

Women

Labourers at Discount

study report on
women at workplace

on behalf of
Campaign **A**gainst **N**egligence of **G**irl child



supported by

Katholische
Frauenbewegung
Austria

study done by

Development Education and
Environment Protection Society
Dharmapuri, India



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Development Education and
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Abbreviations:

BC- Backward Caste

CANG – Campaign Against Negligence of Girl child

CNSL - Cashew Nut Shell Liquid

ESI – Employee’s state insurance

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

GDP –Gross domestic product

IDI – In-Depth Interview

MGNREGA - Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

NCEUS - National Commission for Enterprises in the unorganised sector

NGO – Non Governmental Organisation

NSS – National sample survey

PF - Provident Fund

SC – Schedule Caste

SHG – Self Help Group

ST – Schedule Tribe

UPSS- Usual Principal and Subsidiary Status



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Background and Introduction



Developed state like Tamilnadu is not exceptional for the societal embedded issues of gender inequity including female literacy, employment opportunity, female infanticide, sex ratio etc., Civil society organisations in Tamil Nadu had taken multiple efforts to address these issues on their own way including community level work, criticising the government policies which are pertaining to reduce the gender gap and advocate for gender sensitive policies. Campaign Against Negligence of Girl child (CANG) is one of the important networks in Tamil Nadu, Which works consistently on the rights of the girl child. The woman and girl child's rights are being a social issue which is set in within the caste system and patriarchic nature of Tamil society, in the past CANG had taken multiple level interventions including working with communities, civil society organizations to build strong coalition to reduce gap in child sex ratio, taken legal measures including filing of Public Interest Litigation against cradle scheme and oppose government's narrow approach to a larger social problem.



2011 Census of India reveals that Tamil Nadu has shown overall improvement in reducing the gap in sex ratio, while overall strategies including government and people's own consciousness helped to improve the situation, it is worth to mention that the districts in which CANG partners work, had contributed to this overall development. Over the years CANG had developed understanding of social complexness of the issue including the impact of neo liberal economic policies of India, its impact on the working class especially on the women unorganized workers and on gender equity including sex ratio.

In this context and understanding of the overall situation, as a natural transformation and progress on CANG's work the partner organizations decided to explore women workers' status that are in organised and unorganized sectors. Based on multiple rounds of internal discussions and workshops among CANG partners and with few other groups and resource persons in Tamilnadu CANG had initiated a study on "Women at Workplace", with the primary aim of building a road map for long term intervention in women workers issue in Tamilnadu. The study has been done in Spinning mill, Textile, Cashew nut Processing unit, Silver anklet manufacturing Industry, Fireworks and Small Scale Industries which are spread across in districts Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri, Erode, Salem, Namakkal, Karur, Trichy Pudukottai, Theni, Dindugal and Virudhunagar . Through this study CANG partners had reached 1000 women, their families, like minded groups and individuals to develop understanding on the issue of women workers in Tamilnadu.



Rationale of the study

According to Census 2011 data, Tamilnadu is one among the fastest growing state in urbanization with 52:48 of rural and urban population ratio. Neo liberal economic policies adopted by India had influenced the people's life, place of living, income, employment patterns and nature of labour in the country. The number of manual labourers involved in agriculture has drastically come down from 6.46% to 4.5% of the total female population of the country¹ At the same time women work force moved from agricultural to other types of employments including garment, textiles which were seen more employment opportunities due to export oriented policies of the country, tobacco, fireworks and many other types of employment including hazardous industries.

In Tamilnadu the participation of the female work force has marginally increased from 29% to 31 % and the average number of daily female employment in factories of Tamil Nadu has also gone up to 427,374 from 186,310 between 1991 and 2006, out of which 41% of the total female workforce are from the rural area. This statistics shows higher migration rate of rural female working population to jobs in the factories.

Since the failure of growth in agriculture sector (as per Tamilnadu government report during the year 2011-12 Tamilnadu has registered annual growth of 2.63 percent in farming sector whereas the national average is way above at 7 percent in the same year) the rural non skilled women are forced to find alternative employment in the formal non formal production sectors. As the female work force is on rise, many of the formal sectors were utilizing and exploiting this labour force in many ways including recruiting most of their employees through casual labourers, contracting and agreement mode rather expanding permanent labour force.

It is read from the below table that the total employment rate in the manufacturing sector has increased from 396.8 million to 457.5 million between the two rounds of National Sample Survey¹. Though the employment of formal workers remains the same as 35 million in both the rounds but in case of the employment of informal/unorganised workers, it has shown a drastic increase from 361.7 million to 422.6 million thus indicating around 61 million workers employed informally between the years 2000 to 2005. It is also learnt that the organised sectors had



contributed more (20.5 million to 29.1 million) in employing the unorganised labourers¹.

Table 1: Relationship between sector and type of employment (UPSS)

Sector	Total workers (in Million)		
	Informal/Unorganised Worker	Formal/Organised Worker	Total
1999 – 2000			
Informal / Unorganised sector	341.3 (99.6)	1.4 (0.4)	342.6 (100.0)
Formal / Organised sector	20.5(37.8)	33.7 (62.2)	54.1 (100.0)
Total	361.7 (91.2)	35.0 (8.8)	396.8 (100.0)
2004 – 2005			
Informal / Unorganised sector	393.5 (99.6)	1.4 (0.4)	394.9 (100.0)
Formal / Organised sector	29.1 (46.6)	33.4 (53.4)	62.6 (100.0)
Total	422.6 (92.4)	34.9 (7.6)	457.5 (100.0)

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages. Source: NSS 61st Round 2004 - 2005 and NSS 55th Round, 1999-2000, Employment-Unemployment Survey.

At the same time many studies and anecdotal evidences illustrates growing injustice to women workers' legal, economic, social and cultural rights including their minimum wages, working hours, workplace safety, social security, violence, sexual harassment and compromise on their health.

In this context and based on CANG partners earlier intervention and growing interest on the issue of women workforce in formal and informal sector this study was designed to bring out facts around the issues of physical conditions, nature of work, employment pattern, wage, health hazards, violence, sexual harassment, welfare measures for the workers, existing inequity among the work force and various exploitation women workers are facing due to their employment.



Objectives of the study

MAJOR OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the issues of women workers in the major industries in the areas where the various partner organizations work (these are Garment & Textile, Silver ornamentals, Cashew nut and Fireworks) using Gender, occupational health and worker's rights lens.
2. To develop a deeper understanding of the particular sector / industry by the partner NGO.
3. To develop a roadmap for a longer term initiative around "women in the workplace".

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the issues of women in the various industries.
2. To conduct a secondary data analysis including both published and grey literature on the specific industry.
3. To prepare a compendium of resources on the particular industry.
4. To develop the capacity of the partner NGOs.
5. To conduct a participatory mapping exercise of the industry of interest.



Study Methodology and Process

STUDY DESIGN

Since the primary aim of the study is to increase the understanding of the women workers issue and to capture their perspective qualitative research methods were used, to capture the larger trend in women workers status across industries quantitative method as were also used. In qualitative research methodologies like Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and In-Depth Interview (IDI) were used. Through a structured questionnaire, data was collected from 1000 women by female investigators and was analysed using SPSS.

The investigators had interacted with the workers during convenient time to respondents including late evening and Sundays.

SAMPLE SIZE

As per the research plan it was decided to reach 100 women in each of the 11 districts where the partner NGOs have work (Table2). However data was collected only from 1000 women, out of that 58 interview schedules were not taken for analysis due to incompleteness of the data.

The research team had directly interacted with the group of women workers in various industries. The total number of FGDs conducted was 11 which cover women from 11 districts. The participants of each FGD ranges from 6 to 22, while each discussion held around 2 to 3 hours. The FGDs were focused around the pre tested guideline and based on respondent context, which covers seven broad domains of women workers issue.

Four In-depth interviews were done with Trade union leaders, textile owner and a women worker. Case studies were done on the affected women in each industry.



Table 2 Focus group discussion respondents' details

FGD	Name of the District	Total number of respondents	Respondents
1	Karur	12	Females currently working in textiles
2	Trichy	11	Females currently working in rice mills
3	Pudukottai	8	Females currently working in cashew nut processing units
4	Dharmapuri	17	Mothers of Females currently working in spinning mills as agreement labourers
5	Krishnagiri	22	Females currently working in small scale Industries
6	Erode	11	Females currently working in spinning mill as daily workers
7	Salem	11	Females currently working in silver anklet artefact
8	Dindugal	6	Females currently working in spinning mills
9	Theni	9	Mothers of Females currently working in textiles
10	Virudhunagar	17	Females currently working in fireworks
11	Namakkal	6	Females currently working in power looms

SAMPLE SELECTION

As it was difficult to identify the list of women working in the industries, the investigators identified the samples by interacting with various community members like SHG groups, Panchayat presidents, village heads. For FGD the respondents were informed on the venue and dates, prior by the field staffs for the discussions. The FGD's were done with the respondents who were interested to participate. All the participants who involved in the study were well informed about the purpose of the study and the oral consent was taken from them for participating in the study.



INDUSTRIES SELECTED FOR THE STUDY

Among the 11 districts of CANG partners working area, the major industry in which the women workforce as informal labourer (non-permanent) is more in each of these eleven districts were chosen for the study. The industries and corresponding districts are given below.



Table 3: Study area

Industries	District covered
Cashew processing Unit	Pudukottai
Cotton Spinning Mill	Erode, Dindugal, Theni, Dharmapuri, Namakkal
Textiles	Karur
Silver anklet artefact	Salem
Fireworks	Sivakasi
Small scale Industry	Krishnagiri
Rice Mill	Trichy

STUDY TOOL

The data was collected using a pre-tested questionnaire. The Investigators' were trained in data collection along with the questionnaire. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected by female investigators led by female researcher. The questionnaire was prepared, pre tested and based on suggestions it was modified after piloted. Training was given to the investigators on the contents of the questionnaire and frequent clarifications on the tool were also provided by the researcher to the investigators during the investigation process.



VALIDITY OF DATA

To ensure the validity of the quantitative data the researcher had cross checked the questionnaire at the time of interviews with the respondents.

The research team had conducted the group discussions in all the eleven districts with minimum of 6 to the maximum of 21 participants. The process of quantitative data collection was done within one month with the help of 30 investigators approximately.

LIMITATIONS OF THE DATA

Though we had planned to meet the girls in spinning mill, who are employed by the industries on agreement mode, our investigators was not able to access those girls. The women workers were very much concerned about the confidentiality of the data which were discussed by them since they fear loss of job if the management know about their participation in interview. Hence there might be a chance of not obtaining entire information about the industries from the workers.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses in detail on the findings of each industries on various issues of physical conditions and nature of work, employment pattern, wage, health hazards, violence, sexual harassment, welfare measures for the workers, existing inequity among the work force and various exploitation women workers were facing.

Photo 1 : Focus group discussion and planning session for the study with NGO heads



Cotton Spinning Mills



Indian cotton industry is the leading industry in the world. Though it was predominantly organized before 1990s, the scenario has changed highly after neo liberal economic policy. Indian Textile industry highly depends on the textile manufacturing and export. India earns about 27% of foreign exchange, and contributes 3% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Indian textile industry generates employment for 35 million people². Over the last two decades, the proportion of young women employed in the textile industry has raised since they are easy to manage, can be paid lower wages and are less likely to unionize than men. In Tamil Nadu over 200,000 women are employed in low-skill manufacturing jobs in this industry³.

EMPLOYMENT

The spinning mills employ three types of workers they are Daily wages worker, Piece rate worker and agreement labourer. The agreement worker is unique form of employment which the cotton industries of Tamil Nadu are following from 4 decades. This system of employing the female workers on an agreement basis was initially called by various names like Sumangali thittam, Mangalya thittam, Suba Mangala scheme, Thirumangalam thiruman thittam etc., where a contract will be made in written or oral between the girl's parents and the management. The total sample size of spinning mill workers is 442 from five districts out of which 200 (45%)



respondents were the women currently working in spinning mill as daily labourer and 242 (55%) women who had previously worked as agreement labourers.

AGREEMENT WORKERS

All the agreement workers were unmarried women and majority of them are adolescence between 12 to 19 years of age. These women were primarily recruited from remote villages, where there are fewer or no other opportunities for employment (Table 4). In a few cases, companies have their own recruitment staff or use brokers or sub-agents to get labour force³.

Table 4: Labour force supply district

Yarn Production Hubs	Labourer Supply district
Coimbatore/ Tirupur	Pollachi, Udumlaipat, Sathyamangalam, Belt around Coimbatore.
Dindugal	Triunelveli, Virudhunagar, Sivaganga, Pudukottai
Karur	Pudukottai, Tanjore, Trichy, Cuddalore, Tiruvannāmalai
Erode / Salem	Namakkal, Permbalur, Viluppuram, Cuddalore, Tiruvannāmalai.

Source: Research Report Sumangali Scheme by SOLIDARIDAD 2012.

The Agreement is that the girl has to work for the mill for three years, staying in the hostel provided by the company and the girl will be paid a lump sum amount at the end of the agreement period, with a minimum monthly salary to manage their domestic needs. In the year 2009 there was a huge public hearing organised by the Child Rights Activist network, which drew the attention of many NGO's and child rights activist. From then there were many struggles to ensure the basic rights of these women workers on their wages, working hours, violence, sexual harassments, etc. The Sumangali system (at present called as agreement based workers) is practiced under the pretext training or apprentice. For which The Industrial Employment Act-1946 and Apprentices Act-1961 are used to meet legal challenges. Since the Sumangalies are treated as apprentice, the benefits of Factory Act-1948 and other relevant acts are not provided to the worker. In the year 2009 Madras high court in response to a writ petition by the "The Southern India Mills Association" vs the State



of Tamil Nadu, it was also specified that the minimum wages for the textile mill workers which covers not merely the contract of employment, but includes the outsourced workers also (2009). This judgment is clearly explains that the contract labourers are also to be given the minimum wages of Rs.110/-. But even after this judgment the girls are given wages ranging between Rs.50 to 70 per day.

Distribution: Data about spinning mill workers were collected from labourers who had completed their agreement period who are from Erode, Namakkal and Dindugal districts, which are supply districts to this scheme.

67 percent of the agreement workers are below 18 years of age.

Wage: On an average the monthly wage for a female worker is Rs. 1500, apart from the agreement amount. On an average Rs. 200 per month will be deducted by the company for food and accommodation which is provided inside by the company. Due to various issues the money is deposited only in the employee's account, and the parents can collect once in a month from their daughter during their visiting hours.

Amount settlement: However 12% of our respondents had not got any amount from the mills even after working for 3 to 5 years. The remaining 88% had got only part of the agreed amount. The agreement amount is always fixed by the management unilaterally and in a non-transparent manner. Neither the workers nor the parents or guardians are consulted in fixing this amount. Companies have specific conditions to settle the agreed amount at end of agreement period, the conditions include compensating the number of leave days taken during the agreement period, need to submit the marriage invitation and a bank account in the name of the worker are few precondition to settle the amount.

Working hours: Apart from the stipulated working hours of one shift per day the workers will also be expected to work on more shifts when there is shortage of labourers or to reach production targets. However the workers are not paid for their extra time of work.

The agreement workers those who stay inside the hostel will be asked to work for more than one shift without any wage for their overtime.



Health: The study also found that the girls who had gone back to home after 3 to 4 years of mill life, suffering from psychological disorders like Insomnia, wired behaviour, stress and depression. Women suffer from various respiratory problems like cough, lung infection, wheezing etc. The women are facing health problems like irregular periods, urinary tract infection; the common complaint by the women is white discharge. The workplace room temperature is high throughout their working hours where there is hardly any airflow. The cotton dust always prevails in the work environment. The protective gears are not worn by the workers because they are not available at all time.

CASE STUDY 1

A 17 year old girl from Somanahalli, Dharmapuri district had worked as a agreement labourer in a spinning mill located in Tirupur before a year. As she was interested in earning money and support her family, she had discontinued her schooling in tenth class and joined the mill when she was 15 year old. She was informed that she had to stay in the hostel room provided by the company and should work on shift basis. After 3 months of her work she experienced certain health problems like stomach ulcer and amenorrhea. She was unable to work and became weak that she was not able to go to the worksite and stayed back in her hostel room. The manager of the mill had informed about the ill health of the girl to her parents. The girl's parents went to the mill and took her back to home. Though the girl had worked there for 4 months she did not receive any money for her labour but her parents had to pay for her hostel fee. After which the girl was diagnosed to have cotton sedimentation in her ovaries which had caused amenorrhea. The girl was then taken to a gynecologist and treated. Her parents expected a lump sum amount at the end of the agreement period to support her marriage, but it was they who spent beyond their income to bring their child alive back.



Stay: The hostel rooms which are of 10 feet length are shared by 10 to 15 girls. The total space available in each room for large number of girls is far less than the recommended standards. In the other words more number of girl are dumped in a small room which is the perfect stage for disrupting the dignity of a women. The girls need to share a common wash room and toilets. The company will deduct Rs. 200 per month from their salary for their stay and food.

Legal requirements: Most of the spinning mills are registered units and follows dual register / attendance system, which clearly shows that the mills are not showing these employees in the legal register. The agreement workers are employed as apprentices; during the inspection from labour department the management follow all coercive strategies and measures to hide these workers from the sight of the officers. These measures range from taking them to a short picnic to dumping them into the underground rooms and in toilets. In short, industries are utilising various kinds of strategies to run away from fulfilling the legal requirements and oppressing the working class.

MOTHER'S PERCEPTION ON AGREEMENT BASED WORKERS

As a part of this study the mothers who had sent their girl child were met and discussed about their views and expectation from the spinning mills employment.

Reason behind migration: The main reason the parents or guardian had sent to the spinning mills which are very far from their own village varies in priority among mothers. The most common reasons were better wages than local wages,, to support the entire family, to earn money for the girl's marriage, etc. There were few girls who started going to these spinning mills because of their peer pressure. But the common answers given by all the mothers were the insecure feeling of the parents in leaving an adolescent girl child all alone at home in their village.

Contact: The girls are not allowed to contact through phone whenever they wanted but they can call from the public booth in a particular time. Parents are allowed to visit their children once in a month after waiting long hours to meet their daughters for an hour or two.



Visiting home: The girls are permitted to go home for 6 to 8 days for some important festival like Pongal and Diwali. Other than that the girls are not allowed to go out of the campus. In some factories the girls are allowed to go for shopping once in 6 months under the supervision of the management. Because of all these reason, the mothers feel that the safety of the girl child is ensured inside the mill and they need not worry about anything.

Food & stay: The parents of the girls are pleased with the variety of food their daughter is given, and some feel happy as their children are able to eat all three times a day which will not be affordable by them. It was said by a guardian of a girl that *“my daughter looks very healthy and happy after started working in the mill as she gets food for three times a day with tea and snacks without any difficulty throughout the month, whereas in our home we strive for three meals a day”*.

Monthly income: The parents will be informed about the date the wages will be given to their daughters, so that they can meet their daughter and get the amount from their daughters.

Violence & Sexual Harassment: The parents spent very less time with their children, not able to capture the depth of the problem which the girl children are hesitant to discuss with their mothers. There are few mothers who had taken back their children to home. But some parents do not want to reveal the issue so that it will bring a crude image of their daughter, and wanted to complete the agreement period and get the money.

CASE STUDY 2

A 37 year old lady, who previously worked as bonded labourer in quarry, is now working in a textile of Karur district got married at the age of 14 and gave birth to 2 girls. As the mother had faced lot of harassments at her young age she didn't want her girl child to suffer the same. So she sent her daughter to spinning mill at the age of 12, was a dropout her (6th std) schooling, had complained of issues like working till 10pm, not allowed to come out of the hostel even on Sundays, wage retention of Rs. 200/- from her monthly salary, not informing the parents while she is sick and not allowed to contact whenever she wish. In spite of the mother knowing all these issues, she feels that it was because of the insecurity for adolescent girls in the society and the social pressure they face.



NON-AGREEMENT WORKERS:

Work: Though it is a complete organised sector the workers doesn't enjoy any leave benefits like sick leave, maternity leave etc. All the workers are treated as daily wagers. Only 53% of the respondents are provided with identity card.

Wage: The average monthly income of the daily labourer is Rs. 4800/-, i.e. 160 rupees per day. In some spinning mills the workers are rewarded with small gifts if they achieve higher targets for that month. This makes the worker to feel recognised by the management and enhance the workers' productivity. The spinning mills are providing employment opportunities throughout the year. The respondents receive social benefits such as PF (28% of the respondents), ESI (15% of the respondents), and festival bonus (86% of the respondents).

Wage Exploitation: There is wage retention of Rs 2000 from the salary of unmarried girls, at the end of a year and this amount will be given back to the girl at the time of her marriage. If the girl could not complete 2 years of services the deducted amount will not be paid back to her.

Health: Women suffer from various lung problems like cough, infection, wheezing etc. The women are facing health problems like irregular periods (42%), urinary tract infection (29%) and miscarriages (7%); the most common complaint by the women is white discharge. The work need to be performed in high temperatures throughout their working hours where there is hardly any airflow. The cotton dust always prevails in the atmosphere. The protective gears are not worn by the workers because they are not available at all time.

Big mills have 24 hours medical facilities while the smaller units don't have. Even the bigger companies do not have doctors but have nurses in the hospitals. At the time of major accidents initial medical expenses will be taken care by the management. But no compensation is given to them during the sick period.

Sexual Harassment: In spite of many steps taken to regularise the workplace security of female workers in spinning mill, harassments still exist at their workplace. Like other unorganised workers the females of spinning mills face a sturdily higher rate of sexual harassments. As the agreement based workers are out of home for their livelihood they are the most targeted victims. Almost all the girls those who stay in



the mills had to undergo some form of sexual harassments. None of the mills had formed a 'Vishaka' committee to address women grievances in spite of 2000 to 3000 female workers are working in a single mill.

Legal Aspects: All the spinning mills are employing these agreement female workers as apprentices. But they are made to work like a regular employee without the welfare which is spelled out by the law of the land.

CASE STUDY 3:

A mother of a girl who works as a contract labourer from Madhelli, Dharmapuri district also works as an agent. She had helped more than 6 girls from her own village to join the spinning mills as agreement worker. Inher opinion, her daughter had attained a better living condition when compared to earlier life in village. The mills had provided with all the facilities for their children like swimming pool, vocational courses, food etc.

Though it is said that the spinning mills do not employ girls below 14 years, there seems to be girls who are joining the mills before the age of 14. It was also found that the Human resource Department maintains a dual register system of the labourers those who work inside the mills. There will be separate attendance register for labourers to sign and a different one to be an evidence for the labour department.

Accidents: There is history of instrumental injuries for the labourers that had lost their body parts if the workers are bit lethargic while working. So it is an important requirement for the female workers those who work on the machineries to be alert throughout their working hours especially during night shifts. An incident discussed on case study 4.

Migration: There are a fair number of workers from other states like Orissa (men), women from Sri Lanka and Kerala. The migrant workers are paid very less wages, faces ill treatment their supervisors which are in high degree in nature compare to the local workers. The study found that they will be treated worse than the agreement workers.



CASE STUDY 4:

A 12 year old girl started working in a spinning mill due to her family situation, with the specific responsibility of growing her younger brother. She completed her three years of employment and there was a major accident which happened when she stepped into her 4th year. One day while leaving the mill after her night shift, her hair caught into a machine and her entire skin of the scalp had uprooted, and she fainted. Then she was taken to the nearby hospital for first aid and then to a private multi-specialty hospitals where she was treated for 8 months. The management had taken care of the medical expenditure with 3 months of paid leave to compensate her nonproductive period. But the mill failed to provide injury benefit. This incident had caused a serious mental trauma, creating a social stigma because of her baldness. Now she is 21; living with self-confidence and studying D.M.E in a private college.

After working in the spinning mill for quite a number of years, the women workers are not satisfied in working in the spinning mills, and they wish that agriculture labour was more esteemed job they can pursue instead of all such exploitative work condition.

Social Stigma: In the villages and among the society there are different kinds of opinion exists regarding the women worker, her attitude and her relationship with other male employees in the factory. Hence these girls find difficult to identify life partner for her and the boy's family in general do not prefer the girls employed in the textile industries.

OTHER FINDINGS

- As part of many gimmick measures to attract young girls to this employment in recent days companies taken new initiatives including offering vocational courses **such as Tailoring, Nursing, etc., teacher training, through tie up with few universities in Tamil Nadu**, Higher Education Programs for school drop outs, and Computer Education for interested candidates are offered. But



the interested girl need to attend these classes after their working hours hence there were not many takers to this scheme

- **The parents are unaware of what is written on the agreement and sometimes there is no written agreement.**
- **In the normal days the workers are asked to wear the same mask for even one month but whenever the buyers, especially from other countries visits the management will distribute new protective gears like glove, mask and apron.**
- In few mills the female workers are asked to make sign some papers for PF, but there is no deduction from their salary nor do they receive any money when they resign the job.
- The agreement workers those who had worked in the spinning mill for 4 to 5 years have some mental disorder. They don't converse much to others moody. After working in the mill for a long period the girls get adapted to the life at mill and hesitate to be at home after the agreement period. Few girls have joined back the mill after their agreement period is completed.



Textile



The textile industry mainly involves in the process of converting a fabric into apparel or making bed linens, kitchen linens, toilet linens, table linens and wall hangings. In Karur District, the power loom occupies a significant size of the business which gives commendable employment opportunities to the innumerable families. Karur exporters are the leading exporters of textiles from India who has direct dealing with the buyers. On an average it is 2600 textiles located in Karur district providing employment opportunity for 1.5 lakhs people.

EMPLOYMENT

The female workers those who have worked for more than 5 to 6 years in the same field also serve as contractors. The work of these contractors is to identify the labour requirement of the industry. The job availability depends on the number of orders the textiles get from the buyers, when there is no orders from the buyers the contractor will send the female workers to some other textiles where they have more orders. So the workers keep changing their workplace as daily labourer without facing any off seasonal crisis.

WORK

The process of garment industry is stitching, checking and packing. Karur is the main hub of garment units, with huge female working population. The employees travel daily to Karur from the nearby districts. The overtime employment is also available if the female worker wishes to take up. The employees can earn double the amount of



their normal wage if they work on Sundays. For the whole day the workers need to stand and in few textile industries one seat is provided for two employees.

HEALTH

The women faces sever back pain due to prolong hours of standing and continuous operation of tailoring machine. The women workers who become pregnant are not continuing their employment since they feel the continuation of the work may lead to abortion. There is no provision of any medical facility inside the campus in these units. If there is an injury occurring to the worker then the management will bear the transport and the medical expense of that day but management will not bear the cost of follow up treatment. The workers are provided with protective gears (71%) and 67 % of them use glove mask, apron, and hair cap. The remaining workers do not use protective gears because they don't feel comfortable working with that.

LEGAL ASPECTS

There is no existence of any trade unions for women those who work in the textile. There are no grievance redress mechanisms available in any of the factories to address the complaints of the women workers. None of the factories formed the Vishaka committee which is the mandatory committee to address sexual harassment complaints of women worker. During the school vacation time the school children works in the textiles.

VIOLENCE

The workers will be verbally abused by the supervisors when the worker is late to work and not achieving the target.

SEXUAL HARASSMENTS

Sexual harassment in these industries is common phenomenon. Physical touch of private parts of the female workers especially the young girls, showing vulgar signs to them and demanding the women to do sexual favours are the common harassments of the men supervisors. The worst part of the story is that all these harassments happen in front of the other 300 women workers. Due to the fear of losing jobs, the female workers do not retaliate to the men and do not discussed with other female colleagues and feel embarrassed. This leads to a lot of mental trauma for the women and stress.



Silver Anklets Artifacts Manufacturing Industry



The origin of Silver anklet artifact remains unclear but it is believed to be brought to the land by the Gujarat migrant's way back in 1000 BC. The silver anklets artifacts by cottage workers in Salem district is an important form of livelihood of families dwelling in Blocks of Omalur, Tharamangalam, Idapadi and Veerapandi.

ANKLET MANUFACTURING PROCESS

The Silver bar is given to lathe machine vendor to convert it into silver wires and silver snippets, silver bells used to decorate the traditional silver anklets. The wires are converted into small circular rings, which are then compiled into long chain manually. The chains are clogged up using a machine. Craftsmen (labourers) place the solder snippet in the openings using boar paste and mild concentrated sulphuric acid after which thermal treatment for the welding is given through lung powered blow pipe. Craftsmen assemble the molded shapes of silver on a sand box in particular arrangements to further more decorate the silver chain which is done as cottage works. Sometimes decorative stones are mounted on silver strips to create attractive designs. The produced anklets are again given to the machine lathe vendor for polishing. The polished silver anklets are then supplied back to the jeweler. The process like converting silver bar into silver wire, manual compilation of chain, coagulation of chain etc., is done in workshops while the craftsmen can assemble the decorative items like snippets, bells etc., from home.



EMPLOYMENT

Three types of employment are available for the women viz., one type is daily wage labourers, other type is piece rate labourer and another type is mortgage labourer, who is tied with the industry owners and mortgages their labour due to the advance amount received from them. The respondents of the study who represent the labour community in silver anklet industry are distributed between 77 percent of mortgage labour category and 23 percent of daily wage category.

The nature of mortgage labour is that one of the family member either the women or the men, will receive an amount ranging from 2000 to 1.5 lakhs rupees before they start working for a lathe machine owner. According to the respondents this amount (popularly known as “advance amount”) which they take before mortgaging their labour to the owners, does not bear any interest and it is traditionally understood that this amount is not paid back to the owners. There is no written agreement between the money lender and the debtor to specify the terms and conditions. But the debtor should ensure his/her labour to that particular person (owner) in manufacturing his anklets whenever he requires their labour. There are few constrains for these labourers in comparison to the daily labourers that they are not permitted to work for other owners or to go for any other work. If they are willing to get rid of this work, they should pay the loan amount which they had taken from the owner. The advance amount is commonly used for family rituals, medical expenses and for their daily survival. Whenever the silver prices go down there is no other backup source of employment for the workers. To survive during non-employment the workers are forced to taking more debt from the same owners, which put them in a vicious cycle of bonding their labour with the particular owner. In case the workers violate this bond they would be humiliated in public by quoting their inefficiency to repay advance amount. As the women fear of humiliating by owners in public they do not prefer going for some other work and stay bonded.

There are variations existing between these types of labourers in their working hours, leaves, holidays, compulsion of work etc. For instance, the only other source of employment in and around these 4 blocks are power looms (weaving yarn), and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) which can be chosen by the daily wage workers as alternative employment but the mortgage labourers cannot choose any other alternative employment.



This system provides labour security to entrepreneurs, as the workers cannot just leave all of a sudden. The workers work almost 8 hours per day in the workshop, but for the workers those who work from home there is no defined time limits all that they need to do is to achieve the target within specific time.

WAGE

The daily wage for both type of employees are different. The average monthly income of a woman is 1600 rupees (Rs. 50/- per day). The wage is calculated according to the piece rate which includes various stages of anklet artifacts. Not all the process of anklet making is done by the same labourer. Whenever the labourers need to carry the work beyond the normal work hours are not paid for their extra time of work.

HEALTH AND WORK SAFETY

As most of the workers work from home there is no required infrastructure to support their work posture. Prolonged sitting on the floor with keen watching on the silver lines makes causes the women suffering with sever back ache and some women complained inter vertebral disk herniation. The study shows 81% of the women worker suffering with Irregular periods, 24% with uterus prolapsed and 17% with abortion.

At their home, the workers use sulphuric acid which are hazardous chemicals to mix with the boar powder with bear hands. One of our respondents got burned her skin while she come into contact with the concentrated sulphuric acid. Since the acids are kept at home there is great danger of children coming into contact with the acids without the knowledge of the parents. The study observed that the absolute absence of safety measures is the tradition of these industries which makes the workers and small children vulnerable.

LEGAL ASPECT

It is evident from the study that 61% of children's labour is being given. That is the children are being pledged for certain amount ensuring their labour throughout the year. Out of this 61%, it is 10% of the children pledged before the age of 18. . Since the work place becomes their home for few of the workers, it makes the school going



children to work after their school hours also. As these women are bonded they cannot take leave very often and there is no paid leave offered for them. No social security benefits like PF, ESI are provided to them. Only 43% of owners provide some festival bonus for the women workers.

39% of the respondents have started working before the age of 14

OTHER FINDINGS

- As majority of the women are being bonded in their own household no legal measures like minimum wages, workplace safety, protective equipment, stipulated work hours, social security benefits, unemployment compensation, benefits of Employee's State Insurance (ESI), maternity benefit are not available to these workers.
- A large number of children joined the workforce during their school days and they tend to drop from school and pursue this work as their full time job in order to compensate their parent's labour mortgage. This leads to a natural continuation of bonded labour system for generations.
- The advance amount taken by the women workers is spent by their husbands. The owners nowadays lend money only to women labourers as they don't trust men. This trend added burden on the women who are already over worked and taken multiple responsibilities including managing home.

CASE STUDY 5:

A 17 year old girl, who met with fire accident while soldering the silver chain and she had lost her forearm and leg. She was working for her parent's loan amount of Rs.20,000/-. The owner did not pay any compensation to this accident. After 6 months of the incident, the owner had forced her to resume back to work the women now in her forties, unable to carry out her work like before. She is suffering with sever back pain and poor vision and all her money is spent on her medical expenditure. As she is not married she is struggling alone to lead dignified life.



Cashew Nut Processing Units



It was the Portuguese who introduced cashews to India in the second half of the 16th century though its commercial values was realised only in 20th century by the Indian traders. It was initially planted and processed in Kerala later shifted to Kanyakumari because of declaration of cashew nut processing units as factories. This declaration brought in a compulsion to the employers to adhere to stipulated work hours, unemployment compensation, employee's state insurance, maternity benefit, minimum wage etc. So the factory owners shifted the processing units to neighboring district Kanyakumari as it comes under Tamil Nadu and need not face any restriction on cottage Industry. (K.N.Harilal, march 2006) From there the cashew processing units spread across in the districts of Tamilnadu viz., Cuddalore Viluppuram, Pudukottai, and Sivagangai. But in Panruti area of Cuddalore has unique set of relationships between production, 'cluster' processing and marketing. Primarily in areas with poor quality land or little irrigation infrastructure, which does not support other crops, cashew processing is an important livelihood source (K.N.Harilal, march 2006).

There are 10 cashew nut processing units in the districts which includes both registered and unregistered units owned by Kerala business people. On an average more than 7000 families are involved in this work. The study has reached workers from all the 10 factories in Pudukottai.



NUT CONDITIONING PROCESS

The processing units of Pudukottai District undergo the following processing to add value to the raw nut in producing the edible kernel which is a long and labor-intensive process.

The processing method involves first cleaning the cashew nut seeds with water followed by drying in sunlight continuously for four days and then soaked in water to soften the shells. Then these seeds are boiled at 92 to 100 degree centigrade for 45 minutes. After that the boiled cashew seeds are dried in the room temperature for 12 hours. The next day cashew nuts are cut with the help of cashew cutter machine, running the nuts one by one through a foot-powered press which cracks the shell. To avoid injury from oil of cashew nut seeds Castor oil is applied to both hands before cutting the cashew nuts in cutter machine. Then machine roasting is done. Then the kernels had to be cooled by spreading on a mat, water sprinkled over it and covered by a sac. Then it is passed to second women who removes the nutmeat from the shell by hand or through a blunt knife. This is incredibly tedious work. Then they are kept in the dryer for 8 hours after removing the shell. The processed cashew nuts are sorted on the basis of their sizes and then packed under hygienic condition. They are sold under brand name and trade name. The products are packed in 200gm, 500gm, and 1 kg as per demand.

Broken nutmeats are also used, most in commercial baking and then roasted as well and sold in bulk. The discarded shells also have numerous uses like in adulteration of tea powder, so all parts of the nut are used.

EMPLOYMENT

The nature of employment in cashew processing unit is piece rate employment. There are large numbers of young adolescent girls working in the cashew nut processing units of Pudukottai district. 84% of the total women work force of cashew industries are not married.. The industry prefers young adolescent girls than adult women to increase productivity as the young girls does the work faster and they will not take leave often like married women. 49% of the women joining this industry between the age of 14 to 18 while 29% of the respondents joining between the 18 to 22 years.



The Kerala Government had made as mandatory for the cashew processing units like stipulated working hours, compensation during non-employment period, employee's state insurance, maternity benefit, minimum wage etc.. But Tamil Nadu does not provide such legal protection to the cashew workers hence the farmers and business men from Kerala starts the units in Tamil Nadu.

WORK

The average working hours are 10 hours per day and a company vehicle is available in all processing units to carry the workers from their native to the processing units. The workers leave their house at 4 am and return to home by 7 pm. The employees can take off from work on any day without payment. However the units are not encouraged frequent leave taking which would lead to loss of employment.

WAGE

The study found that 71% of the labourers come under Piece rate employees' category i.e. the wages will be based on the number of Kilograms of Kernels processed. The wages will be issued every week which depends on number of kilograms a worker processed on that week. The women involved in breaking section earn Rs. 15/- per Kg; on an average a woman worker will be able to process 60 Kgs of kernels in a week. The quantity of raw nut distributed to the worker should be equivalent to the processed kernels and the waste created.

Wage exploitation: The labourers are not given wages for the decayed kernels (which is not the workers fault) which has gone through all the process of breaking, peeling etc. For example if there is 1 kg of decayed kernels in 10 kg's of total kernels which the labourer had broken the shells will be receiving wages only for 9 kg's. The wages are given only for full, good kernels. The labourers had not taken steps against such exploitation of labour. Most of the workers feel that as it is the practice followed by the management even before they joined the work they were not confident enough to raise voice against such injustice.



HEALTH

As part of processing Cashew Nut Shell Liquid (CNSL) is being used this is acidic in nature, which creates a thick stain in the palms of the women who is handling the liquid. Some employees are allergic to the CSNL, it causes itching and rashes on their body.

The women worker peels the cashew nuts with their nails and not allowed to do it with the knife, as the knife might damage the Kernels. All the young adolescent girl's nail beds are damaged due to this work pattern.

The girls between the age group of 14 to 22, complains over bleeding & irregular menstrual cycle, and white discharge. Women who become pregnant do not continue their job since they fear of miscarriage. None of the industries provide ESI facility for the workers doctors are not available inside the factory but the women had said that basic first aid medications are available inside the campus like head ache tablets, ointments etc.

BASIC AMENITIES

The labourers are provided with tea and lunch break, separate toilet for female is also available inside the workplace. But the female workers do not take these breaks and continue their work in order to earn more money. Most of the time the workers do not take lunch since washing hands after handling the cashew nut shell liquid is a long process and it would take at least 5 minutes .

The women in cashew factory are indirectly forced to work continuously without break for tea and lunch due to the system of piece rate. This type of employment is rooted in the neo liberal economic growth model which is centered on profit rather than welfare of the workers.



LEGAL ADHERENCE

There are cashew nut processing units which are not registered and do not carry any name boards outside the unit. Few registered companies run unregistered units in parallel. There is no increment in wages for past 2 years. There were attempts by workers to initiate struggle to demand increase in tea allowance in which they succeed. 61% of the respondents have said that PF is not provided where as 39% of the respondents said it is being provided. However, it was found that the company does not contribute to the employee's PF. But, amount worth 2 Kgs of processed nuts will be deducted in the name of compensating for wastes from the total kilograms processed by the women that will be given as PF later.

VIOLENCE

As there are more McGaurds (lady supervisors) available in the units, the women faced relatively less sexual harassment. But verbal abuse is very common and punishments such as making the worker stand outside when they do not process the kernels properly are common in the industry. There is no mechanism or committee to address the grievances of women.

It is important to note that there is always tension lies between the BC (Kallar) and the MBC community workers which need to be addressed to avoid any big clash.

Since many young girls are the bread winners of their family they are forced to discontinue their school education (about 37%) and start work.

According to young women workers they are much happy about this job and prefer this than agriculture due to various reasons including possibilities of earning more money and with less physical

The women also equally concern about the low wage, retention of wage and about their bad health conditions.



About 29% of the girls are unmarried and they don't have any other source of income in their family, which means that they are the only bread winners of their family.

OTHER FINDINGS

- The wages are calculated by number of kilograms processed by the female worker, but the workers cannot see the weighing machine and there is a reduction of 2 kilogram for every week.
- There is social stigma about the young girls' attitude and behavior due to working in Cashew processing units, this becomes a challenge for the young working women.



Fireworks



Crackers play an important role in the Indian festival likewise the business of pyrotechnic is a vital source of income for the families dwelling in Virudhunagar district. About 90 per cent of India's production of fireworks is at Sivakasi⁶. For the employers the business becomes a highly profitable one. The fireworks industry in Sivakasi is worth Rs.800-1000 crore. The market for fireworks is likely to grow at the rate of 10 per cent per annum. There are nearly 460 fireworks factories employing about 40,000 workers. These units manufacture about 300 varieties of fireworks (Thamburaj). The fireworks are governed by the Indian Explosives Act and Rules 1940 and the unit has to comply with all the regulations. If the units fail to satisfy the requirement of the Explosives Act 1940, the unit's license will be cancelled. Hence the manufactures uses back door methods to start unlicensed firework units which pave the way to not adhere to labour acts. Almost all the licensed firework units have converted all the works into sub contract mode which can be done at home.

EMPLOYMENT

The firework industry appoints female workers on regular basis and contracting out certain process and gains labourer as home based workers. The regular workers are involved in the process like fixing fuses, chemical filling, packing, gift packing. The home based workers make paper tubes.



WORK

The factory workers have a stipulated 8 hours of working hours but the home based workers has target based work and paid based on piece rate. Most of the work in the home based works involves the labour of the entire family which includes the children also. This system paves the way for the children to dropout from the school and joins the labour market in younger age group.

WAGE

The average wage of the female worker working inside the company is about Rs.500/- per day and the wage earned by the home based worker around Rs. 140/- per day. Though the factory workers earn more the female workers prefer doing the home based work as they should take care of the house hold activities and the child care activities.

The MGNREGA has changed the balance of bargaining power between the workers and owners in favour of the workers. After the scheme was introduced in full swing the workers effectively utilised this opportunity and demanded hike in their wages. Changing the power in relationship between the employer and employee is the basis for social transformation hence this progress could be the first step towards that transformation.

SOCIAL SECURITY

The licensed units provides all the social benefits like ESI, PF, injury benefits, medical compensation, etc. But the unlicensed units never provide these benefits and the life of these workers are at stake.

HEALTH

The respondents have major complaints of stomach pain due to the effect of the chemicals which infuses into the stomach since they do not wash their hands properly before having food. The female workers do not wear any protective gears to protect



themselves from the chemicals. Many of the workers are allergic to the chemicals and get rashes due to the prolonged exposure.

SAFETY MEASURES

The licensed units has adopted all the safety measures like fire safety, training the staffs on emergency exit on regular basis, training the workers on new process like first aid unit, fire safety equipment etc.,. Each chemical filling process will be done in a work shed which has two doors on each side of the wall for easy exit at the time of fire accidents. Only four workers are allowed to sit inside with only 5kg's of gunpowder. The unlicensed unit does not possess any of these safety measures.

LEGAL ADHERENCE

At the time of fire accidents the death compensation will be given to the victim's relative ranging from 60 thousand to 1 lakhs but the female workers are not aware of the actual death compensation amount. Since there were many groups in Tamil Nadu had raised the issue of child labour in fireworks industry, as per the respondents the licensed units broadly do not have children below 14 years but they had shifted their child labour work force into un-licensed units and into home based work.

VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL HARASSMENTS

The workers will be verbally abused if the workers do not achieve the target or taking leave often.

There were not many incidents of harassments observed within the factory as all the workers are women working together under a shed. Respondents were confident that management relatively takes quick action if any complaint is registered.

OTHER FINDINGS

All the licensed and non-licensed units have sub-contracted their workforce to home based work, which involves making paper tubes, and filling of explosives which is harmful. The wages of these workers are far more less than the licensed unit workers.



Small Scale Industries



Predominantly there are four categories of products which are manufactured in Small Scale Industries – Cotton and Textile, Food Products, Non-Electrical machineries including tools and parts, Paper and Printing. There are around 4.2 lakhs of registered small scale industrial units in Tamilnadu. The small scale industry respondents interviewed in our study were female labourers of Rice Mills from Trichirapalli district and casual wage earners of Industrial hub of Hosur and Krishnagiri District.

Around 700 modern rice mills are there in Trichirapalli district out of which the study had covered respondents of 48 rice mills. The process involved in rice mill is boiling the paddy and removing the outer skin of the paddy and making it edible. It is main source of employment for the people dwelling in villages of Mannachanallur, Punampalayam, Ayamalayam, Manaparai, Mayakudi etc. The female workers are appointed to dry the paddy in the sun. In each mill around 20 female workers are working as a casual labourer. Though the female workers work for more than 5 years in the same mill their work for the days is not made certain.

Hosur, **Industrial area**, consists of about 700 industries comprising of Large, Medium, Small and Tiny industries and 19 of such industries were covered in the study. It is the major industrial hub of many automobile, manufacturing and Granite industries spreading across the blocks of Krishnagiri, Veppanalli, Hosur and Kelamangalam towns. In equivalent with the small scale industries there is an



upcoming trend of cottage industries in making snacks, mosquito coils, washing etc. The daily labourers here are appointed as helping staffs.

WORK

The nature of these workers is casual labourers. Average working hours are eight hours per day. These female workers do not enjoy other benefits like ESI, PF, injury benefits etc. They also have to spend extra time when their supervisors request them. As they work as daily workers there is no scope of job promotion or increment in salary. The rice mills does not provide any type of paid leave including medical, maternity and casual leaves which are legal entitlement of the workers.

WAGE

The average monthly income earned by the rice mill workers and the housekeeping workers is 3600; they get to work for 28 days of work per month, thus their average daily income is Rs. 116/-. But the government fixed minimum wages for rice mill workers is Rs.178/- per day. There is no increment made in their salary for the past 5 years.

Wage Exploitation: In the rice mills, there is fixed number of sacs (300) per day laid on the open ground for sun drying, and the daily wage is paid for only drying 300 sac of paddy. But there will be at least 10 sacs extra every day and the workers will not be informed about this.

HEALTH

The health problem of the rice mill workers differ from the house keeping workers of Krishnagiri district. They face health problems like Body ache, Congestion in lungs, whooping cough etc. Common problem among women are white discharge, uterus prolapse and 54% of the respondents had complained of urinary tract infection. None of these women go to work when they conceive in the fear of abortion. There is no awareness among the workers on using personnel protective equipment, and they feel protective gears is unnecessary to their work, and wearing it might reduce their efficiency of work. But these females who are working in rice mills are heavily



exposed to sun who are working with bare foot and do not wear anything to prevent the husk entering into the lungs. The house keeping staffs use hazardous chemicals as washing medium. In few other industries though the women are aware of using the protective gears because of non-availability on regular basis they do not use them.

BASIC AMENITIES

There is no specific time for lunch break and tea break, the rice mill workers had to have their lunch in the small gap which they get between drying the paddy. There is no provision of crèche in any of these industries. The labourers were not known about the minimum wages, and they had not taken any steps to avail an increment in their salary or other allowances.

LEGAL ADHERENCE

The rice mill female workers have registered their names in trade unions through which they gain some awareness on minimum wages, PF, ESI etc. There were no provisions in any of these industries to compensate the off seasonal employment and provision to address grievances related to general working issues and specific to women protection also.



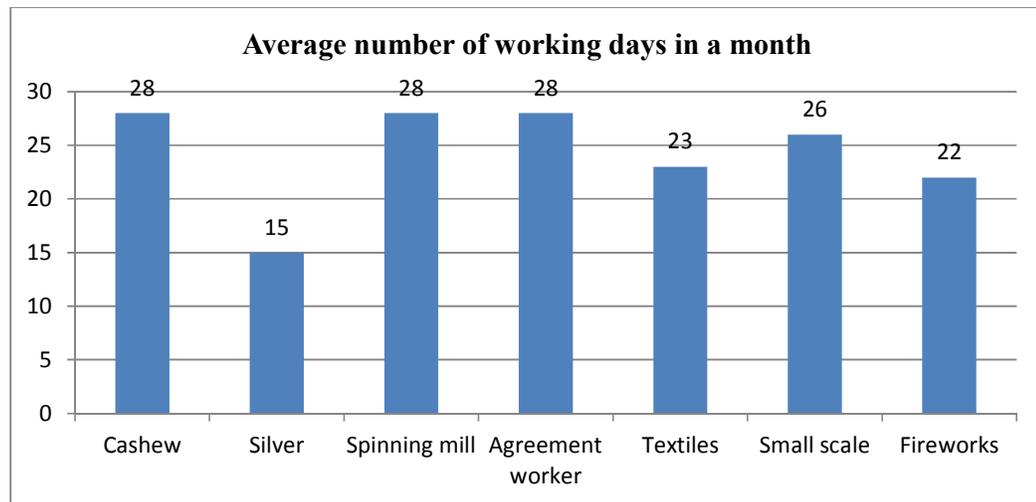
Significant findings across the Industries

EMPLOYMENT

Type of labour: About 72% of our respondents are daily wagers, 13% are agreement workers, 13% are piece rate workers and 2% are regular employees. But each industry adopts some system to ensure the workforce whenever required by the management. For instance, like deducting some amount from the wages for PF, giving the laborers some advance amount and asking them to repay if they wanted to quit.

Recruitment: The recruitment process is either directly by the employer or through the contractors such as in spinning mills and textiles or sub-contracting the work as home based job such as in fireworks and small scale industries. Alternative employment during non-working days of the factory during the days of non-production in the factory most of the women chooses MGNREGA work or stay at home without alternative job.

Graph 1: Average numbers of working days women get to work



Since the failure of growth in agriculture sector (as per Tamil Nadu government report during the year 2011-12 Tamil Nadu has registered annual growth of 2.63 percent in farming sector whereas the national average is way above at 7 percent in the same year) the rural un educated women are forced to find alternative employment in the non-formal production sectors. The women working in silver industries are not allowed to take any other alternative employment during off season and also not permitted to work with other silver industry owners. To manage the situation women are forced to borrow more money from their owners and put them in vicious cycle of bonding. Study also found that in recent times some of the women working in silver industries took up tailoring jobs at their home during the off season of employment.

TABLE 5: OVERVIEW ABOUT THE WORK FORCE

	Cotton spinning mill	Textiles	Silver artefact manufacturers	Cashew nut processing units	Fireworks	Small Scale industry
Employment	Daily labourers Piece rate workers Agreement workers	Daily labourers Piece rate workers	Daily labourer Advanced workers	Piece rate workers	Daily labourer Piece rate workers Home based workers	Daily labourer Home based workers
Remuneration	Weekly Monthly Piece rate	Daily Weekly Piece rate	Weekly Piece rate	Weekly Piece rate	Weekly Monthly Piece rate	Monthly Piece rate
Average income per day (in Rs.)	135	106	53	159	87	121
Working hours (in hrs)	8	9	10	12	9	9
Average Number of days they get to work	25 days	23 days	15 days	28 days	22 days	28 days



The women working in silver industries are not allowed to take any other alternative employment during off season and also not permitted to work with other silver industry owners. To manage the situation women are forced to borrow more money from their owners and put them in vicious cycle of bonding. Study also found that in recent times some of the women working in silver industries took up tailoring jobs at their home during the off season of employment.

WORK CONDITION

Leave: None of the firms provide any type of paid leave such as sick leave, casual leave, earn leave, etc. It is always tuned according to the requirement of the management and the target to be achieved by the manufacturing sector.

Work hours and overtime: Though the stipulated work being eight hours per day there is some extra time which the workers work beyond these work hours (on an average from one hour to eight hour per day) for which they are not paid. But in few industries like Textiles the overtime work hours are given some minimal amount. The piece rate workers do not have any specific work hours all that they work for a day will earn them money, so they don't take any rest period and work on their lunch hours skipping their meals.

Job promotion: The promotion to higher post is not possible in any of these industries as they are all skill based workers. Once they enter the factories they learn a set of work and continue doing the same and get expertise in that. So there are very less scope for these workers to change their department if they are not willing to work in same department.

Job security: In all the sectors the employees are not made permanent irrespective of their number of years of working in the company. (While the total years of experience of our respondents ranges from 3 months to 8 years) Whenever the factories are not involved in production the employees have to take leave without pay and they will be recalled once the work resumes in the factory. None of the factories pays any compensation for this period of unemployment.

Travel: Almost all the women prefer working around their residence for they have to take care of their family and children but the adolescent girls travel to next village or to other districts for their job. Parents of adolescent girls, who sent their daughters to

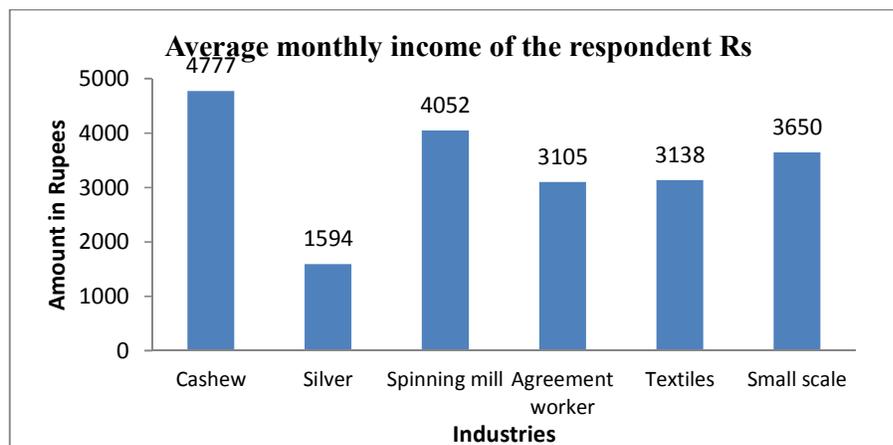


other districts for their livelihood, prefer to put them in hostels inside campus and they feel that it is the secured place for them to stay.

WAGE

Minimum wages: Industries like cashew and fireworks pay labourers daily wage more than the minimum wage fixed by the government of Tamilnadu, where the other industries pay a less than the minimal wage to the employee. The female workers of silver anklet manufacturing are paid on an average of Rs. 53/- per day while the minimum wage of Tamil Nadu government is Rs. 264.65/- per day.

Graph 2: Average monthly income of the respondents



In cashew industry the workers on an average earn equal or slightly higher to minimum wage specified by Government. This includes incentive amount of Rs.45/- if they achieve the target of cleaning 6kg cashews per day. The worst scenario is in silver anklet manufacturing units, where women workers are paid on an average of Rs. 53/- per day while the minimum wage of Tamilnadu government is Rs. 264.65/- per day.



In some industries such as cashew and rice there were struggles led by workers on demand of hike in their wages yielded positive results, through the strike on demand. Cashew labourer's incentive has been increased from Rs. 32/- to Rs.45/- rupees per day.

Deduction of wage: In fireworks, small scale industries and textiles there were no visible deduction from the wage. But in cashew industry the wage for processing the rejected kernels is not paid to the worker which is around Rs. 30 per week. In spinning mills Rs.200 to 300 has been deducted for the food and stay from the agreement based workers.

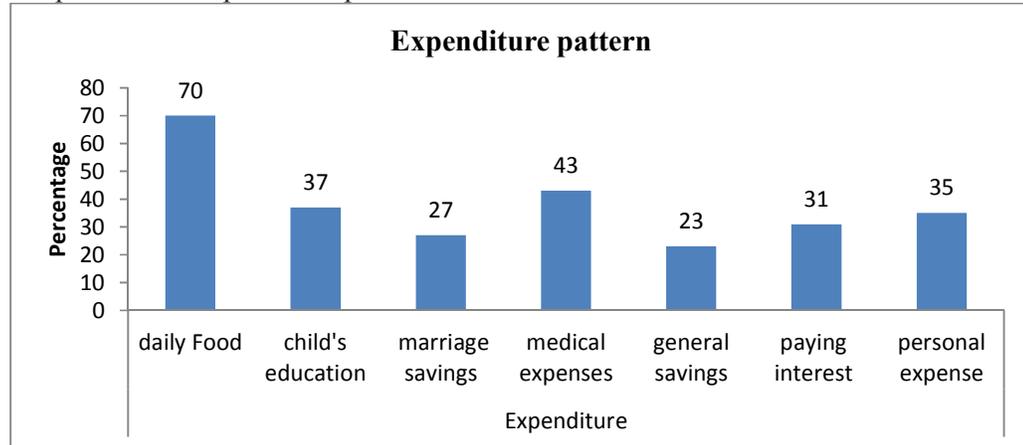
Wage Exploitation: Various forms of wage exploitation has been observed across the industries for instance nonpayment of agreement amount in spinning mills, poor wages to the silver anklet workers who bonded their labour to the owners due to their debt and strict target to avail "Tea amount" in Cashew industry.

70% of the female workers spent their wages on daily food

Expenditure pattern: The wages earned by the female workers is spent by them is 43%, by their husbands 37%, by their parents 35% and 3% spent their earning for children. Total income produced by the female labourer is largely spent on their daily food (70%), child's education (30%) and marriage savings (27%).



Graph 3: Expenditure pattern of women workers on various heads



SOCIAL SECURITY

There is no provision of festival bonus, PF, ESI or gratuity in industries like Textile, silver anklet manufacturing, and small scale industries. But in cashew, fireworks and spinning mills PF has been deducted from the worker's salary but the company does not contribute to workers' PF account.

Table 6: Percentage of response in provision of social security benefits in their workplace

	<i>Cashew</i>	<i>Silver</i>	<i>Spinning mill</i>	<i>Agreement worker</i>	<i>Textiles</i>	<i>Small scale</i>	<i>Fireworks</i>
Festival Bonus	99	43	93	79.5	20	45.2	96
PF	39	0	11.7	46	10	0.5	42
ESI	0	1	9.1	21.5	9	1.5	50
Maternal benefit	0	0	15.8	22	6	11.1	12
Injury benefit	0	0	0	55.5	8	20.6	44
Old age pension	0	0	5.6	17.5	0	16.1	10
Survivor benefit	0	0	45.3	50.5	5	15.1	42



HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES

General health: Almost all the workers developed musculoskeletal problem like joint pain and severe back problem; the reasons according to workers were, working in the same posture for long hours without any rest period in between.

Women Health: Most of the women complained that the work burden caused them with irregular periods, white discharge and urinary tract infection. Some of the women worked in spinning mills observed that these problems were stopped after they stopped working.

28% of the female workers are facing irregular periods

Mental Health: There were observations by the former workers of spinning mills that the adolescent girls while working in spinning mills as agreement labors complains of mental stress and depression. It was observed that there were some incidents of suicide attempts among the spinning mills worker.

Protective gears: Silver anklet, Rice mill, small scale industry and cashew workers were not aware of protective gears at the same time they feel that using them might reduce their working efficiency. On the other hand spinning and textile workers are willing to use the protective gears but the supply by the factory is very poor. Hence almost all the industries workers are highly exposed to occupational hazards and accidents. For instance the silver anklet workers are handling hazardous sulfuric acids in bare hands.

Medical services: In few spinning mill and fireworks there is medical unit or a small nursing homes with nurses. In rest of the industries medical assistance at the time of emergency is not available. None of the industries have the facility of 24 hours doctors. During the emergency the workers will be taken to nearby hospitals by the management.

Accidents: In Fireworks and Spinning mills there is a chance of big accidents with loss of body parts and leading to death. Though in the past the compensation is given by the company for major accidents and loss of body parts. Compensation for death were not given as per the law.



BASIC AMENITIES

Toilet and Drinking water: Toilets are available inside the workplace in the industries of spinning, textile, firework, small scale industries but they are not maintained properly and some are not in usable condition. Hence the women avoid using them till they reach home. All the industries provide drinking water for the workers.

In few set ups of rice mill toilets are built as it is required by the labour department but the female workers are not allowed to use them and they had to use open space outside the mills.

Resting room: There is no provision of resting room inside the industries for the female workers to rest when they are unwell and there is no specified rest period provided.

Creche: In few units of fireworks and spinning there is provision for the employees to engage their children during their working hours. But in cashew processing unit and rice mills bringing children to the work place is strictly prohibited.

In contrast to this the silver anklet manufactures as they work from home, the children stay around the parents even when the parents does some hazardous job.

LEGAL ADHERENCE

Registration and License: The employees of cashew, silver anklet manufacturing are not aware of whether their firm is registered under factories act. The firework labourers are aware that they are working in unlicensed units; still they continue working for their wages. The spinning mills and textiles are mostly registered firms as they deal with foreign exchange.

Trade union: There are no trade unions for workers in Cotton spinning mills, textiles, and silver anklet manufacturers but there are few trade unions functioning in rice mills and fireworks.



The management never allows the workers to form unions and they will be fired if they unite to gather for a cause.



VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL HARASSMENTS

Violence: Almost all the employees are undergone some forms of harassments including verbal and physical abuse and punishment such as barring from work for few hours etc, when there is some inaccuracy in the work or not maintaining the work time and not achieving the targets for the day. Sometimes the supervisors use abusive language to the female workers which highly frustrates the workers.

Sexual harassment: It has prominently come out that the women had experienced various forms of severe sexual harassments such as compelling for sexual favour, molestation, bad touch, commenting on the body etc., These issues are not taken to the higher authorities because it is mostly the immediate supervisor who does these harassments.

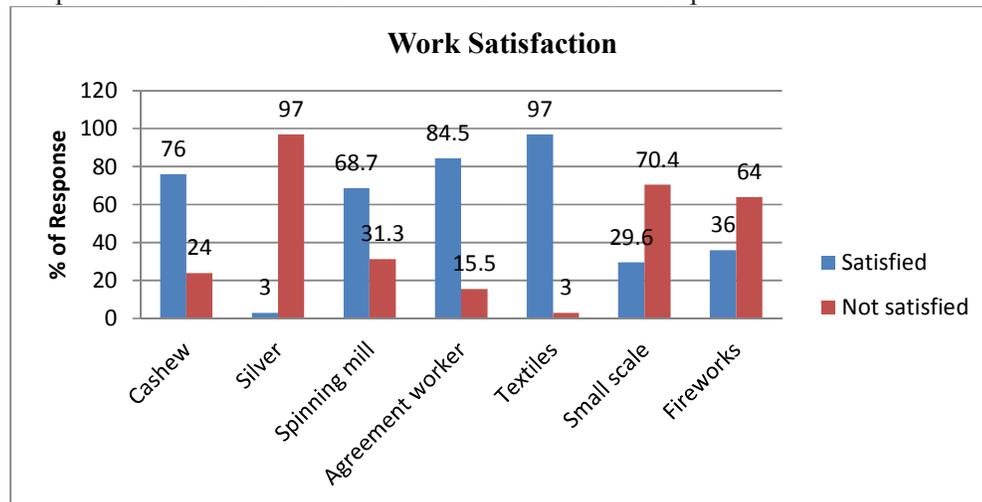


The young girls are commonly becoming the victims as they don't reveal fearing of losing their job, and imposing them with heavy workload.

Sexual harassments were high for women who had worked as agreement labourers in spinning mills as they have to stay there inside the campus. The girls do not reveal, because of losing their job and the agreement amount. As most of the girls are the only bread winners of their family, they feel that these issues might lead to lose of income and jeopardise their entire family existence.

The mothers of these girls seldom know about the issues happening inside the mills, and they feel that inside the campus the girl is safe and secured.

Graph 4: Overall work satisfaction of women workplace



Salient points and trends emerging out of study

- The cruel face of the neo liberal economic policies which are embedded in the frame work of creating private capital and huge profit can be seen in all the industries discussed in this report. It perfectly abolished permanent labourer system and created very vulnerable section of work force through system of casual, piece work and daily wage labourers.
- The same policies uprooted all the labour rights which were achieved by sacrificing thousands of labourer's life during many workers struggle during 19 & 20th centuries in India and in many other countries. The study also found that 98 percent of the labourer are either casual or daily wages or piece work labourer who does not have basic worker's rights such as minimum wages fixed by the government.
- Across the sectors we could able to see various types of injustice, exploitation of the workers including denial of right to come together and form trade unions to secure their interests, minimum of 10 hours working time, compulsory double shift without payment, denial of any type of paid leave even for single day, not included in any of the social security schemes and need to spent their entire labour life as casual labourer under the constant threat of possibilities of thrown away from the job at any time.
- When all these harassments are posed on already vulnerable section of the society i.e. women workers, the harassments are taking new shapes and stand up with enormous potency against them. The patriarchy nature of the society utilise all the new opportunities perfectly and oppress the vulnerable section more than the past. The study reveals that the women are stressed with terrible burden, on one hand in the name of growth in employment opportunities women are employed as cheap labourer without any type of workers' rights and on the other hand they are undergoing all types of sexual harassments and remained as silent spectators. Almost all the respondents of the study revealed that high degree of sexual harassments are the regular phenomenon in most of these industries. The classic sign of oppression is that for various reasons including fear of losing job the women workers do not complaint against the male worker who are harassing them. Apart from being victims of sexual harassment they also need to cope up with the social stigma about their behavior and "character" since they work in such exploitative environment.



- The nature of bonding their labour to the owners by the silver anklet industry women is worth mentioning which was revealed by this study. The form of mortgaging their labour led to least development in their socio, economic status generation by generation. Though this was not identified as bonded labour system by the government the democratic society cannot accept any type of bonded labour system even if it is in indirect, non-classical form. The study found that their daily wage is Rs. 53/- per day which is way below the Tamil Nadu Government's minimum wage for this category of labourer. The very fact that 99 percent of the silver anklet workers are not satisfied with work they are doing shows that the compulsion and bonding system of labour still exists.
- Though the industries and the government claim that none of the industry have child labour and government is vigilant to punish the offenders the study found that in many industries including garments, silver anklet and fireworks considerable number of labourers are belongs to less than 18 years of age. In order to escape from the clutches of law industries uses all sorts of coercive measures such as converting the petty works into home based work which compel and attract the children to engage in the work their parents do. The lack of stringent action on the violators by the government departments provides enough room to think of illegal nexus between industry owners and government officials.
- Many of the national level studies shows that, the second biggest reason for the Indian poor to become debtor is out of pocket expenditure for their health care. The study findings also synchronise with the general trend in India. 43 percent of the earnings are spent on the health care. This can be correlated to the fact that majority of the workers do not have membership in Employment State Insurance scheme (ESI) hence cannot access ESI run hospitals. Long time demand of social movements to include unorganised sector workers into ESI scheme is not heard by the central and state governments.
- Though health care is broadly given free of cost and it is every one's rights to avail free health care, the poor people had to spent huge portion of their little income. In spite of the fact that the Tamil Nadu government has allocated Rs. 7500 crore to the health sector in the latest (2013 -14) budget which is higher than many other states of India, the poor female worker had to spent major portion of their income to health care.



Conclusion

This study is being done at the time when the government is implementing anti labour policies in its full swing. The government is bending the rules and regulations in the favour of industries and finding various ways such as creating Special Economic Zones to legalise those measures. The National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised sector (NCEUS) has advocated strongly for universal coverage, which recommendation was ignored by the central government when they enact unorganised workers social security act 2008. The lack of political will by the Tamil Nadu government to enact stringent labour laws and enforce them, opened up Pandora box for the industries like Cashew which were migrated from Kerala to Tamil Nadu to enjoy the loose legal environment.

The study has highlighted various forms of exploitation the female workforce is undergoing at work place. The extent of vulnerability varies from one industry to another and between different forms of employment. As the rural women feel these jobs as a better option to agriculture coolie, they get into these kinds of exploitative and broadly unregulated jobs. The unskilled nature of the workers aggravates the nature of exploitation. The non-literacy about the legal protection, health hazards, and labour rights added more fuel into vulnerability.

Therefore with the presence of anti labour policies and absence of political will to protect labourer, providing legal protection, strict enforcement of laws, awareness, collective bargaining power the workers are subjective to all sorts of exploitations. In this context we feel the civil society has more roles to play to alter the power balance and the situation in favor of labourer.



Recommendation:

Though the minimum wages specified by the Tamilnadu government is not upto the workers' and trade unions' demand, at least the government need to take holistic measures to implement the minimum wages act across the industries on emergency basis.

The workers need to be protected by all the section of the society for which rights of coming together in the form of trade union is the basis. The government needs to take all the measures to start trade unions in these un-organised sectors.

Effective enforcement of acts along with necessary change in existing acts to prevent the exploitation of labour in the name of casual, contract and daily wage mode of employment.

Preventing women workers from all sorts of sexual exploitation is need of the hour. It require social, administrative as well as legal measures including forming Vishaka committees as per the supreme court of India's guidelines. The civil society also had to play important role in lobbying with the government industries to protect women from harassments.

Effective implementation of community led monitoring including civil society organisations' representation is essential to prevent the child labour effectively. Stringent action against the offenders and effective redress mechanism are vital mechanisms to curb such un-civilised practices.

Long time demand of extending Employment State Insurance scheme benefits to all the unorganised workers along with other essential social benefits of PF, Paid leave, double wages for extra working hours etc., are the core need of the workers.



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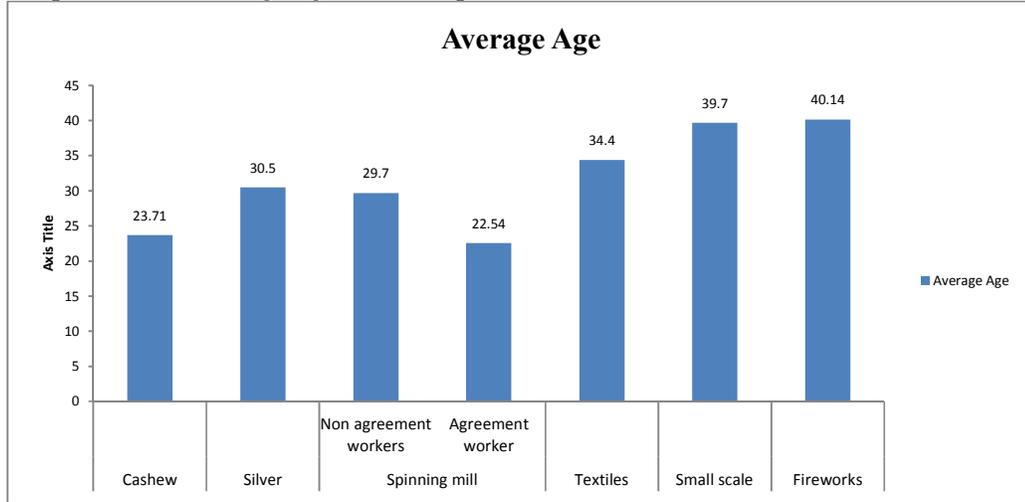


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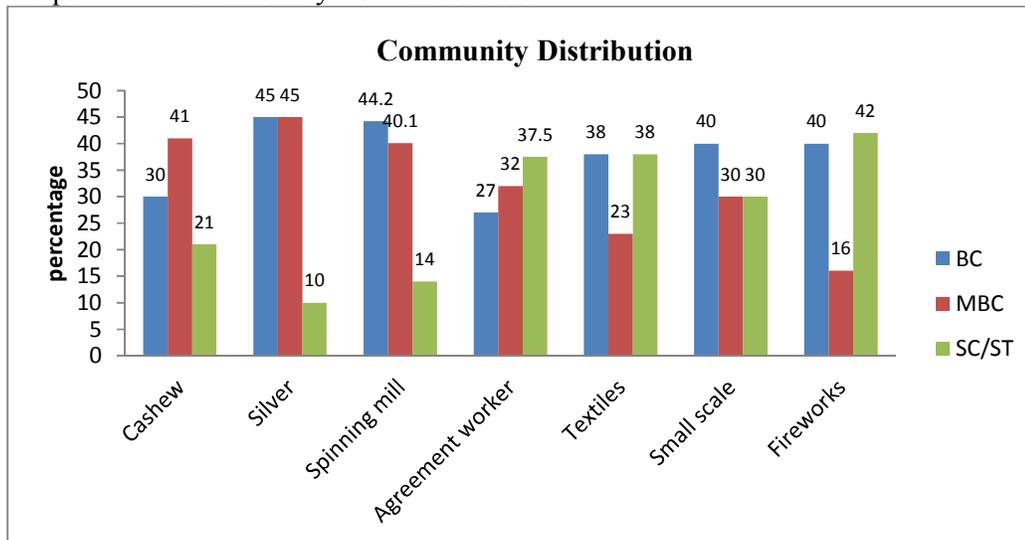
1. Society for Mahalir Development (SMD), Indoor, Dharmapuri
2. Rural Women and Children Health and Development Welfare Programmes (RWCHD), Denkanikottai, Krishnagiri
3. Rural Women Development Trust (RWDT), Tharamangalam, Salem
4. Human Integrated Life and Learning (HILLS), Sathyamangalam, Erode
5. Surabi Foundation, Komarapalayam, Namakkal
6. Women Development Planning Society (WDPS), Trichirapalli.
7. Jayam Trust, Karur
8. Swami Vivekananda Educational Service Trust (SVEST), Dindugal
9. Gramiya, Perungalur, Pudukottai
10. Virutcham Magalir Munnetra Kalzangiam, Virudhunagar
11. Vidiyal, Rasingapuram, Theni



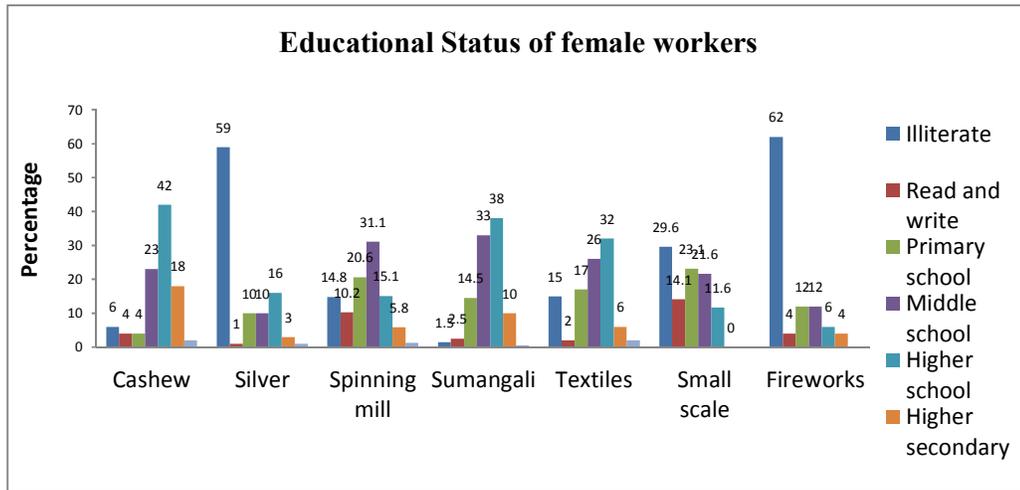
Graph 5: Average age of the respondents



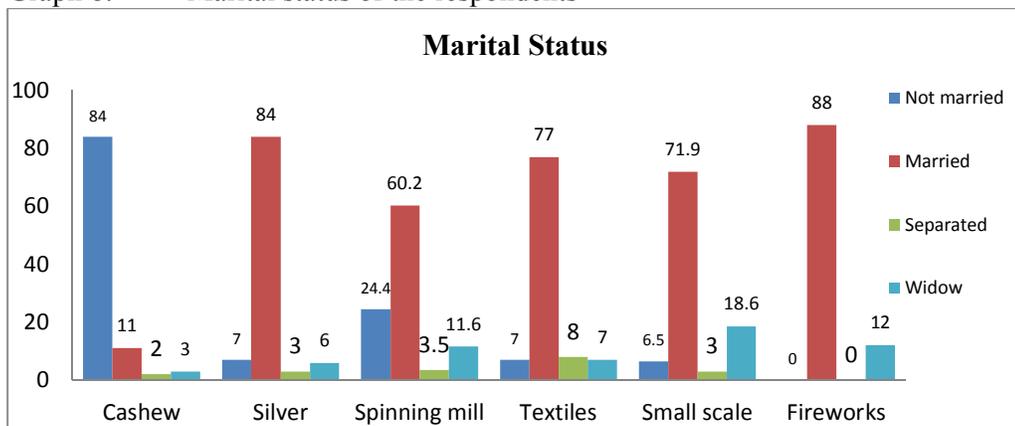
Graph 6: Community wise distribution



Graph 7: Educational Status of the respondents



Graph 8: Marital status of the respondents





It (the workplace) is a better place for my daughter to be - than my home. Since her every movement is overlooked, she will be protected from all men folk. I feel that my daughter is more secure at work, than in my village until she gets married."

- - - Mother of a girl child worker

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