Employment and Determinants of Participation of Females in Rural West Bengal: A Field Based Analysis of Bankura and Malda

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**Background**
- Stagnation of agricultural sector—forced rural workers to migrate either to the urban areas or the non-agricultural sector (RNFS) - all sectors other than agriculture and allied activities
- Females joined workforce for supplementing low household incomes from the agricultural sector — distress driven employment—Define in LFPR of females in both rural and urban sectors of different states over these years.
- West Bengal experienced shift of rural workforce from agriculture to RNFS - high proportion of female employment’s proportion in RNFS in the period when other major states experienced fall
- This entails the study the working condition of the females working in the RNFS of West Bengal

**Determinants of Rural Female Workforce Participation in Bankura and Malda**
- **(i) participating in total rural (both farm and non-farm) workforce**
- **(ii) participating as Self-employed in RNFS in the survey areas.**

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**Employment Status and Industry-wise Employment**
- Bid rolling in Malda
- Brick kiln works in Bankura
- MGNREGA work in both districts
- Self-employment in Non-farm activities in Bankura

**Determinants of Female Workforce Participation as Self-employed in RNFS**
- Engagement of the female workers as self-employed in RNFS increases with educational attainment.
- Female workers with Middle and Secondary & above education have significantly higher chance of participating as Self-employed in RNFS.
- Female workers’ participation as self-employed in RNFS of the sample surveyed increase with increasing consumption quintiles.
- Female workers’ participation as self-employed in RNFS is significantly five times more in Malda than in Bankura.

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**Conclusion**
- Female’s workforce participation—mainly distress-driven, conditioned by specific kinds of available works.
- Availability of the home-based manufacturing work - one reason for the females’ high participation in RNFS of West Bengal
- Mostly engaged in low grade, low paying, unskilled jobs, dependency on the contractor — no availability of social security benefit
- Bid workers—highest number of days worked in the last one year being earned lowest average yearly income earned - job workers are found to be in worse situation
- Poor implementation of the MGNREGA scheme—delay in payment by 4 to 5 months

**Data and Methodology and Socio-Economic Profile of Households Surveyed**
- Primary Survey—Bishnupur (Bankura) & Kaliachak-II (Malda); 4 villages—400 Households; Sampling method—Systematic random sampling
- Methods— Descriptive statistics & logistics regression
- Malda - Muslim dominated; Bankura - Hindu dominated; No tribal population
- 59% HBs - Landless; highest among the Hindu SC followed by Muslims - lowest proportion of Landless households is Hindu General group

**Demographic and Socio-economic Characteristics and Workforce Participation**
- Bidi rolling work—Malda
  - Home-based workers—Self-employed in non-agricultural activities—Majority of the females are engaged
  - Workers’ dependency on contractor for supply of ingredients and delivery of the finished products—Dependent workers Sub-contracted workers.
  - 2 kinds of bidi—1 No. Pataka bidi and 2 No. Pataka bidi (local brand)
  - Average working hours per day—4 hours
  - Average working days—231 days; average annual income earned—Rs 11777.68.
  - Only 1 No. Pataka bidi workers earned a provident fund which is voluntary.

- Brick kiln workers—Bankura
  - 95% Non-agricultural labour—working in brick kiln.
  - 3 types of work in the brick kiln - moulding bricks along with the male members, carrying bricks to the furnace and clearing debris
  - Average working hours per day—5.5 hours
  - Method of payments depends on the nature of the works—mainly piece rate payment except for the one who are collecting debris
  - On an average, the females worked for 137 days over the past 12 months earning an average yearly income of Rs 22587.22.

- MGNREGA
  - 54 females engaged — only 2 from Malda.
  - Average number of days of work—23
  - Payment made on Daily basis with a wage rate of Rs 174.
  - Payment often delayed by 4 to 5 months
  - Average yearly income earned—Rs 3886.67.

- Self-employed in non-agricultural sector
  - 22.86% females of the sample surveyed in Bankura are engaged as Self-employed in non-agricultural activities in Manufacturing sector.
    - They are Home-based workers but are not dependent on contractor.
    - On an average for 255 days with average 5 working hours per day.
  - Average net income earned is Rs 22683.67.
  - Malda—Female workers prepare “malthol” hat made of bamboo sticks—home-based workers and Manufacturing sector.

- Regular wage/Salaried workers
  - Malda—1 female working as governess
  - Bankura—2.92% female workers engaged as domestic help
  - Average yearly income earned—Rs 3222.50.

- Own-form activity
  - Malda—1.33% females engaged in Silk-worm rearing
  - Duration of cultivation each time—25 days—done four times in a year
  - Average working hours per day—11 to 12 hours—Subsidiary works.

**Policy Recommendation**
- Government of West Bengal has introduced scheme for the welfare of Home-based bidi workers—Initiative to be taken for proper implementation
- Initiative to improve MGNREGA implementation in West Bengal—focus on the schemes specially included in MGNREGA for attracting female employment.
- Strengthening SHG groups to function as employment generating group.

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