

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF WOMEN WORKERS IN DIAMOND MINES PANNA M.P.

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ABSTRACT: - Panna is famous for its diamond mines. The Panna Diamond Belt (PDB) occupying the northern margin of the Vindhyan Basin in Panna district, Madhya Pradesh hosts the primary, secondary and tertiary sources of diamond. It comprises the basement Bundelkhand granitoids to the north overlain by Vindhyan Supergroup of rocks (Mid to Upper Proterozoic) to the south. The diamond mining activity is confined mainly to the Baghain plateau and to a lesser extent to the Gahadra plateau. The two kimberlite pipes known in PDB are Majhgawan and Hinota pipes (~1100 Ma), emplaced in Baghain Sandstone lying to the west of PDB. The survey aims at collecting data on the various Socio-Economic facets of the women workers, engaged in Diamond Industry, in the States of Madhya Pradesh district Panna, to study their 'working and living conditions' and 'welfare facilities' available to them, as against the various legislative provisions.

KEYWORDS: Panna Diamond Belt, women's worker, Socio-economic condition

INTRODUCTION

Panna is a city and a municipality in Panna district in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. It is famous for its diamond mines. A large group of diamond deposits extends North-East on a branch of the Vindhya Range for 150 miles (240 km) or so, and is known as the Panna group. They do not cover an area of more than 20 acres (81,000 m²). Great pits, 25 feet (7.6 m) in diameter and, perhaps, 30 feet (9.1 m) in depth, are dug for the sake of reaching the diamond conglomerate, which, in many cases, was only a very thin layer. According to Valentine Ball, who edited the 1676 'Travels in India' of Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, Tieffenthaler was the first European to visit the mines in 1765 and claimed that the Panna diamonds could not compare in hardness and fire with other locations in India. No really large diamonds have come from this area. The most productive mines were in the 1860s and were found in Sakaria, around 20 miles (32 km) from Panna. Four classifications were given to the Panna diamonds: first, Motichul, clear and brilliant; 2nd, Manik, with a faint orange tint; 3rd, Panna, verging in tint towards green; 4th, Bunspat, sepia coloured. Mines is situated in the interior of Panna district. Diamond mines in Panna are managed under the Diamond Mining Project of National Mineral

Development Corporation (NMDC Ltd) of Government of India. In other mines every year the land is leased to prospective miners by the government agency.

In India, women-workers constitute about one-fifth of the total work force in the overall economic activity. Out of these, very few are employed in organised sector. In spite of the mandatory legislative protective provision, the extent of their exploitation exists not only in the unorganised sector but in the organised sector also. Due to inadequate implementation of protective legislative provisions concerning women workers, there still remain a yawning gap between these provisions and the facilities actually available to them. Some instances have occurred, where women workers were deprived of the benefits and amenities like equal remuneration vis-a-vis their male counterparts, maternity benefits, child care service etc. Several factors are responsible for their plight, like weak bargaining power, indifferent attitude of the employers, and non-awareness of the rights available as per the legislative provision. Although the Government is seized of the situation, yet it continues to remain a problem area due to non-availability of reliable statistical data and other information pertaining to working and living conditions of women workers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The survey aims at collecting data on the various Socio-Economic facets of the women workers, engaged in the Diamond mines, in the States of Madhya Pradesh district Panna, to study their 'working and living conditions' and 'welfare facilities' available to them, as against the various legislative provisions.

PERIOD OF STUDY

The field work for the survey was undertaken by the regular field staff of Labour Bureau from last week of April, 2014 to mid of July, 2014.

Labors in Diamond Mines

There are three types of diamond mines in Panna – Government owned land where NMDC does the mining work, private owners of land who employ daily labors, private owners who give land to workers and tell them to mine and if diamond is found then the money will be divided in certain percentage.

We met Rakesh from Dahalan Chauki village who was working in a private land and bears all the cost of mining. If he finds diamond then he will keep 75% and

the land owner will keep 25%. However it may happen that the land may not bear anything so all the hard work may become pointless. The people of this village are discriminated as they belong to SC/ST community and untouchability is practiced against them in both workplace and normal life. On another private land, we found workers from Vikramganj were working at a wage of Rs. 130 per day as against the minimum wage set by the government which is currently Rs 203 for construction work and Rs 146 for agricultural work. We also found that workers had no knowledge about MNREGA and the wage act. Inside Panna workers get Rs 200 per day but since this village is 15 km away, they are being exploited as they are not aware about the government policies. There were also child labors who were working as they get wages at the end of day. They also work for 365 days a year and are not allowed to take any leave. The working conditions are unsafe with people working bare hand and foot and using tools to dig the ground.

In order to assess the Socio-Economic Conditions of the workers engaged in Diamond Industry, the information on the Average Daily Earnings and Average Daily Basic Wages, are collected for the workers from the sampled units. These activities are mostly carried out by women workers. The table 1.1 shows that average daily earnings of women worker is Rs 120, which is very lower in the Diamond industry. This is due to the abundance of cheap women work force available in these regions where the Diamond mines are located.

Table 1: Average Daily Basic Wages of Female workers by Occupation.

S.NO.	Occupation	Daily Income Female Workers
1.	Driver	Rs. 150
2.	Supervisor	Rs. 200
3.	Women worker (Labour)	Rs. 120

Case Study –I

Present survey’s findings indicate that economic condition of the Workers, particularly women workers, in Diamond mines of Panna is poor. About 50 per cent sampled women workers in the Diamond mines in the state are employed either on temporary or on casual basis. At all-India level only 7 per cent women workers are temporary or casual. Housing facility is available to only 15 per cent workers in Diamond mines of Panna whereas at all-India level this figure is more than 75 per cent. The average daily earnings of workers are also lowest in the state’s diamond mines.

Village- Baghaguda
Gram Panchayat- Dhalan Chowk
Number of Houses- 68, 120 families

Community- Gond/ Raj Gond, Yadavs

Baghaguda is a village which is approximately three kilometers away from Panna. The village is established adjacent to a stone mine site and is a source of employment for maximum population of this village specifically women. The village has a school and an anganwadi. In this village we interviewed 31 women and asked them basic questions about livelihood options for them and their husbands; their health status, condition of anganwadi and schools; possible migration and their entitlements.

Total Population	Men	Women	Children in Anganwadi
626	326	300	72 (35 Girls+37 Boys)

(Population of Baghaguda village as per the 2012 survey conducted by Anganwadi)

In terms of livelihood, men and women both go to the mines. Women go to the stone mines to break big chunk of stones into small matter and unloading and loading of stones in the lorry while the husbands are employed in cutting stones. In these mines it was observed that even children go to work in the mines if not the mine which is adjacent to the village then to some other mines. It is this particular mine which currently is providing them livelihood and because they live right next to the mines they all look at the mines as a source of employment for some definite amount of time. All through the interviews it was observed that women mostly work in the mines and even if they go to collect wood its for daily use. Whereas men other than working in stone mines have options of working on someone else’s farm or driving tractor. Under MNREGA, all of them have job cards and if there any opportunities they do go but not always. Their motivation also depends on the distance that they have to cover from the construction site. In case the job sites are far away men and women both prefer to go to stone mines.

Livelihood options	Wages (Men)	Wages (women’s)
Diamond mines	100-200(depends)	80-100(depends)
Worker Under Manrega	157 (depends)	120 (depends)
Driving tractor	50-100	-----

(Livelihood options and wages for men and women)

In terms of health as men and women both work in the mines, there have been incidents of death among men and there haven’t been any cases of silicosis among

women yet. Among the 32 women interviewed there were five widows identified whose husband died of silicosis and one man is identified with possibilities of having silicosis. There is a myth attached to how doctors understand Silicosis and mostly confuse it with TB. More often instead of coming to the PHC or District Health Hospital they go to Naugaon to get the disease diagnosed by a private doctor.

A case was found in Umrahan, Panna where a woman who was working in the mines had the possibility of having silicosis. Knowing this she went for a treatment in Naugaon to a private doctor and was given medicines for TB for a year. She has stopped taking medicines now and has stopped working in the mines too.

With high risks being involved its not just men and women even children join with their parents at young age and then continue working in the mines instead of going to school.

"I have been working in the mines since i got married and that is how my children also started working in the mines." - a woman worker in the stone mine

Since there is a stone mine in the proximity to the village, majority of the population goes there to work for 8-12 hours a day and are paid around 80- 100 rupees. If in a family both the husband and wife goes to the mine there are high chances that their son will also join them at a very young age and their girls get married at the age of 13 or 14. Mostly all the women who work in the mines are weak and there are one or two cases of malnutrition among women as well. While interacting with Geeta Bai (anganwadi worker) it was observed that there are cases of tuberculosis among children (1-3 yrs of age) and prevalent cases of malnutrition among children. She mentioned that women do not take care of themselves during maternity. It is more obvious that while pregnancy they will be found working in the mines and immediately after delivery they will be found working in the mines. The people of this village have become blind by this livelihood option and are not able to look for any other alternatives.

"I delivered a baby recently at home but when I was pregnant I was working in the diamond mines then too. We have to make a living. It's difficult to take extra precautions for the safety of the child and mine too." - a woman worker

In order to look for employment women migrate to cities like Delhi, Haryana and stay there for four to five months. They take their children along and this has serious effects on both the mother and the child's health. In words of Geeta Bai,

"Women when migrate for labour are accompanied by their kids. By the time they come back the kid is malnourished and the mother also becomes really weak. Women then send their kids to anganwadi for some

months and then again migrate to some place and the cycle goes on. This way the child remains weak till they reach their adolescent age."

It was also observed that there are no specific groups for adolescent girls to teach them livelihood skills or to make them aware about personal hygiene during menstruation and otherwise.

CONCLUSION

The women labour constitutes an important segment of the labour force in India and their participation in the labour force is increasing over the years. Wage work in India, as elsewhere, in a number of sectors is sharply differentiated along sexual lines. Their participation in economic activities of the country has grown enormously after rapid industrialization in post-independence era. Increased participation of women in economic activities on one hand has helped them to narrow down the gap between their needs and resources, while on the other hand it has given rise to a number of complex problems having a direct bearing on their Socio-economic Conditions. Present survey's findings indicate that economic condition of the Workers, particularly women workers, in Diamond mines of Panna is poor.

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