)</b>

**Source:** *Field Study*

The table 1 explains the village wise and caste wise distribution of the sample respondents. Of the total sample Sunkollu respondents are more in number followed by Ravicherla and Digavalli villages. In caste wise distribution 40.5 percent of Backward Class respondents, 30 percent Scheduled Caste respondents, 17 percent of Muslim Minority respondents, 8.5 percent Scheduled Tribe respondents are chosen for study, only 3.5 percent Other Caste respondents are available in our selected sample villages. It is noted that BC & SC respondents are almost equal number in all the three villages, whereas ST respondents are not available in Digavalli and Ravicherla villages. It is significant to note that OC respondents are very less in number in the sample villages.

**Table-2: Agricultural Labourers and Marginal Farmers**

<b>Community</b>	<b>Agricultural Labourers</b>	<b>Marginal Farmers</b>	<b>Total</b>
B C	72 (18.00)	90 (22.5)	162
S C	64 (16.00)	56 (14.00)	120
S T	10 (2.50)	24 (6.00)	34
O C	10 (2.50)	4 (1.00)	14
Muslim Minority	70 (17.50)	--	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>226</b> <b>(56.50)</b>	<b>174</b> <b>(43.50)</b>	<b>400</b> <b>(100.00)</b>

**Source:** *Field Study*

Table 2 reveals that the households 43.5 percent have land. Of this 22 percent are BCs, 14 percent are SCs, 6 percent are STs and only one percent belongs to OC community, Muslim Minority community do not have any land. In BC and SC community almost 50:50 division among landed households and landless households. In other communities landless households are more than landed households.

**Table-3: Landholdings of the respondents**

Community	Number of Respondents got land from Govt.	Number of Respondents have own Land	Total Respondents have Agricultural Land	Landless respondents/ Landless Agricultural Labourers	Total
B C	14 (3.50)	76 (19.00)	90 (22.50)	72 (18.00)	162 (40.50)
S C	30 (7.50)	26 (6.50)	56 (14.00)	64 (16.00)	120 (30.00)
S T	14 (3.50)	10 (2.50)	24 (6.00)	10 (2.50)	34 (8.50)
O C	--	4 (1.00)	4 (1.00)	10 (2.50)	14 (3.50)
Muslim	--	2 (0.50)	2 (0.50)	68 (17.00)	70 (17.50)
Total	58 (14.50)	118 (29.50)	176 (44.5)	224 (56.00)	400 (100.00)

Source: Field Study

Table 3 explains the landholdings of the sample respondents of the entire 400 sample respondents 44.50 per cent landed households, 22.50 percent are BC community, 14 percent are SCs, 6 percent are STs only one percent OC community. Majority of the respondents (56 percent) do not have any land. Among the landed households 29 respondents have got land from government.

**Table-4: Income Particulars of the Respondents**

(Income per Annum)

Income Range	B C	S C	S T	O C	Minority	Total
Below 2000	20 (5.00)	20 (5.00)	4 (0.10)	2 (0.50)	--	46 (11.5)
2000-5000	42 (10.5)	12 (3.00)	2 (0.5)	--	2 (0.5)	58 (14.5)
5001-10000	22 (5.50)	16 (4.00)	16 (4.00)	--	--	54 (13.5)
10001-15000	4 (1.00)	6 (1.50)	2 (0.50)	2 (0.50)	--	14 (3.50)
Above 15000	2 (0.50)	2 (0.50)	--	--	--	4 (1.00)
Total	90 (22.50)	56 (14.00)	24 (6.00)	4 (1.00)	2 (0.50)	176 (44.00)

Source: Field Study

Table 4 explains Majority of the respondents are getting income below Rs. 10,000 per annum, 3.5 percent of the respondents are getting in the range of Rs.10,000 to Rs. 15,000 only two persons are from BC and one from SC are getting more than Rs. 15,000 income, 11.5 percent of the respondents getting below Rs. 2,000 income. Thus, low level income shows that the economic conditions of the respondents, most of the respondents are not getting sufficient income from cultivation that why they are not depending on cultivation.

**Table-5: Outstanding Loan Particulars of the Respondents**

Range	B C	S C	S T	O C	Minority	Total
No Indebtedness Families	44 (11.00)	14 (3.50)	16 (4.00)	4 (1.00)	16 (4.00)	94 (23.50)
Below 10,000	30 (7.50)	52 (13.00)	4 (1.00)	2 (0.50)	28 (7.00)	116 (29.00)

10,001 – 20,000	36 (9.00)	28 (7.00)	6 (1.50)	--	22 (5.50)	92 (23.00)
20,001 – 30,000	18 (4.50)	14 (3.50)	4 (1.00)	2 (0.50)	--	38 (9.50)
30,001 – 40,000	6 (1.50)	4 (1.00)	--	2 (0.50)	2 (0.50)	14 (3.50)
40,001 – 50,000	20 (5.00)	4 (1.00)	2 (0.50)	2 (0.50)	--	28 (7.00)
Above 50,000	8 (2.00)	4 (1.00)	2 (0.50)	2 (0.50)	2 (0.50)	18 (4.50)
<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>400 (100.00)</b>

Table 5 denotes outstanding loan amount of the respondents. It is noted that 306 respondents have outstanding loans, only 47 respondents do not have outstanding loans 29 per cent of the respondents outstanding loan amount is below Rs. 10,000, 23.00 per cent of the respondents outstanding loan amount is in the range of Rs. 10,000 – 20,000, 9.50 per cent of the respondents outstanding loan amount is in the range of Rs. 20,000 – 30,000, 7 per cent of the respondents outstanding loan amount is in the range of Rs. 40,000 – 50,000. Above 50,000 outstanding loan having respondents are 4.5 per cent.

### V. Findings

The increasing vulnerability among the agricultural labourers is inevitable due to feckless schemes of the governments. This research is a module for attempting the whole issues of agricultural labourers was done primarily based on both primary and secondary data. The research analyses the employment generation, income of agricultural labour and the extend of indebtedness and earning prevalent among rural landless labourers and agricultural households in Nuzvid Mandal of Krishna District with a view to understanding their livelihood patterns. In this Mandal—where more than 75 per cent of the population is rural—a third of rural households constitute landless labour households which depend completely on wage employment. Another 60 per cent of rural households are comprised of marginal farmers and small farmers who do not generate sufficient income from their land. Even small farmers with up to five acres supplement their agriculture without side jobs or wage employment. The evidence relating to rural labour households and agricultural labour households shows an explicit overall decline in employment both for male and female labour. There is also a decline in the average number of earning members per household. Clearly, the rural labour households and agricultural labour households in this mandal are characterized by low earning, decline in income, low consumption and high debt, and remedies will have to be found to generate more employment and income. Since independence, there is a significant improvement in India's economic and social development.

In the post-reform (since 1991) period, India has done well in some indicators such as balance of payments, resilience to external shocks, service sector growth, significant accumulation of foreign exchange, Information Technology (IT) and stock market, improvements in telecommunications etc. GDP growth was around 8 to 9% per annum in the period of 2004-05 to 2007-08. Investment and savings rates were quite high 32 to 36%. However, exclusion continued in terms of low agricultural growth, low quality employment growth, low human development, rural-urban divides, gender and social inequalities, and regional disparities etc. In spite of all, several efforts have been made by both governments in order to promote livelihoods of the agricultural labourers across in India. Eventually, the Telangana State has made remarkable progress in certain sectors of its economy but this had led to no perceptible improvement in the living conditions of agricultural labourers. There are some acute poverty persist in the agricultural sector. However, in Nuzvid Mandal of Krishna district is having acute poverty among agricultural labourers due to indiscrimination of wage paid to the labourers, using mechanized practices, cultivation of single crop due to failure of irrigation facilities and other social factors are highly vulnerable.

#### **Suggestions for the Improvement of Agricultural Labours:**

The following suggestions are be made for the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of the agricultural labourers

1. Improving the working conditions
2. Public works programmes should be for longer period in year
3. Credit at cheaper rates of interest on easy terms of payment for undertaking subsidiary occupation.
4. Better implementation of legislative measures.

5. Strengthening of Mahathama Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) creating alternative sources of employment
6. Protection of women and child labourers
7. Cooperative farming
8. Proper training for improving the skill of farm labourers

## VI. Conclusion

Labour shortage in agriculture is being major problem in agriculture sector in India. The main cause of labour shortage in agriculture are- rural out-migration of agricultural labour; MGNREGA works and its wage rate; high wage rate; institutional factors. Former two factors are more prominent in rural areas. According to the farmers' response, labour shortage started since 1990s when economic reform was introduced but acute labour shortage started since 2005-06 when the MGNREGA was begin. Mechanization in agriculture is the best alternative for labour shortage but it has some limitation such as costly, small landholding, high maintenance charges, etc. MGNREGA is a labour bank in rural areas and involvement of it in agriculture is the best strategy to overcome labour shortage in agriculture. But it needs some regulation with rules and conditions.

The study recommends that farmers and agricultural labours are mutual partner in agriculture; Hence, both should be satisfied in terms of wage rate and nature of works. Government should facilitate MGNREGA labour to the farmers in subsidised rates.

One of the distinguishing features of the rural economy of India has been the growth in the number of agricultural workers, cultivators and agricultural labourers engaged in crop production. The Government of India conducted agricultural Labour Enquiry and Rural Labour Enquiries. The main objectives of these Enquiries have been to collect vital information on the Socio- Economic conditions of Rural Agricultural Landless Labourers. These enquiries formulate the policy measures to uplift the economic life of population in rural areas. In order to guarantee sustainable agricultural development in the new millennium, rural workers and their families should have access to adequate working and living conditions, health and well The wage employment programs and employment guarantee scheme of MGNREGS regulates the right direction to ensure livelihood security to the agricultural labourers. This Scheme Safeguard the agricultural landless labours sources of income earnings and improve standard of living. A technology which best suit and fulfill the requirement of agricultural labours should be promoted in the direction of sustainable agricultural without affecting livelihood security of agricultural labour in India. A balanced approach towards capital intensive technology without affecting the interest of manual labour is the need of the hour in the Indian context.

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