

Human Rights of Women Construction Workers in Gulbarga City

Dr. Chinna Ashappa

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology Government Degree College Gurmitkal, Dist:Yadgir

Abstract: *Human rights are basic rights as the weaker sections such as lower castes, women, children, etc are frequently deprived from these rights. As such, to examine the human rights of women working in construction sector, a survey of total 50 women construction workers was made through interview schedule in Gulbarga city. The findings revealed that there are violations of human rights of women construction workers.*

I. Introduction

Human rights, like civil and political rights, are in danger of subordination to the development ideology, whose very absorption of all other rights implies their irrelevance. Proponents of the ideal, rights-protective version of development often do not recognize that, in practice, development is a political, frequently a coercive activity.

Article 2 of the Indian Constitution guarantees rights without discrimination as to sex, but Article 18 stresses the family as the “natural unit and basis of society”, and Article 17(3) also mandates that the state should protect “morals and traditional values recognized by the community”. Traditional values frequently reflect deeply held ideological beliefs that include an entrenched notion of the moral inferiority of women to men and of the need to subordinate women to men's familial and political authority (Ragi and Sindhe, 2011). Human rights include rights to life, rights to adequate food, rights to shelter, rights to clothes, rights to pollution free air, rights to noise free surroundings, rights to have safe drinking water, rights to vote, rights to participate in all social, economic and political activities, rights to embrace any religion, rights to speak and the like.

Women represent 50 per cent of the adult population and one third of labour force, they perform nearly two - third of all working hours and receives only one-tenth of the world income. Human Development Report for the year 2000 on the amount of time that women and men spend on market and non-market activities by considering 31 countries reveals that women work longer hours than men in nearly every country. Women carry on average 53 per cent of total burden of work in developing countries and 51 per cent of that in industrial countries. Also, roughly two-third of women's total work time is spent in unpaid non system of national accounts activities (Vimala, 2005).

Even though there are sufficient rights and legislations to protect the interests of the women construction workers, they are become not useful, as the construction workers are not aware about the same. Further, they are not strictly executed in India. If the women construction workers would like to gain their rights through agitation, then there is fear of loss of their work, as they do not have any unions. Further, many of the female construction workers are illiterates and do not know about the legislations, rights and rules regarding their construction work. As such in majority of the cases the human rights related to the women construction workers are being violated. The present study was examined the socio-economic and human rights issues of the women construction workers in Gulbarga city.

Women construction workers are most vulnerable groups, who are exploited and harassed by their employers very much. Further, majority of these workers are not getting minimum wages prescribed under the law. To examine the rights of the women construction workers, the present study was surveyed and interviewed 50 women construction workers, who are working in different houses in Gulbarga city. The collected data was analyzed and discussed as under.

1. Age: Age of the respondents refers to the level of understanding and work culture. Age also determines the awareness about the different laws, rights and privileges of the construction workers. Hence the information on the age of the respondents is collected and presented as under.

Table No. 1. Age

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Below 18 Years	07	14.0
19 to 25 Years	12	24.0
26 to 35 Years	17	34.0
36 to 45 Years	06	12.0
46 to 55 Years	04	8.0
Above 55 Years	04	8.0
Total	50	100

It is noted from the above table that of the total 50 (100%) female construction workers covered under the study, 17 (34.0%) are between 26 to 35 years followed by, 12 (24.0%) are between 19 to 25 years, about 07 (14.0%) are of below 18 years of age, about 06 (12.0%) are between 36 to 45 Years of age, about 04 (8.0%) are between 46 to 55 Years of age and the remaining 04 (8.0%) are of above 55 years of age. It is surprising to note that about 14.0% of the respondents are female child workers. Even though law prohibits the child labour, these child workers are working as construction workers.

2. Education:

The present study is made to analyze the knowledge of the female construction workers on human rights. Hence, to know about their rights, there is need for education on the part of the female construction workers. The information collected on the level of education of the respondents is presented in the following table.

Table No. 2. Education

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	23	46.0
Primary	16	32.0
Secondary	11	22.0
Under-Graduate	--	--
Total	50	100

Of the respondents, 23 (46.0%) are illiterates, 16 (32.0%) have completed primary education and the remaining 11 (22.0%) have completed secondary education. Considerably major portion of the women construction workers are illiterates and majority of the respondents are under-educated.

3. Caste: Caste is essential to know about the socio-economic background of the respondents. The information collected on the caste of the respondents is shown in the following table.

Table No. 3. Caste

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Scheduled Caste	14	28.0
Scheduled Tribe	09	18.0
Other Backward Tribe	17	34.0
Others/ GM	10	20.0
Total	50	100

The caste-wise distribution of the respondents shows that 17 (34.0%) are from Other Backward Caste followed by, 14 (28.0%) are from Scheduled Caste, about 10 (20.0%) are from other castes (GM) and the remaining 09 (18.0%) are from Scheduled Tribe. Nearly half of the respondents are from backward classes such as from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe.

4. Marital Status: Marital Status is an important criterion while deciding the social status of the respondents. The study revealed that there are also widows, separated, single and divorcees, who are considerable in number in the construction work. The collected data on the marital status is shown as under.

Table No. 4. Marital Status

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Unmarried	09	18.0
Married	22	44.0
Separated/ Divorcee	11	22.0
Widows	08	16.0
Total	50	100

The marital status revealed that 22 (44.0%) of the respondents are married and living with their husbands followed by, 11 (22.0%) are separated or divorcees, about 09 (18.0%) are unmarried and the remaining 08 (16.0%) are widows. Majority of the respondents are single, that is may be unmarried, widows, separated, widows or divorcee, who does not have economic security in their life. As such they are working as construction workers.

5. Number of Children:

After collecting the data on marital status, the information was collected from the respondents on the number of children and presented as under.

Table No. 5. Number of Children

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
None	04	8.0
1-2	16	32.0
3-5	13	26.0
Above 5	08	16.0
Not Applicable	09	18.0
Total	50	100

It is revealed from the above table that of the total respondents, 16 (32.0%) have 1 to 2 children followed by 13 (26.0%) have 3 to 5 children, about 08 (16.0%) have above 5 children and the remaining 04 (8.0%) have no children. For the remaining 09 (18.0%) it is not applicable, as they are not married.

6. Children Go to School:

Education is a basic need and right of every child. Of course, many of the respondents are illiterates, but may have realized the importance of education. Hence, whether the respondents are sending their children to the schools is shown in the following table.

Table No. 6. Children Go to School

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	18	36.0
No	19	38.0
Not Applicable	13	26.0
Total	50	100

It is surprising to note from the above table the children of 19 (38.0%) are not attending to any schools, whereas the children of only 18 (36.0%) are going to the schools and for the remaining 13 (26.0%) of the respondents it is not applicable. It is interesting to note that even though the Government is providing free primary education with all facilities, the women construction workers are not sending their children to the schools.

7. Construction Work Experience:

Construction work experience helps to assess the experience and expertise of the women construction workers in their occupation. As such, it helps to know about the opinions of the respondents, regarding their rights and privileges. The information collected on the household work experience of the respondents is shown as under.

Table No. 7. Construction Work Experience

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Below 05 Years	17	34.0
06 to 10 Years	14	28.0
11 to 15 Years	10	20.0
16 to 20 Years	09	18.0
Above 20 Years	--	--
Total	50	100

It is noted from the above table that of the total respondents covered under the present study, 17 (34.0%) have experience of below 5 years followed by 14 (28.0%) have experience between 06 to 10 years, about 10 (20.0%) have work experience between 11 to 15 years and the remaining 09 (18.0%) have work experience between 16 to 20 years. Majority of the respondents covered under the study are working as construction workers below 10 years.

8. Monthly Income:

Monthly income shows the economic power of the family. Further, it also depicts the economic security of the family. If the monthly income low, there is lower economic security and lower economic power, and vice versa. It is an important criterion to decide the livelihood of the family. The monthly income of the respondents is presented in the following table.

Table No. 8. Monthly Income

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Below Rs. 1000	13	26.0
Rs. 1001 to Rs. 2500	31	62.0
Rs. 2501 to Rs. 5000	06	12.0
Rs. 5001 to Rs. 7500	--	--
Above Rs. 7500	--	--
Total	50	100

It was observed from the above table that 31 (62.0%) of the respondents have monthly income between Rs. 1001 to Rs. 2500, followed by 13 (26.0%) have monthly income below Rs. 1000 and the remaining 06 (12.0%) of the respondents have monthly income between Rs. 2501 to Rs. 5000. The collected data clearly revealed that majority of the respondents are living below poverty line.

9. Hours of Work:

Hours of work determines the extent of work and remuneration or wages they are getting. The hours of work also depicts the extent of exploitation from the employers. If the working hours are more and wages paid is less, then there is chance of exploitation of the construction workers. The information collected on the hours of work of the respondents is presented in the following table.

Table No. 9. Hours of Work

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 04 Hours	04	8.0
5 to 6 Hours	17	34.0
7 to 8 Hours	21	42.0
9 to 10 Hours	05	10.0
More than 10 Hours	03	6.0
Total	50	100

It is surprising to note from the above table that of the total respondents covered under the present study, 21 (42.0%) are working for 7 to 8 hours in a day followed by 17 (34.0%) are working for 5 to 6 hours in a day, about 05 (10.0%) are working for 9 to 10 hours, about 04 (8.0%) are working for less than 4 hours and the remaining 03 (6.0%) are working for more than 10 hours. The working hours clearly depicts the exploitation of the women construction workers as they are working for more than 6 hours as directed by the Government.

10. Wages are paid according to Quantity of Work:

The level of satisfaction of workers is more, if wages are paid according to the quantity of work made by the workers. As such a question was asked to the female construction workers on whether they are getting wages according to the quantity of work done by them. The collected responses are tabulated as under.

Table No. 10. Wages are Paid according to Quantity of Work

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	27	54.0
No	23	46.0
Total	50	100

It is interesting to note from the above table that of the total respondents, only 27 (54.0%) have agreed that the wages which they are getting are in accordance to the work done by them, whereas the remaining 23 (46.0%) have not agreed to the same. Even though more than half of the respondents are satisfied with their wages, still remaining half of the respondents are not satisfied with their wages, as the wages are not paid according to the quantity of work they are doing in the construction activities.

11. Wage Discrimination:

There is discrimination in wages paid by the employers that is between male and female, also between lower caste and higher caste in the society. Hence, it was asked to the respondents that whether they are getting lesser wages compared to other workers in the similar work and the collected information is presented in the following table.

Table No. 11. Wage Discrimination

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	36	72.0
No	14	28.0
Total	50	100

It is very surprising to note from the above table that a great majority of the respondents that is 36 (72.0%) have agreed that there is wage discrimination, whereas the remaining only 14 (28.0%) have not agreed to the same. No standardized rates are fixed for the payment of the Wages for the unorganized sector that is too, for the women construction workers. Hence, there is wage discrimination.

12. Relationship with Employer:

The relationship with the employers shows that there are favourable or unfavourable working conditions. As such, if the working conditions are best or cordial, then there is possibility that there are good working conditions. Further if there are unfavourable or bad relationships with the employers, there is possibility that there are poor working conditions for the women construction workers. Hence the information was collected on the relationship of the women construction workers with their employers and tabulated as under.

Table No. 12. Relationship with Employer

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Best	03	6.0
Cordial	11	22.0
Satisfactory	22	44.0
Bad	14	28.0
Total	50	100

It was observed from the above table that of the respondents covered under the study, 22 (44.0%) have stated that their relationship with their employers is satisfactory followed by, 14 (28.0%) have stated that their relationship with their employers is poor, about 11 (22.0%) have expressed that their relationship with their employers is cordial and the remaining only 03 (6.0%) have expressed that their relationship with their employers is best. Two-third of the respondents have agreed that their relationships with the employers is best, cordial or satisfactory, but one-third of the respondents are emphasized that their relationships with their employers is bad.

13. Exploited and Harassed by the Employer:

Working women are harassed by their authorities, generally by their higher authorities or employers. In Organized sector, there are rules and laws, which reduced the exploitation and harassment at their workplace. But in unorganized sector, even though there are laws to curb exploitation and harassment, due to lack of security in the work, such exploitation, or harassment cases are rarely reported. There are also rare occasions of punishment for the employers in case of unorganized sectors. The collected information on the exploitation and harassment of the women construction workers from their employers is shown as under.

Table No. 13. Exploited and Harassed by the Employer

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	22	44.0
No	28	56.0
Total	50	100

Surprisingly it is emphasized that more than one-third that is 22 (44.0%) of the respondents are harassed and exploited by their employers, whereas remaining 28 (56.0%) are not been harassed or exploited by their employers. Even though the Government has passed legislations against the exploitation and harassment at the work place, still the present study revealed that nearly half of the respondents are being harassed or exploited by their employers.

14. Aspects of Harassment:

The above table made it clear that 22 of the total respondents are being exploited and harassed by their employers. The information was collected from the respondents on the aspects of harassment and exploitation and presented in the following table.

Table No. 14. Aspects of Harassment

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Social Aspects	08	16.0
Economic Aspects	11	22.0
Religion/ Caste Aspects	07	14.0
Sexual Aspects	13	26.0
Not Applicable	28	56.0
Total	50	100

The above table made it clear that of the respondents exploited or harassed, 08 (16.0%) are exploited socially, 11 (22.0%) are exploited economically, 07 (14.0%) are harassed and exploited in the name of their religion or caste and 13 (26.0%) are abused and harassed sexually. Sexual harassment forms to be an important area which has to be encountered by strict rules, laws and legislations. The legislations already passed now are not sufficient to solve the problems of the exploitation and harassment of women at the work place.

15. Knowledge about Human Rights related to Women and Women Construction Workers:

To protect the interests of the women in general and women construction workers, there are different legislations and rights. Hence, information was collected from the respondents that whether they are aware about the human rights related to the protection of the interests of women and women construction workers and tabulated as under.

Table No. 15. Knowledge about Human Rights related to Women and Women Construction Workers

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	--	--
No	50	100
Total	50	100

It is surprising to note from the above table that none of the respondents covered under the present study are aware about the human rights related to the women and women construction workers.

16. Awareness on Laws and Welfare Policies of the Government:

Government of India has passed several legislations to protect the rights of the vulnerable groups including women. As the present study was covered the women construction workers as main focus of the study, there are few legislations such as Minimum Wages Act, Unorganized Workers Social Security Act 2008, Law on Sexual Harassment of Women (Prevention) at work place, etc are aimed for the protecting the interests of the women construction workers. Further, there are also social welfare policies of the Government such as formation of self-help groups, etc are helpful for the women working in unorganized sector. Following table shows the awareness of the women construction workers on these legislations and welfare schemes.

Table No. 16. Awareness on Laws and Welfare Policies of the Government

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Unorganized Workers Social Security Act, 2008		
Yes	--	--
No	50	100
Minimum Wages Act		
Yes	04	8.0
No	46	92.0
Laws on Sexual Harassment of Women (Prevention) at Work Place		
Yes	02	4.0
No	48	96.0
Social Security Welfare Schemes		
Yes	11	22.0
No	39	78.0
Total	50	100

It is noted from the above table that none of the respondents are aware about the Unorganized Workers Social Security Act, 2008, even though all the respondents are working in unorganized sector. Only 04 (8.0%) of the respondents are aware about the Minimum Wages Act, whereas the remaining 46 (92.0%) are not aware about the same. Only 02 (4.0%) are aware about the laws on sexual harassment of women (prevention) at work place, whereas almost all that is 48 (96.0%) are not aware about the same. Of the total respondents, 11 (22.0%) are aware about the social security welfare schemes, whereas the remaining 39 (78.0%) are not aware about the same. A great majority of the respondents are not aware about the legislations, laws, welfare policies and rules formed by the Government.

II. Conclusion

The construction workers are being deprived of the welfare amenities; especially during sickness they do not have any medical facilities. They are also not entitled to leave with wages and if thrown out of jobs, they have absolutely no security in the society. At the outset, there should be a “welfare fund” to be set up either by Government or Non-Government agencies from which, they can get financial assistance for welfare amenities including social security and housing facilities, at a nominal rate of interest.

The women construction workers, owing to their heavy ordeal of work remain sick or when they get sick, they are not in a position to avail of health facilities meant for them, free of cost. So a health insurance scheme shall be promoted by the Government or Non-Governmental Organizations under the patronage of government including compensation for accident, should be available to these marginalized section. Health cards should be distributed among them and through this, they would be entitled to receive health care of their choice at any public health centre like ESI Hospital, Government Hospital, Specialized Hospitals, Primary Health Centres, Sub-Centres, etc.

References

- [1]. Ragi, Sharanabasappa and Sindhe, Jaganath R (2011): Women Workers in Informal Sector and Human Rights: Development at International Perspective. **IN: Developments in Social Sciences**. Edited by Dr. Atik-ur-rahman. S.M and Dr. Praveenkumar. Kumbargoudar. Jaipur: Aadi Publications, 2011. P. 182-203.
- [2]. Vimala, M (2005): Socio-Economic Status of Domestic Women Servants: A Case Study of Thrissur Corporation. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Research programme on Local Level Development, CDS, 2005.