

To measure the extent of unemployment during off season and document the alternative sources of employment in Latur district

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ABSTRACT

The investigation was made to measure the extent of unemployment during off season and document the alternative sources of employment. The study was conducted in ten villages of AUSA and Renapur Tehsils of Latur district of Maharashtra state. For the study, 60 women labourers were selected from those ten villages. The problem of unemployment in agriculture has been very severe due to its seasonal nature. Also, the existence of fragmented holdings, crop loss due to drought and pest attack has severed the problem of unemployment. The present study revealed that the women labourers had no employment in agriculture for 155.63 days in a year which accounts for almost five months. As a result the women labourers had to find alternative source of unemployment like MGNREGA, construction, brick making, domestic servant etc.

KEY WORDS : Unemployment, Off season, Alternative sources, Woman labourer

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According to the census reports, there is an increased participation of rural women in economic activities besides doing household duties, though participation of women in agriculture contribute a lot for the economic growth and progress of the country, their problems are shown least concern. Woman's role has biologically and socially combined to create four distinct functions that of mother, wife, homemaker and worker. The role of worker is equally important as that of the other three roles.

But her role as an active worker-producer is rarely

acknowledged though it is significant for the family's survival. These unknown and unacknowledged beings are responsible to keep the economy at a steady pace and helped the nation to occupy a significant place in the world.

Women's involvement varies widely among different regions, ecological sub zones, farming system, caste, class and stages in the family cycle. Generally, the poorer the family, the greater the involvement of women in agricultural activities. Women have extensive workloads with dual responsibility for many of the farm operations and household management (fetching water, cooking and taking care of children). Despite women's significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields, they have virtually no access to agricultural information, services or production assets and have very limited control over their earnings.

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METHODOLOGY

Multistage sampling design was adopted for selection

of district, tehsils, villages and women labourers. In first stage Latur district was selected purposively from Marathwada region of Maharashtra state. In the second stage, AUSA and Renapur tehsil from Latur district were selected purposively. In third stage, from each tehsils, five villages were selected purposively. In fourth stage, six women labourers were selected from those ten villages randomly. Thus, a total of 60 women agricultural labourers from ten villages were selected for collecting the required data for the present study.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The extent of unemployment of women labourers is given in Table 1. The problem of unemployment in agriculture has been very severe due to its seasonal nature. Also the existence of fragmented holdings, crop loss due to drought and pest attack has severed the problem of unemployment. In the study area, the women labourers had no employment in agriculture for 155.63 days in a year which accounts to almost five months.

Table 1 : Season wise and month wise woman labourer's unemployment in agriculture

Months	Unemployment days	
	Days	Per cent
<i>Kharif</i>		
1. June	7.80	5.01
2. July	10.30	6.62
3. August	12.63	8.12
4. September	6.55	4.21
Sub total	37.28	23.95
<i>Rabi</i>		
5. October	7.38	4.74
6. November	8.82	5.67
7. December	12.93	8.31
8. January	11.92	7.66
Sub total	41.05	26.38
Summer		
9. February	9.32	5.99
10. March	17.03	10.94
11. April	20.97	13.47
12. May	29.98	19.26
Sub total	77.30	49.72
Grand total	155.63	100.00

Kharif and Rabi season :

During *Kharif* season the women labourers were unemployed for 37.28 days and during *Rabi* season, they were unemployed for 41.05 days. Maximum unemployment days were observed in the month of August (12.63 days) and July (10.30 days) in *Kharif* season which accounted for 33.88 per cent and 27.63 per cent, respectively of the total unemployment days in the *Kharif* season and in the month of December

(12.93 days) and January (11.92 days) in *Rabi* season which accounted for 31.50 per cent and 29.04 per cent, respectively of the total unemployment days in the *Rabi* season, respectively. These were the lean period in most of the crop cultivated in the study area. Very few women labourers got involved in cultivation of other crops like vegetable and fruits.

The women labourers did not seek any non-farm employment during these seasons as it was difficult for them to get employment for few days. They mostly survived on their savings or else borrowed money as debt. Their household responsibilities also deterred them from involving in other sources of employment, as these were far away from their dwelling place. Some labourers did not have the necessity to seek any alternative employment, as their family members had constant income source from their work.

The unemployment days were less in September (6.55 days) and June (7.8 days) in *Kharif* season and in October (7.38 days) and November (8.82 days) as these were peak season in most of the crops cultivated in study area.

Summer season :

The female labourers faced maximum unemployment in summer season as this was the off season for agriculture in the study area. In the summer season they were unemployed for 77.3 days. More unemployment days was observed in month of May (29.98 days) and April (20.97 days) which accounted for 38.78 per cent and 27.13 per cent, respectively of total unemployed days in summer season. In March unemployed days were 17.03 and in February it was 9.32. Many of the labourers were without any employment in this season. As a result, the labourers were compelled to seek alternative employment sources especially those from female headed families to support their children and other dependents.

Alternative sources of unemployment of women labour in agriculture :

Because of absence of irrigation facilities in the study region, no crops were raised during summer season. It was off season for agricultural activities and women labourers could not find any job in agriculture during this season. As a result, the women labourers had to find alternate sources of unemployment which are presented in Table 2.

Among the 60 sample labourers, 45 labourers got involved in other activities during off season. About 16 labourers got employment through Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) for 40 days during the months of February, March, April, and May. This scheme has been a great boon for the poor labourers. They did activities like cutting roads, making canals, cleaning ponds etc. Both male and female labourers received the same wages at the rate Rs.145 per day which is the minimum wage prescribed under minimum wages act.

Table 2 : Alternative sources of employment for women labourers in agriculture

Sources	No. of labourers involved	Months	Employment (Days/woman labour)	Wage rate (Rs./day)	Income Rs./woman labour)
1. MGNREGA	16 (35.56)	February, March, April, May	40	145	5800
2. Domestic servant	6 (13.33)	March, April, May	60	50	3000
3. Bricks making	5 (11.11)	February, March, April	30	100	3000
4. Harvesting of sugarcane in nearby villages	4 (8.89)	April, May	20	100	2000
5. Construction	8 (17.78)	February, March, April, May	30	100	3000
6. Candle making	2 (4.44)	February, March, April, May	45	80	3600
7. Papad making	3 (6.67)	March, April, May	45	100	4500
8. Shevaya making	1 (2.22)	March, April, May	45	100	4500
Total (Σ1 to 8)	45 (100)	–	–		

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages to total women labourers moved to other jobs

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme launched by the Government of India on February 2, 2006 has become a boon to the rural labour community. The NREGS (2005) works with the theory of equal wages for equal work. This programme was launched to provide 100 days of guaranteed employment (unskilled manual work) to every rural household. One third of the total employment days are reserved for women labourers and it aims at eliminating the exploitation of women labourers by providing them with labour opportunities and thereby increasing their social status and providing them social justice.

The labourers also worked at construction sites, about 8 labourers worked in construction. They did activities like lifting and carrying of bricks, sieving sand, carrying and spraying water on constructed buildings etc. They got employment at a wage rate of Rs. 100 per day. They worked for 30 days. Construction works are in full boom now-a-days.

The labourers also worked as domestic servants. About 6 labourers were involved in this work. They worked as domestic servants for 60 days during the months of March, April and May. They received wages at the rate of Rs. 50 per day. They mostly worked in houses nearby and in the houses of farmers in whose fields they worked in agriculture season.

Some labourers (5 labourers) were got employment in brick making factories in nearby villages. During summer season brick making is done extensively and so these factories employed additional labour. They got employment at the wage rate of Rs. 100 per day. They worked for 30 days in February, March and April months.

Some labourers also got employed in harvesting of sugarcane in nearby villages. In the months of April and May they went for harvesting, for about 15 days to the neighbouring villages and earned wages at the rate of Rs. 100 per day. About 4 labourers were involved in this activity.

Some labourers were involved in small scale business

like papad making (3 labourers), Shevaya making (1 labour) and candle making (2 labourers). They got employment at the wage rate Rs. 100 per day for papad and shevaya making and Rs. 80 per day for candle making. They worked for 45 days in March, April and May.

Among the sample women labourers, 15 labourers did not migrate to other activities or other places. Lack of other employment opportunity in the vicinity might be the reason for their non-migration. But some of them did not seek any alternative employment as their family members had good source of income.

The results are in consensus with the hypotheses that women have limited alternative sources of employment.

Elumalai and Sharma (2003) and Hemlatha *et al.* (2003) have also worked on non-farm employment for rural household and women employment for rural development in India, respectively. Kumar *et al.* (2003) generated some information on non-farm employment in rural India and Tuteja (2005) on rural non-employment in Haryana.

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