



## **Employment of agricultural labourers in Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh**

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### **Abstract**

Human resources in an economy constitute a significant input in the production process of goods and services. The study of human resources their quality and problems is of immense use in manpower planning in both developing as well as developed economies. The agriculture is the major sector of Indian economy. Most of the population is depending upon agriculture which is contributing about half of the national income in the country. The agricultural labour constitutes an overwhelmingly predominant aution of the rural workforce. The agricultural labour occupies the lowest rung of the rural ladder. Agricultural labourers constitute the largest role of the labourers and they constitute one of the biggest slices of Indian population. The agricultural labour, total workers are fast growing which is purely depending on wage paid employment in India. The farmers will try to substitute family labour in place of hired labour because of their low capacity to pay. If the population grows at the present rate accompanied by low industrial development, the unemployment problem in the agriculture becomes serious and the agricultural labourers become the victims in that vicious circle. The objective is to study the pattern of employment of agricultural labour for different crops and to find out the nature of employment for male and female labour separately in Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh. The primary data included information collected directly from the sample respondents through a field survey in Nellore district. In addition to primary data, a good bit of information was collected from secondary sources. The suggestions can be made for the improvement of socio-economic positions of the agricultural labourers. The better implementation of legislative measures, creating alternative sources of employment, protection of women and child labourers, public works programmes should be for longer period in year, improving the working conditions, regulations of hours of work, improvements in agriculture sector; the credit at cheaper rates of interest on easy terms of payments for undertaking subsidiary occupations, proper training for improving the skills of farm labourers and co-operative farming.

**Keywords:** Employment, Nellore, Production, contributing

### **Introduction**

Human resources in an economy constitute a significant input in the production process of goods and services. The study of human resources their quality and problems is of immense use in manpower planning in both developing as well as developed economies. The knowledge relating to human resources is important since human beings constitute the subjective factor working to produce goods and the economic progress of a country depends upon the welfare of the subjective factor of the workforce. It is more necessary to have an intimate knowledge of human factor in India where labour intensive techniques are wide spread. The agriculture is the major sector of Indian economy. The most of the population is depending upon agriculture which is contributing about half of the national income in the country. The agricultural labour constitutes an overwhelmingly predominant aution of the rural workforce. The agricultural labour occupies the lowest rung of the rural ladder. They are basically unskilled and unorganized and their conditions are at the lowest ebb. Their problems are complex which necessitate immediate attention from the planners and policy makers as their welfare is predominantly an agricultural economy. The character of Indian economic development reflects in the nature and magnitude of agricultural development of the country. The agricultural labourers constitute the largest role of the labourers and they constitute one of the biggest slices of Indian population. The agricultural labour, total workers

are fast growing which is purely depending on wage paid employment. But one thing here worth mentioning is that cultivators are also growing. As the cultivator population has increased, the precipitate size of land holding is becoming smaller. The most of the prosperous farmers are becoming marginal and small farmers due to division of land among heirs of succeeding generations. So in future the problem of agricultural labour will become more complex. The farmers will try to substitute family labour in place of hired labour because of their low capacity to pay. If the population grows at the present rate accompanied by low industrial development, the unemployment problem in the agriculture becomes serious and the agricultural labourers become the victims in that vicious circle.

It is of great importance to note that agricultural labour is provided mostly by backward classes and other depressed classes who are economically poor and socially downtrodden since the days immemorial. The most of the scheduled caste population is depending upon the wage paid employment in agriculture to eke out their livelihood. They have been living like dumb driven cattle. Most of them possess no land. Some of them have cultivating rights in tiny bits of land where they are employed for a part of the year, but the extent of employment and earnings secured on their farm is so limited that they are compelled to supplement it by hiring out their labour on other holding. Now the trend is changing and the Government is taking sincere efforts to remove the serfdom of these neglected

sections and trying to uplift them economically and socially. In spite of all the efforts to uplift them from the low social status, they are yet in the same stage with a helpless state. Most of them are illiterate and so they are not aware of the existing legislation and policies. They never had the courage to demand a high wage because of low social status and poverty. Their appalling conditions of poverty are too well known.

The agriculture labourers have to work in cold and hot weather from sunrise to sunset. Their wages are low when compared to industrial labourers. They are generally custom bound. They suffer from many social handicaps and majority of these handicaps are interconnected with economic problems which overweigh other problem. The agricultural labourers cannot earn their living in spite of sweating labour. The low incomes only enable them to have low levels of living. The low standard of living further causes social disabilities and malnutrition. This ultimately results in low efficiency of labour leading to low labour productivity in agriculture. Thus the problems of agricultural labourers are interconnected with each other. Employment is a state of being engaged in productivity work. Continuous engagement in such work with sufficient amount of labour put in and adequate reward flowing from it constitute full employment in agriculture labourers is a rare phenomenon. There are seasonal, regional and structural variations. These agricultural labourers are suffering due to unemployment, underemployment and low wages. Due to low employment potential in other sectors, most of the population is forced to be dependent on agriculture. Their houses are hardly fit for human living. The phenomenon of unemployment in agriculture which is the major source of livelihood of the rural population of our country is the result of maladjustment between the demand for and supply of labour in this sector. The demand for labour in agriculture lags behind the increase in the size of population and consequently in the number of labourers. The factors like diminution in the size of holding, abundance of agricultural labour, employment of family labour by small cultivators and existence of seasonality in cultivation are mainly responsible for the creation of unemployment among agricultural labour.

The employment in agriculture is mostly seasonal and intermittent in character. The labourers suffer with seasonal unemployment. During the periods of peak agricultural activity, the demand for labour well is high and during the off season they have to face acute unemployment problem. In the areas where multiple cropping is practiced, the labourers get employment throughout the year with minimum period of unemployment. In the areas where single crop is grown extensively, the labourers get employment only during the period of activity. For example, when only one crop like paddy is grown during the fixed seasons, labour gets employment only during sowing, transplantation, weeding and harvesting. At other times they do not get any employment. Within the various categories of agricultural labourers, conditions of annual labourers are more secure than casual labourers. During famines, scarcity of food grains and during the years of crop failures, they are forced to lead a life of misery with lack of food and bare necessities of life. In such cases they borrow money from the prosperous landlords during the periods of scarcity to meet the needed expenses of the family. As a result they are

forced to work for the indebted landlords until they repay the debt. They are even forced to work for low wages to the creditor landlord until the repayment of the debt. Thus these labourers are leading a life of misery with acute poverty. There is little uniformity in regard to agricultural wages and methods of payment and these vary not only from state to state, but also from district to district and even from villages to villages. In certain occupations women workers are paid lower rates than men. The low wages are responsible for their sub human standard of living. It is highly difficult for an agricultural labourer to make his both ends meet with these low wages. The inevitable result is that they are mostly semi-starved, not having sufficient physical strength to perform all agricultural operations in a proper manner. The chronic imbalance between labour supply and complementary resource in agriculture is normally expected to result in setting up of wage floors at subsistence levels over large parts of the country. The productivity of Indian agriculture, about the lower in the world, seriously limits the employer's capacity to pay, so that few can afford to raise the wages above the prevailing level. Any effective external pressure to raise wages will be at the cost of employment. If these basic weaknesses of the economy are not effectively dealt with, all efforts to improve the lot of agricultural labourers will prove futile. Although several years of planned development have passed, still the conditions of agricultural labour are miserable and the meager incomes are resulting in low standard of living. The agricultural labour is provided mostly by BC/SC/ST and other depressed classes who are socially handicapped from the earlier days and are leading a life of misery. So the present study has been undertaken with the purpose of revealing the position of employment of agricultural labour in Andhra Pradesh. The objectives are to study the pattern of employment of agricultural labour for different crops and find out the nature of employment for male and female labour separately in the study. The hypotheses are the patterns of employment of agricultural labour depend upon crops and the nature of employment is different in males and females in the study. To examine the objectives of this study, relevant data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data included information collected directly from the sample respondents through a field survey in Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh. The schedules were pretested and necessary improvements were made before conducting the survey. In addition to primary data, a good bit of information was collected from secondary sources.

### Sample Design

A multi-stage stratified random sampling frame is used for collection of the primary data. On the basis of proportion of agriculture labour to total labour, the Mandals were stratified into those with proportion of agriculture labour below 50 per cent and those with proportion of agriculture labour above 50 per cent are classified in Nellore District. From each stratum, one mandal was randomly selected. From each mandal two villages is selected randomly. In the district 4 villages were studied, the total of 300 sample respondents was drawn on random basis. The study was conducted with a scientific outlook to find out the causes responsible for the prevailing employment conditions of agricultural labourers therefore all the necessary and appropriate methods of research were used.

### Selection of Agricultural Labour

The concept of agricultural labour is defined precisely for the purpose of study. Agricultural labourers are the persons who are employed on another person's land to perform various tasks in connection with planting, preparation of the soil, ploughing, sowing, weeding, harvesting etc. Their labour is performed under the direction of someone else and they work for remuneration in each of in kind or in both. The above definition of agricultural labour was adopted after consideration of the other concepts of the agricultural labour, envisaged in other studies. It was decided to cover all the agricultural labourers existing in the villages of study.

### Employment of Agricultural Labourers

The agricultural labourers both annual or casual labour do perform various activities and these activities can be conveniently classified as agricultural and non-agricultural activities. The agricultural activities are concerned to work as agricultural labourer concerning with performing agricultural operations. The non-agricultural activities are the works performed in sectors other than agriculture and self-employment refers to performing work of their own. The extent of employment of agricultural labourers (operations wise) is presented in the Table-I and Table – II.

**Table 1:** Employment of Agricultural Labour in Various Activities in Nellore District Andhra Pradesh (Male)

S. No	Classification of Working	No. of Man Days Worked
I.	Agricultural Labour (Working Days)	
	Ploughing	1,704
	Preparatory operations	1,777
	Sowing	276
	Wedding	461
	Harvesting and threshing	1,367
	Sugarcane cutting and Jiggery making operations	1,740
	Other	1,043
	Total	8,595
	Average No. of days Employed per labourer	260.45
II	Non-Agricultural work	
	Total working days	467
	Average No. of days per casual labourer	22.24
III	Particulars of Labour in Self-Employment	
	Total working days of self-employed labourers	329
	Average No. of days worked per labourer in self – employment	19.35

Source: Filed Data.

From Table-I found that the average number of days of employment of casual male labourers in agricultural activities is found to be 260.45 days and in non-agricultural activities and self-employment, they are employed for 22.24 and 19.35 days respectively. All together the total number of days employed in all works put together comes to 302.04 days. The extend of the days of employment of male

labourers are not so favourable when compared to casual male labourer. On the whole the causal male as well as female agricultural labourers are more engaged in agriculture and the employment in non-agricultural work is not considerable. Especially the employments are female agriculture labour employment activities are presented in Table- II.

**Table 2:** Employment of Agricultural Labour in various activities in Nellore Nellore Andhra Pradesh (Female)

S. No	Classification of Working	No. of Man Days Worked
I.	Agricultural Labour (Working Days)	
	Preparatory operations	593
	Sowing and Transplantation	1,984
	Weeding	3,271
	Harvesting and Threshing	3,072
	Others	363
	Total	9,283
	Average No. of days Employed per labourer	201.80
II	Non-Agricultural work	
	Total working days	363
	Average No. of days employed per labourer	19.15
III	Self-Employment	
	Total working days of self-employed labourers	497
	Average No. of days working days per labourer in self- employment	41.41

Source: Field Data.

From Table-II evident that the average number of days of employment of casual female labourers in agriculture stood at 201.80 days and in non-agricultural work and self-employment they are engaged for 19.15 and 41.41 days respectively. Altogether the total number of days in all

works out together comes to 262.36 days. From this we can safely state that the position of employment of casual female labourers is not unfavorable. The employment and unemployment of agricultural are presented in Table-III.

**Table 3:** Employment and Unemployment of Agricultural Labour in Nellore District of Andhra Pradesh

S. No	Classification of Working	No. of Days worked
1.	No. of days worked in agriculture	269
2.	No. of days worked in non-agricultural work	56
3.	No. of days absence from work	41
4.	Reasons for Absence	
	Sickness = 4	
	Social function = 7	
	Festivals = 11	
	Bad Weather = 9	

Source: Field Data

Table-III shows that there is only one labourer who is working as an agricultural labourer in the study area. He has been employed in agriculture for 269 days. It is a difficult task to work out the extend of hours of employment per days because he is entrusted with various kinds of operations every day. As far as agricultural activities are concerned, he is engaged in them for 269 days. He was found working in non – agricultural operations for 56 days. The remaining days he is permitted to be absent from work due to various genuine reasons are social functions, festivals, sickness and bad weathers. The employment of agriculture labour crop wise in presented in Table-IV.

**Table 4:** Employment of Casual Agricultural Labour in Nellore District of Andhra Pradesh

S. No.	Crops	Total Man days Worked	
		Male	Female
1.	Paddy	2,380	4,516
2.	Sugarcane	3,544	2,138
3.	Ragi	180	515
4.	Ground-nut	2,209	1,645
5.	Chilies	12	75
6.	Tomato	9	31
7.	Others	261	363
	Total	8,595	9,283

**Table 5:** Reasons for Unemployment of Agricultural Labourers in Nellore District of Andhra Pradesh

S. No	Reasons	Total number of man days	Percentage of man days of each category to the total man days unemployed
1.	For want of work	4,460	47.95
2.	Sickness	727	7.82
3.	Social functions	1,088	11.70
4.	Bad weather	1,498	16.11
5.	Births and Deaths	659	7.08
6.	Festivals	869	9.34
	Total Man Days Unemployed	9,301	100.00

Source: Field Data.

From the Table-V observe that the reasons for unemployment are worked out. Out of the total unemployed man days of all the labourers studied want of work accounted for 47.95 per cent, sickness for 7.82 per cent, social functions for 11.70 per cent and bad weather for 16.11 per cent, birth and deaths for 7.08 per cent and festivals for 9.34 per cent in the study area.

Their low standard of living permits them to be satisfied with subsistence and low wage. Inadequate employment opportunities further aggravate the problem. No legislation can improve the conditions unless some drastic programmes are implemented to improve the conditions of the agrarian economy in general. The slow pace of industrialization is

Source: Field Data.

In Table –IV show that the employment of agricultural labourers according to crops were presented. The total man days worked by all the agriculture labourers were classified according crops. It is evident that sugarcane largely requires male labour than female labour and paddy requires mostly female labour than male labour. This can be attributed to the nature and intensity of operations which vary from crop to crop. In case of paddy it has become a tradition to employ female labour for transplantation, weeding and harvesting. The family labour of the cultivators does not participate to work in these operations as it is a tradition in the villages to use hired labour. So female labour use will be high in case of paddy than male labourers. Whereas the intensive and difficult nature of operation in case of sugarcane requires mostly labour. In the case of groundnut the requirements of hired labour is high. Due to heavy seasonal rush of work and the urgency to harvest immediately after the rains, most of the cultivators use immigrant labour in order to complete the activity quickly. The agriculture labourers in the villages are not in proportion to the area sown under groundnut. When we take the overall view in the case of food crops female labour use is high and in the case of commercial crops male labour use is generally high except in some instances.

**Unemployment**

Unemployment of agricultural labourers takes place during some days in the year due to several socio, economic reasons like want of work sickness, social functions, bad weather, birth and deaths and festivals. But the days unemployed due to want of work constitutes the real period of unemployment and requires recognition as such. The remaining may be treated as absence from work. Hence the extent of unemployment in terms of the total man days of all the labourers and the causes for the unemployment is worked out in Table- [V].

not able to absorb surplus manpower in agriculture. Until this pressure is wiped out from transforming surplus labour available in agriculture no sustained growth in the economy can be possible. The first possible solution to free the rural economy from this undesirable situation is to improve villages and small-scale industries which can absorb most of the rural manpower. If the rural economy is industrialized with this type of industries which are more labour intensive, they can generate rural employment. Agricultural development will be the best possible solution to improve the conditions of these labourers. Higher yield will enable the farmer to increase the wage rates which raise the standard of living of labourers. Most of the farmers are now

trying to use high yielding varieties of seeds and chemical fertilizers. Some of them are using tractors for cultivation purposes. Agricultural departments should work in the villages to create incentives to the farmers. Most of the villages development officers are not found to visit the villages as frequently as is necessary. In the villages of our present study most of the farmers reported during the present survey, that they do not know who the villages development officer is. The government should adopt strict measures for proper distribution of chemical fertilizers and high yielding varieties of seeds which, now most of the small cultivators with no political status can hardly have a chance to get. They are buying the fertilizers in the local market where the price is eventually high, which leads to high input costs and reduces the income of the farmers and it will have its indirect effect on agricultural labour. The small peasant is suffering due to exploitation by revenue authorities and also due to improper distribution of fertilizers etc. Establishment of branches of agricultural development offices in various regions of the block ensures contact between agricultural officials and the farmers frequently and help to increase agricultural development through intensive cultivation. This will enable the farmers pay high wages to labourers and also provide them more employment. The labour co-operatives should have to be encouraged to solve the problems of these laborers. These co-operatives can enable the labourers take up rural development programmes like road building, construction and several other activities which will provide employment and income to them. Those co-operatives should be established in several parts of the region to create increased demand for labour leading to rise in wage. The co-operatives should be provided with labour intensive activities which alone can provide more employment and high wage. Working of these co-operatives should be checked to make them work without corruption and immorality. As most of the agriculture labourers are landless, possible distribution of surplus lands will ensure the labourers to get some land of their own that provides at least some security to their standard of living. Land reforms should have to be implemented drastically in order to cope up with the situation. The measures taken by the Government to improve the conditions of agricultural labourers. The welfare programmes are implemented Cash scheme for Rural Employment (CSRE), Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Project (PIREP), Food for Works Programme (FWP), National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGP), National Scheme of Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) and Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). The following suggestions can be made for the improvement of socio-economic positions of the agricultural labourers. The better implementation of legislative measures, the creating alternative sources of employment, the protection of women and child labourers, the public works programmes should be for longer period in year, the improving the working conditions, the regulations of hours of work, the improvements in agriculture sector and the credit at cheaper rates of interest on easy terms of payments for undertaking subsidiary occupations, the proper training for improving the skills of farm labourers and Co-operative farming.

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