UNIT 8 GENDER ISSUES IN WORK AND LABOUR MARKET

Structure

8.1 INTRODUCTION

We read about the concepts related to employment, implications of gendered division of labour and current employment scenario in India in the previous Unit. Learners must have got clarity about the concepts of labour and employment. Along with understanding concepts related to labour and employment, we also need to discuss issues related to gender and employment. So, we will read about the issues related to gender and employment in this Unit namely, under-enumeration of women's work, norms of decent work, feminization, marginalization, informalization of women workforce, sexual harassment of women at workplace, glass ceiling and double burden shouldered by women workers. We have explained each of these issue to make the learners recognize the implications of these issues on the employment scenario.

8.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you would be able to

- List the issues related to women's labour and employment;

- Describe the issues related to labour and employment of women; and

- Examine implications of gender on labour and employment of women.

8.3 ENUMERATION OF WORK

An enumeration is a collection of items. The collected items have to be listed completely in an order. The term is commonly used in mathematics, theoretical computer science and applied computer science. With regard to enumeration of work, the Government of India officially attempts to obtain an estimate of the total number of economically active population in the country for the past hundred years. This is done through Census of India by categorizing total population into those with income earning activities and those without. These attempts were further refined by the 1961 census. The concept of the worker was introduced first time in the 1961 census i.e. a person engaged in a socially productive activity, whether income yielding or not. Since 1950 the Indian National Sample Survey (NSS) has also been collecting similar information about participation in work or economic activity (whether gainful or not) through repeated sample surveys. Apart from other official data collection systems, the population census and the NSS continue to be important and regular sources of the information by sex, region and age for the Indian population.

In this process, the feminists have worked to develop frameworks to include contribution of women's work in the exiting surveys by looking at the inadequacy in that. This process started by studying the existing conceptual frameworks and procedures adopted by the data collection agencies to collect information about the extent of womens contribution in economic activities. We have already read about the contribution of women's work by categories in Unit 1 of this Course. i.e. productive, reproductive and community works. Now we read about the issues related to non inclusion of women's contribution in the official statistical system.

Official Indian statistics indicate that women continue to lag behind men in all spheres of life – socio, political and economic life. The economic activities of women appear to be less important than that of men. In recent years, women's participation in the labour force has never been more than 28 percent of the total female population. However feminist authors argue that these figures do not reflect the full extent of Indian women's involvement in productive activities, both within the household and outside. This is because of the concepts, measures and techniques used by these data collection systems are not appropriate for Indian situation. We have also read about sexual division of labour in the Unit1. The sexual division of labour place women in unfavorable situation. The existing perceptions in the society due to patriarchy value women's work less. This perception is also reflected in the design of data collection machinery. It fails to reflect the value and contribution of women's work.

After studying Indian data collection system, feminists raised questions in various national and international forums to the faults of the Indian data collection systems with regard to women's work repeatedly. Indian data collection system is slightly better than other developing country's data collection system. Socio, cultural practices restrict women to disclose their participation in productive work done both for household and for society in many developing countries. Efforts were put to restructure the existing data collection system to include women's work in both public and private spaces in all developing countries internationally.

8.4　WHAT CONSTITUTES A WOMEN'S WORK?

We need to analysis the pattern and conditions of women's and men's work to know the differences. A basic difference observes in the work style practiced by women and men are that, while women predominantly work in indoors, men spend the major time in outdoor work. In other words, women work is essentially restricted in the private sphere of "households". Men work outside the "household" boundary i.e public sphere. This is not to say that women do not perform any outdoor work or men do not perform any indoor work within the private sphere of household. But women spend considerable percentage of time in household works and men spend considerable percentage of time in outside activities. The choice of the domain of work for men and women are not based on their freewill. It is primarily the result of delegation of responsibilities by traditional norms and cultures. Traditional norms allocate house making or house keeping work (often termed "house work" or "domestic work") to women in almost all societies.

Moreover, all developed countries including India registered large percentage of agriculture and household based production units. In these agriculture and household based production units, family members work as non-wage employer. These non-wage employment activities are part of the subsistence or non market production. In these household economic units, work and income are divided between men and women according to some set patterns. While these patterns of divisions of labour between men and women are not identical in all regions within India. There is a general tendency to assign work for women combining with their house hold tasks. The household tasks are regarded as their primary responsibility for women. Therefore their productive task tends to be mainly confined to the private, indoor domain of the household. Also their participation in the household productive activities is likely to be intermittent, casual and often marginal. This is generally true. But, women are required to involve major part of the day in productive work along with or some sacrifice of their regular household tasks including care of children and the aged during busy agriculture seasons.

Let us examine the reasons for under-enumeration of women's work which is not duly valued.

8.5　UNDER ENUMERATION AND UNDER VALUATION OF WOMEN'S WORK

We have seen women's involvement in household as well as productive activities in section 8.4. Most of the time, the contribution of women's productive activities are not recognized. It is invisible most of the time. When the statistical enumerator approaches family members to note the contribution of work of the each family member, they tend contact male members of the family to take note of the family member's contribution. Due to the non recognition of women's contribution combined with socialization process, male members value less on women's work. So they fail to inform enumerators on women's contribution.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1:

Note: i)   Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii)   Compare your answer with the Course material of this unit.

1)   What is 'Enumeration?

....

....

....

....

....

2)   What are the roles of NSSO and Census of India?

....

....

....

....

....

8.6   DECENT WORK

The concept of ' decent work for all' was put forth by the International Labour Organization (ILO) to promote opportunities for both male and female , to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equality, security and human dignity. The four pillars decent work concept is:

- Employment and enterprise

- Rights at work

- Social protection and

- Dialogue

These pillars constitute an important point of reference that aims to make societies more just, sustainable and equitable, while focusing on empowerment of marginalized groups in society. Women's access to decent work is particularly affected by the burden of combining reproductive and productive work. This stress of double burden of work is not accounted for in traditional conceptualization of work which focuses on paid work and do not examine the implications of reproductive labour.

8.7   GLOBALISATION AND WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

Globalization, the word coined by American management schools, is the phenomenon related to survival of companies that promptly and ruthlessly adjust to global completion for market and production. It means free-trade, unfettered markets and integration of economies of nation in the world. Globlisation is

driven by self-interest of trans-national and multinational corporations. Globlisation of products has led to feminization of labout force and feminisation of poverty. Economic activity of women has increased over the past three decades but they concentrated in low paid jobs, at the lowest rung of occupational hierarchy. Forces of globlisation in developing countries have enhanced the burden of poor and tribal women due to commercialization of natural resources thus depriving their options of sustainable livelihood. In agriculture sector, the international players have created price fluations resulting into distress among female farmers and cultivators. Thus, it can be seen that globlisation has changed labour market context for women in the economy.

In the following sections we will look into how globlisation has changed the face of women's employment.

8.8 FEMINIZATION OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR FORCE

World over, more and more women are joining the workforce. Global employment has given rise to two new developments; first crowding of employment market by women and secondly, conditions for employment of women have become precarious and flexible. The United Nations termed these patterns of women's employment as ' feminization of employment' .Most of the women have a 'patchwork career' because of interruptions in employment as a result of child bearing, child/elderly care or unemployment/ occasional/ part time employment available to them. A life long full time employment with security has become exceptional in a globalised market driven economy across the world.

Trans-national companies have created new avenues of employment for women in their domestic units or through subcontracting. Cheap, flexible and unorganized female employment is regarded as the 'diving board 'of the world's economy. Feminization of labour is used to describe in following ways:

1)   Increase in Female Labour Participation Rate

2)   Fall or stagnation in Male Labour Participation Rate

3)   labour option of employment of women for work in informal/part time/ contractual/ home based work as needed by the employer.

Let us now read how women workers are marginalized through informalization of their labour.

8.9 MARGINALIZATION AND INFORMALIZATION

Women's advantage as workers is because of their lower wages and their inability to oppose poor work conditions. In a globalised market this ensures the country remains attractive and competitive for foreign investments. Globalization has created new possibilities for exploitation of women workers through low wages, denial of rights to organize, migration to urban centres of production and restricted or poor living conditions for migrant workers. Thus, globalization has led to social and economic marginalization of women workforce. Women are found to be over represented in informal sector because of the flexibilities of work involved

in such occupations and activities. These are advantageous for women also, given their reproductive and care giving roles in the form of unpaid labour. These societal expectations from the women are exploited by the employers to maximize their profit. Thus, women workers form the backbone of informal economies in countries across the world.

8.10 SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORKPLACE

Sexual harassment at the workplace is an important issue related to the safety and dignity of women at workplaces. It is an expression of male power over women due to patriarchy. It is often an extension of violence against women in everyday life, targeting and exploiting the vulnerability of women at the workplace.

The land mark *Vishaka* judgment by Supreme Court 1997 defined sexual harassment as "any unwelcome sexually determined behaviour such as physical contact, a demand or request for sexual favours, sexually-coloured remarks, showing pornography and any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature." The Supreme Court also noted that the sexual harassment is the violation of basic human rights of women. The judgment also provided guidelines for employers to redress and prevent sexual harassment at workplace. It also provided guidelines for the employers to make a discrimination-free working environment for women employees. The judgment said that it was the duty of the employer or other responsible persons in work places to provide women with a safe working atmosphere, to prevent sexual harassment as well as provide mechanisms for resolution of complaints through the establishment of complaints committees.

The court further directed that every workplace must constitute a committee for receiving and inquiring into complaints of sexual harassment. As per the directives of the court, every such committee should consist of members of whom at least 50% are women. A chairperson of the committee should be a woman. An external member from a social work / non-profit organization has to be appointed in the committee. Along with above said steps, the following preventive steps need to be taken by the employer. These are

- discussing the issue affirmatively in workers' meetings and employer-employee meetings;

- prominent display of guidelines to create awareness of the right of women employees;

- prominent display of members of the complaints committee and their contact details;

- The employers are also responsible for formulating an anti-sexual harassment policy; and

- Constitution of a complaints committee to investigate, mediate, counsel and resolve cases of sexual harassment.

The following case study gives clarity about the sexual harassment at workplace.

Case of S.

S is a post graduate in commerce. She joined in a multinational company as a trainee. She was appointed as a purchase officer within few years. After

confirmation on the job, S started reporting to G. G is a Senior Vice President. Initially G requested sexual favours from S. Upon her refusal, he demanded sexual favours from S. When S refused to succumb his pressure, she relieved from the position and given much lower position. She needs to do only filing and photocopying work in office. G telephoned S at her residence number late in the night. S registered a police complaint. She also put in a verbal complaint of harassment to one of the Directors of the company. The Director along with the Human Resource (HR) department investigated the complaint. The complaint was closed after giving a verbal warning to G. Following this action, reporting of S was changed. However, sexual harassment resumed when that particular Director resigned from the company. G was now the senior most in the company. During this period, S complained to the HR manager several times orally about severe harassment. However he did not take any action. S complained in writing to the Vice President (Human Resources) based at the head office. As result of her complaint to the head office there was escalation of harassment to S from G. S was isolated at workplace. S once again complained in writing about the sexual harassment and hostile working conditions to the HR department both at the local and head office. In response to the complaint, S was served with a suspension letter and a charge sheet for not performing her duty properly. The company terminated S from the job on the basis of findings of the department enquiry against her. In the meantime due to mounting pressure from the State Commission for Women and the High Court, two enquiries were carried out by the company to look into the complaint of sexual harassment i.e. one by the overseas management and other by a sexual harassment complaints committee. However the S was not informed about the findings of the enquiries. S continued to struggle both in the labour and the industrial court for reinstatement of employment.

Ref: http://www.fes-india.org/media/GBV-SH/Paper_Anagha_Sarpotdar.pdf downloaded on 8th June, 2016.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii)   Compare your answer with the Course material of this unit.

1)   What is meant by "Decent Work"

....

....

....

....

....

2)   Write a note on informalization and feminization of women's employment

....

....

....

....

8.11 SEX WORK

Ministry of Women and Child Development (2007) reported the presence of 2.8 million sex workers in India, with approximately 35% of them entering the trade before the age of 18.

Other sources, such as Human Rights Watch, put the figure at 15 million, with Mumbai alone having more than 100,000 sex workers. In addition to sex workers in brothels, devadasi, jogini and such other traditional systems force girls into prostitution, particularly those from lower castes and classes. (http://www.womenwelfare.org/Forced%20to%20Entertain.html)There are three approaches to sex work – legalization, decriminalization and sex work as a human right. Decriminalization refers to removing the application of criminal law on sex work.   Legalization refers to an official recognition of sex work as a form of work (like all others) by the state, and issuing licenses and regulating conditions of work. The human rights approach, advanced by sex workers themselves, argues that sex workers are entitled to basic and fundamental human rights as every other woman is, in addition to the right to solicit for sex work. The most contentious debate around sex work is whether women can consent to engage in sex work or whether all sex work is the result of force, coercion, threat and duress.

8.12 SERVICISATION

The prominence of service sector in women's employment can not be ignored because of its growing importance in women's employment and their concentration in certain sections of service economy namely, education, health services and domestic work.

Service sector accounts for a large number of occupations and activities ranging from highly skilled and well paid jobs to unskilled and poorly paid activities. Within this sector community, social and personal services account for the largest chunk of women workers with an ever increasing concentration over the years. Though education and that too primary education accounts for the largest segment, the number of women engaged in services rendered under domestic work (cleaning, washing, cooking, child/elderly care services) shows a phenomenal increase. The sector of paid domestic work has become one of the most important sectors of women's work as unskilled workers in urban areas.

The discussion here reflects that women's employment is seen as a natural link to their care work and such engagements leave ample time with the woman worker to carry out her own domestic responsibilities namely, the unpaid care provided to the family.

8.13 GLASS CEILING

Women face two types of obstacles to enter into employment. Due to socialization process and patriarchy, society prefers women to choose traditional occupation. Women have to achieve work place equality in the chosen occupation. Secondly women face obstacles to move upward position in the chosen field. This is what is known as the 'glass-ceiling[1]". Organizations prefer to hire women in lower position. The occupation of lower position in the organizations by women results

less control over their work environment. Due to this, women have less decision making powers. Organization discriminates women on the basis of sex for promotions. They prefer to keep women in lower wages. They get very less opportunities for promotion and upward mobility.

8.14 DOUBLE BURDEN

The entry of women into the labour market has not meant any lessening of domestic chores. Most women are still solely or mostly in charge of housework and child care. In order to fulfil all their responsibilities at the workplace and at home, women end up working longer hours. This phenomenon is called 'double shift' or 'double burden'.

Let us read about more issues affecting women's employment.

Migration

Women constitute a growing population of the workers who migrate to urban centres or to other countries where their work is better paid. Most commonly they work as domestic helps, nursing personnel or in leisure industry.

There is a close relationship between informalization of employment and migration. Various reasons contribute for migration. We can list the reasons for migration as following:

1) Decline of primary sector economic activities contributes for rural urban migration.

2) Workers migrate from one nation to other on short and long term contracts in search of better opportunities.

3) Internal conflict and war contribute for international migration.

Migrant workers face lots of problems. Among migrant population, women and children are worst affected. The place of stay of migrant workers may be in bad conditions due to low capacity of the migrant to pay rent for accommodation. Migrant workers tend to join in informal employment. These workers face many of the same problems as other workers in similar segments of the informal economy, but they also have the additional problems associated with their ambiguous legal status. They generally fall outside the laws of their own countries but are not included in the laws of the receiving countries. As a result, they fall into the category of people who do not have 'the right to have rights' (Kabeer, 2007).

Like other migrant workers, women join in informal employment due low education and skill. These employments include domestic work, vending, caring of children and elders and others. Lack of awareness on rights of the migrant workers in the informal employment, they may get exploited. Children may find difficulties in joining in formal school. Women find difficulties in providing care to their own children due to long hours of work and low payment. Women and children may face sexual exploitation. Lack of infrastructure like sanitation and water, migrant workers faces severe health hazards. They may lack social security due to migration. Accessing health and education facilities by the migrant workers especially for women and children are challenge. Female migrant workers who often don't possess legal papers are forced to work under worst conditions and are often victims of sexual violence.

Increasingly 'flexible 'labour markets have reduced workers rights to unionize and thus has led to worker's weakened bargaining power. As a result of globlisation work has become more in secured as jobs have shifted from formal, legally regulated large firms to smaller and informal establishments and home based work. These jobs are often more accessible to women but lie outside of the protection of labour laws and social benefits. Part-time workers in the formal sector too face these insecurities.

The lack of support system for unpaid family care responsibilities aggravate problems and hit poor and vulnerable women the hardest. Women workers end up being 'time-poor' and ' money poor' which contributes their high morbidity and low well-being.

Social protection means interventions and initiatives that support individual, household and communities in their efforts to prevent and overcome social and economic risks like gender discrimination and exclusion, retirement, retrenchment, maternity benefits, old age death etc.

Gender related concerns and constraints not only limits women's access to labour market but also confine women workers to more poorly remunerated, more casual and insecure forms of waged and self- employments without access to social protection.

8.15 SUMMING UP

We have read issues related to gender and employment so far in this Unit. Women face issues related to their employment before entering into work. The most and significant issues related to their work are non recognition of their work. This was discussed elaborately in the section enumeration of work. After entering into employment they face many issues like sexual harassment, double burden, informalization and glass ceiling. We have discussed elaborately in this Unit.

8.16 KEYWORDS

Human Resources: Human Resources are the people who make up the workforce of an organization.

8.17 REFERENCES

IGNOU. 2014. Gender Issues in Work. Unit 1. Block 1. MGSE 009 Pg. 12-13

IGNOU. .2014. Gender Issues in Work. Unit 13. Block 3. MGSE-009. pg. 76-77 and 81-82.

IGNOU 2015. Women in the Economy, MWG 011 Block 1, unit 1&2, Block 6 units123

IGNOU 2012. Gender and Power, MWG 002 , Block 4, unit 4

Kimmel Michael S .2008. The Gendered society 3rd edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

http://www.fes-india.org/media/GBV-SH/Paper_Anagha_Sarpotdar.pdf

http://www.womenwelfare.org/Forced%20to%20Entertain.html accessed on 27-06-2016

8.18 QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND PRACTICE

1) What are the reasons for not including the contribution of women's work in enumeration?

2) List the Visakha Judgment suggestions.

3) What are 'Glass Ceiling' and 'Double Burden'?