

# Periodic Research

## An Overview of Female Employment in Punjab

### Abstract

Indian women reap only in constitutional and legal provisions the benefits of a status of equality with men. They are not appraised as equal to men in various social as well as economic fields, despite strenuous efforts and policies made at the national and international level to improve the status of women. In the labour market, a considerable segmentation is experienced by them in terms of type, sector, location, region and payment in employment. So far as Punjab State of India is concerned, it holds back place amongst all other Indian states/UTs. So, in the present paper, an attempt has been made to explore the position of Punjab state regarding the total FWPR, in main as well as marginal FWPR in different categories and type of work in the national economy. It also compares the state with the topper states in terms of various aspects related to female employment.

**Keywords:** Female Employment, Female Work Participation Rate, Male Work Participation Rate

### Introduction

India is counted amongst the most important emerging economies of the world but employment situation in the country still remains poor mainly because of gender disparity on various fronts. No doubt, Indian women enjoy a status of equality with men but it can be seen only in the constitutional and legal provisions. In fact, the Indian women folk have come a long way to achieve the present positions. As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places. Economically too, especially in the labour market, a considerable segmentation is faced by them in terms of types, sector, location, region and payment in employment. Despite of increased mobility over the years, critical dualism and sometimes fragmentation persist in the labour market. Often, they have to pay a great deal of movement between places of residence and work, rural-to-rural and rural-to-urban migration is substantial, especially in terms of circular and temporary migration. Thus, women as compared to men, in general, are disadvantaged in the labour market. In addition to their low share in overall employment, most of them are engaged in low-productivity, low-income and insecure jobs.

Overall labour-force to population ratio in the age group 15 years and above is low (56 per cent) in India as compared to around two-thirds for the rest of the world. As a result, the Female Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in India is dismally low at 31 per cent, which is amongst the lowest in the world and the second lowest in South Asia after Pakistan (India Labour and Employment Report 2014: Highlights). Punjab, one of the developed states of the country known for its marked contribution in the green revolution and better economic standards, has not concentrated well towards its labour market especially for females. Hence, the state lags much behind in respect of position of female employment amongst all other States and UTs of India, notwithstanding the high level of infrastructural development and education.

However, with the recognition of increasing importance of gender equality, Female Work Force Participation in Punjab has been improving gradually. From a minuscule share of one percent in 1971, it improved gradually to 4.4 percent by 1991 and furthermore reached to the level of 19 percentage points in 2001. Notwithstanding again due to certain reasons, the share has declined by 5 percentage points and fell down to the level of 13 percentage points by the latest census 2011. On the contrary, Male Work Participation Rate has remained more than 50 percent over the period of time and increased to the level of 55.2 percent in 2011 (Census, 2011). Thus, the workforce participation rate of females in Punjab is only 13.9 percent against the male work participation rate of 55.2 percent as

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compared to national average figures of 25.5 percent and 53.3 percent respectively (Census, 2011). In other words, WPR of females in Punjab is less than one-fourth of WPR of their male counterparts and is nearly half of FWPR at the national level. Thus, gender gap in this respect is very high in Punjab, which ranged from 42 percentage points to more than 50 percentage points and presently, it is more than 40 percentage points.

So, in the present paper, an attempt has been made to explore the position of Punjab State regarding female employment. The position with respect to total, main as well as marginal work, in different categories, type and nature of work in the national economy is explored. It also compares the state figures with the topper state's average regarding female employment.

### Review of Literature

Lahoti and Swaminathan have examined the relationship between the level of net domestic product and women's economic activity and education in the states. It is found that there is no significant relationship between level of economic development and FLFP. North-Eastern states have experienced an increase in women's economic activity with increase in NSDP, while states in northern and southern India have experienced a decline in women's economic activity with increase in NSDP. Hence, it is suggested that a different set of policies will be needed to encourage women to overcome social and cultural constraints to joining the labour force.

Kaur & Kaur inspected the trends and patterns and various determinants of Female Work Force Participation (FWFP) across Punjab, during 1991 and 2001. It is revealed that there is a huge difference between male and female work participation for India and Punjab. Thus, the sex ratio, literacy rate, socio-economic and house hold conditions like poverty and male work participation rate affect the FLFP. Therefore, it is suggested that discrimination of wages and sex should be removed,

women labour's union should be organized and various employment schemes and modern technological programs should be started to encourage the participation of women in the labour force.

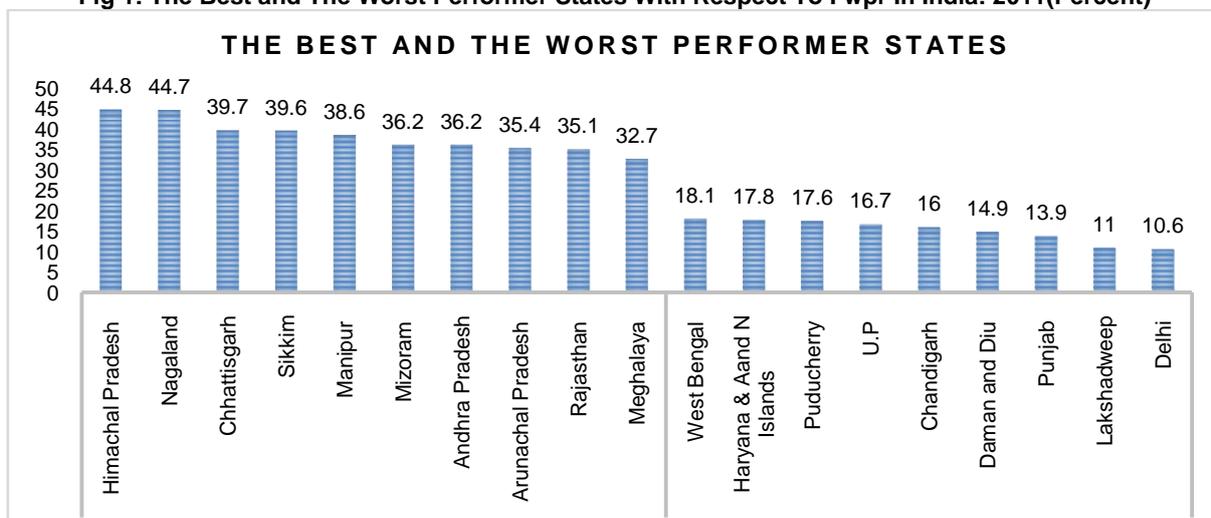
The paper by Andres et.al. describe that factors such as educational attainment, socioeconomic status, and household composition largely contributed to the drop of female participation in the labour market. It also suggests that stability in family income, due to the increasing share of regular wage earners and declining share of casual labour in the composition of family labor supply, has led female family members to choose dropping out of, rather than joining, the labor force.

Sarkar et.al. analyse employment transitions of working-age women in India. Using a nationally representative panel dataset, they show that women are not only participating less in the labour force, but also dropping out at an alarming rate. They find that an increase in income of other members of the household leads to lower entry and higher exit probabilities of women. The importance of cultural and economic factors, large public workfare programs in explaining the declining workforce participation also play a vital role.

### Punjab's standing in the Worst Performer States in FWPR

In terms of ranking, Punjab state falls in the category of the worst performer states, however the States of Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Haryana, Punjab and Tripura have changed their relative position in the last ten years. The relative position of Uttaranchal, Assam, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra is among the major states and Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Dadra and Nagar Haveli among the minor states/union territories. The state of Manipur has retained its same position in ranking in 2011 which it had during 2001. The performance of different states in terms of the best and the worst performing states in FWPR in India in 2011 is demonstrated in Figure 1.

Fig 1: The Best and The Worst Performer States With Respect To Fwpr In India: 2011(Percent)



Source: Researchers' calculations from Census of India, 2011.

It is analyzed in the above table that the top ten best performer states in India with regard to FWPR in 2011 are Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Chhattisgarh, Sikkim, Manipur, Mizoram, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Meghalaya as all of these are having more than 30 percent females work participation rate. The major improvement in statistics of female labour force is due to recognition of women's unpaid work while defining the female work force during 2001. But still many household duties of women are neglected which consider them secondary earners. Moreover, the implementation of MGNREGA in 2006 among all the districts of India has shown a positive impact on economic activity and the participation rate of women in labour force of rural areas has improved. No doubt, it is not related to any agriculture or allied activities but it ensures the work for women, men at the equal level for 100 days in a year (Chowdhury, 2011). In the southern regions like, A.P. and Arunachal Pradesh, most of the female labour force is involved in the informal sector i.e. in manufacturing sector. Majority of female workers in H.P are involved in agriculture and cultivation work due to the small land holdings in hilly areas and thus the proportion of female marginal workers has been increasing. The states of Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Sikkim are good in trade and tourism; hence, these occupations positively stimulate the female work force.

Punjab state, the third lowest, falls in the category of the worst performer states in female employment. However, the other bottom ten or worst performer states in this regard in India which have even below 20 percent female work participation rate are West Bengal, Haryana, A and N islands, Puducherry, U.P, Chandigarh, Daman and Diu, Lakshadweep and Delhi. There are several reasons for the lower participation of females in work force. It is influenced by social norms governing gender roles and responsibilities as much as it is by economic and structural factors. The factors which earlier influenced the female labour force to opt out of labour market were mainly age at marriage, household size (Clog; 1982); social restrictions on the lifestyles of women tend to become more rigid to household work (Kingdon and Unni, 2001; Esha Chatterjee et.al. 2011). Increase in educational level, household responsibilities, lack of technical skills of older cohort of women, high household economic status, double burden of domestic work as well as outside employment which compel them to be willing to opt out of employment (Olsen & Mehta, 2006; Mahapatro. S; 2013). There are some other studies which find the

reasons of recent change in employment pattern. In rural areas, it is correlated with the period of distress, lack of saving or access to credit, crisis in agriculture sector (Attanasio et al, (2005); Abraham 2009; Himanshu 2011; Bhalotra and Umana-Aponte 2012). In urban areas, it may be due to the lack of job opportunities, lack of vocational training, frictional and structural changes in the economy, global recession which also adversely affect the share market etc. and foreign direct investment. But recently, structural and policy changes have brought out changes in the traditional thinking and employment pattern.

### Categories and Types of Female Employment in Punjab

Economically, for a long period, Punjab state enjoyed top position but since 1992-93 (Human Development Report, 2004), the state has been lagging far behind. Among other factors, it is lesser participation of its human resources especially of women in economic activities which can be held responsible. FWPR as compared to MWPR is much less in Punjab. The questions like-Where Punjab state is positioned among other states and UTs of India in terms of WPR? and the position of Punjab's women in total work participation; main and marginal work; in all the categories and types of employment as compared to other states and UTs of India further reveals the true picture.

### Females as Total, Main and Marginal Workers in Punjab

A worker is a person whose main activity is participation in any economically productive activity. Such participation can be physical or mental in nature. Work involves not only actual work but also effective supervision and direction of work. It also includes unpaid work on farm or in family enterprise (Census, 2011). In NSSO, the number of persons/person-days employed per thousand persons/ person-days is referred to as Work-Force Participation Rates (WFPR) or Worker-Population Ratio (WPR; NSSO 68<sup>th</sup> Round 2011-12). Table 1 demonstrates the proportion of female workers in total, main and marginal work in the state of Punjab and compares the relative figures with that of national average and topper state. The rate of female work participation in Punjab (13.9) is near to less than half of the matching figure of the national average (25.5) but less than one-third of the topper state Himachal Pradesh (44.8). The rank of Punjab among all the states and UTs of India, in total female work participation rate is 33<sup>rd</sup> which is third last followed by Delhi and Lakshadweep in 2011 which is poor than 2001 (25<sup>th</sup> rank) but slightly better than 1991 i.e. 34<sup>th</sup> among all the Indian states.

**Table 1: Females as Total, Main and Marginal Workers in Punjab**

| Female WPR                     | Punjab's Rank | Value (%) | State with the highest proper | Value (%) | National Average |
|--------------------------------|---------------|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------|------------------|
| Female Work Participation Rate | 33            | 13.9      | Himachal Pradesh              | 44.8      | 25.5             |
| Female WPR in main work        | 16            | 65.1      | Chandigarh                    | 90.5      | 59.6             |
| Female WPR in marginal work    | 18            | 34.9      | J & K                         | 70        | 40.4             |

Source: Researchers own calculation from Census report, 2011

Those *workers* who work for the *major* part of the reference period (i.e. 6 months or more) are termed as *Main Workers*. Those *workers* who do not work for the *major* part of the reference period (i.e. less than 6 months) are termed as *Marginal Workers*. While analyzing the Punjab's position in employment for female main workers, it is found that Punjab occupies 16<sup>th</sup> position among all the Indian states is having 65 percent of females in main work as compared to 59.6 percent at the national level whereas the state has much difference with the topper state/ UT, Chandigarh (90.5) where women in the large proportion work for more time period in year. The reason being that it is the capital of two states, Punjab and Haryana and is considered as very important place for the investment by other nations as well as states and thus, provide more job opportunities. The percentage has doubled from 2001 when it was 32.6 and 30.1 in 1991 and the position of Punjab improved in the all Indian states from 28<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> during the period of 1991 to 2001. It means Punjab has been improving in terms of Female WPR in main work.

So far as the position of Punjab with regard to female marginal workers among all the Indian states is concerned; the state occupies 18<sup>th</sup> rank with the contribution of 34.9 percent of female marginal workers, it is good that it is substantially less than that of national average (40.4) while Jammu & Kashmir (70), Odisha and Jharkhand (66.1) and Himachal Pradesh (58.9) have the larger proportion of females as marginal workers. This is due to the reason of high seasonal variations and territorial matters that the majority of women work for lesser period in a year which increases the marginalization of female workers. On the contrary, in H.P more females in rural area, work in small holdings of land while in other two respective states, women work as marginal workers due to high poverty and illiteracy.

Thus, as compared to about half of the states/ UTs, the proportion of female marginal workers is less it indicates that more females in the state of Punjab as compared to the national average work as main workers whereas comparatively lesser females are involved in marginal work. But the overall situation is such that lesser females in Punjab are engaged in economic activities as compared to the national average and much lesser than the topper

**Table 2: Share of Female Employment in different categories of Employment in Punjab**

| Ag/Cult/HHI/OW     | Punjab's Rank | Value (%) | State with the highest proportion | Value (%) | National Average (%) |
|--------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| Agriculture        | 21            | 19.1      | Bihar                             | 60.8      | 41.1                 |
| Cultivation        | 28            | 9.9       | Himachal Pradesh                  | 76.2      | 24                   |
| Household Industry | 5             | 7.5       | West Bengal                       | 16.8      | 5.7                  |
| Other Work         | 9             | 63.4      | Chandigarh                        | 97.3      | 29.2                 |

Source: Researcher's own calculation from Census report, 2011

Household industry work does not require a large number of workers or funds to run the work. It can be conducted by the head of the household himself or herself and/or by the members of the household at home or within the village in rural areas

states.

### Female Employment in different categories

The different categories of employment are agricultural labourers, cultivators, household industry workers and other workers. The percentage of total female workers in these categories in Punjab is given in Table 2. A person who work on another person's land for wages in money, kind or share of crop is regarded as an 'agricultural labourers' whereas a person is considered working as cultivator if he or she is engaged either as employer, single worker or family worker in the cultivation of land owned or held from Government or from private person or institution for payment in money.

In fact, Punjab economy still is an agrarian economy and therefore, majority of people are involved in agriculture and cultivation work as it does not require any specific education, skill and talent. But in agriculture, the highest proportion of female workers in agriculture is found while in Bihar (60.8), Andhra Pradesh (58) and Odisha (57.8). The share of women working in agriculture is less than half as compared to the national average (41.4) and is recorded as 19.1 percent. Hence, with respect to female agriculture workers, the state is positioned 21<sup>st</sup> amongst all the Indian states due to the fact that a large proportion of female workers has been shifting from traditional work in agriculture to modern world of work in service sector and also more girls have started attaining higher education.

With respect to the females in cultivation work, the position of Punjab is such that it is placed on 28<sup>th</sup> rank with 10 percent of women cultivators, while Himachal Pradesh (76.2), Nagaland (65.2) and Uttarakhand (64) are placed on the first three ranks in this respect as per the figures of census 2011. The state average is about the half of national average and much less than that of the topper state, Himachal Pradesh, where most of the people have small farms due to the hilly area, and majority of females work there or even they hire the small land and cultivate. But in case of Punjab, quite a large number of farmers have large land holdings due to the plain area and hence, lesser women work as tenants, However, it is the poverty, illiteracy and large household responsibilities which lead them to work as agricultural labourers and cultivators.

and only within the premises of the house where the households live in urban areas. This industry relates to production, processing, servicing, repairing or making and selling (but not merely selling) of goods. In 2011, the state average for female HHI workers is

7.5 percent which is more than national average and the state is placed on 5<sup>th</sup> position among all the states/UTs. On the contrary, West-Bengal (16.8), Manipur (14.1) and Uttar Pradesh (9.7) are placed on the first three positions among all the Indian states. This is due to the fact that in like West Bengal, the proportion of females in beedi making, bindi making, aggarbatti making, packaging of match box, garments industry, weaving of clothes and sarees and in other home based work is substantially high. Similarly, in the mega cities like Ludhiana, Amritsar, Patiala in Punjab, women at home are doing the traditional work of Punjabi jutti-making, paranda and nada making, fulkari work, papad and wadian making, knitting, pickle or murraba making, packaging of small products, dairy work at own or village level. No doubt, Punjab has improved its status in female employment in household industry work during the last three decades, but the number of female HHI workers is quite less which can be improved.

The type of other workers that came under fourth category included factory workers, plantation workers, those in trade, commerce, business, transport, mining, construction, political or social work, all government servants, municipal employees, teachers, priests, entertainment artists, etc. All those workers, who are engaged in some economic activity during the year proceeding numeration, are termed as "Other Workers" (OW). The involvement of women of Punjab in other category work is the highest never the less. It has declined during the last decades. However, in this regard, the state is positioned better in 2011 as compared to many other states. It comprises of 63.5 percent of female workers which is relatively more than double of country's national average (29.3) however, it is much less than the topper state, Chandigarh (97.3) because this is a capital state/UT, as female workers are comparatively highly educated and skilled in this region. They work in health, social, educational, tourism, hotel and trade work, banking and insurance sector etc. While in Punjab state, the proportion of female workers is improving in other works as the literate females are mainly engaged in education and community services. Moreover, the Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and Self Help Groups (SHGs) in rural areas help women and also empower them to come forward from secondary earners or helpers to primary earners in the society.

Thus, in Punjab state, less than 20 percent of females are working as agriculture workers while less than 10 percent as cultivators. However, majority of them are working in service or tertiary sector as other workers whereas a very small proportion is involved in HHI. It indicates that since lesser women participate in secondary or manufacturing sector in

the state, so there is a need to make such policies that more women participate in the manufacturing sector.

### Type of Female Workers in Punjab

Persons who operate their own farm or non-farm enterprises or are engaged independently in a profession or trade on own-account or with one or a few partners are deemed to be self-employed in household enterprises. The essential feature of the self-employed is that they have autonomy (to decide about how, where and when to produce) and economic independence (in respect of choice of market, scale of operation and finance) for carrying out their operation. For self-employment, there is not only a need to search employment opportunities in the job market rather it needs the finance, empowerment and courage among women to show their talent. However, the policies of government to provide them easy credit and vocational training play an important role. Table 3 reveals that only little more than one-fourth of women workers in Punjab which is less than one-third of the topper state are such who are involved in the self-employment category of work however 43 percent are found at national average level which is also half of the topper state. In this respect, Punjab is placed on the 30<sup>th</sup> position. So, majority of Indian women workers work as self-employees and among the states, the highest proportion of such women is in Arunachal Pradesh (93.2 percent) and Punjab ranks much behind.

The persons who work in others' farm or non-farm enterprises (both household and non-household) and, in return, received salary or wages on a regular basis (i.e. not on the basis of daily or periodic renewal of work contract) are covered in the category of regular wage or salaried work. In this category for women, the state is ranked at 8<sup>th</sup> place. Moreover, the proportion of women in this work is better i.e. 33.6 percent however, it is more than double as compared to the national average. Chandigarh, the state's capital stands at the top in this respect, having highly educated women with paid employment and social security involved in regular wage or salaried work. Furthermore, being a capital of two states, huge investment and large MNCs in the capital also provide more job opportunities and facilities to women due to which talented women like professionals, engineers, etc. are migrated from other states. Hence, Chandigarh is ranked on the top position among all the states having 72.7 percent of female workers as regular/salaried workers, while the corresponding figure for Punjab is less than half revealing a lot of work need to be done in Punjab to improve the status of female employment.

**Table 3: Type of Female Workers in Punjab**

| S.E/R.E/C.W      | Punjab's Rank | Value (%) | Topper State         | Value (% in their respective state) | National Average Value (%) |
|------------------|---------------|-----------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Self-Employed    | 30            | 26.2      | Arunachal Pradesh    | 93.2                                | 42.9                       |
| Regular Wage     | 8             | 33.6      | Chandigarh           | 72.7                                | 12.5                       |
| Contract workers | 5             | 14.6      | Dadra & Nagar Haveli | 16                                  | 2.7                        |
| Casual Workers   | 23            | 25.6      | Tripura              | 72.4                                | 41.9                       |

Source: Researchers' own calculations from Employment and Un-Employment Survey, 2015-16

Nonetheless, another significant and growing form of employment is of contract workers. These are employed not only in informal sector, rather these days the contract workers are being hired by the government or other organized too on the contract basis for some time period. They are also considered as informal workers in formal sector, so informalisation exists in the labour market. These type of workers are found in the highest proportion in Dadra and Nagar Haveli (16 percent) while in Punjab, 14.6 percent of female workers work as contract workers and the state is placed on 5<sup>th</sup> position among all the Indian states/UTs. However, only about 3 percent of these type of workers is noticed at the country level. On the other hand, a person, who is casually engaged in others' farm or non-farm enterprises (both household and non-household) and, in return, is given wages according to the terms of the daily or periodic work contract, is considered as a casual labour. The status regarding female casual workers of the state is such that it is ranked on the 23<sup>rd</sup> position with one-fourth proportion of female workers working as casual workers among all the Indian states however, in the state like Tripura the percentage of female casual workers is the highest (72.4 percent) out of the total female workers in the state whereas at the national level, the corresponding proportion is 42 percent.

Thus, no doubt, in Punjab, the proportion of female regular wage/salaried workers is higher among all other type of workers, followed by self-employees, casual workers and contract workers. But, at the national level, the trend of type of female workers is such that self-employed female workers are the highest, followed by casual, regular/salaried wage workers and contract workers. It signifies that at the state as well as the national level, more female workers are involved in un-organised sector where there is unavailability of social securities and benefits. On the other hand, the escalation in the trend of contract and casual workers manifests the informalisation and casualisation of female workers in the labour market which is considered as a sign of deteriorating quality of employment, where job security and other benefits are not ensured and workers are over-exploited.

## Conclusion

It is concluded that Punjab state lags much behind amongst all the Indian states/UTs with respect to female employment. Not only this, it is placed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest position among the worst performer states in India. For total WPR of females, the state average is about the half of the national average while 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the topper state. However, as compared to the national average, the state average is higher with respect to female main workers. While comparing the different categories of work in Punjab state as of India, majority of working women engaged are working as other workers (factory workers, plantation workers, those in trade, commerce, business, transport, mining, construction, political or social work, all government servants, municipal employees,

teachers, priests, entertainment artists, etc.) in Punjab whereas the major proportion of those is working as agriculture workers in India. On the contrary the proportion of female workers in HHI and OW is higher in Punjab than those at the national level. So, there is an awful need to develop the small and cottage industries, women entrepreneurship and empowerment in Punjab. The proportion of female regular workers in Punjab is better is much lesser than the topper state, Chandigarh. However, it is comparatively higher than that of the national average. However, the proportion of self-employed women is also less and is declining while it has been increasing with respect to female contract and casual workers and thus, the informalisation and casualisation of female workers reveal the sorry state of affairs and attaining the benefits of social security is a dream for them.

No doubt, many public policies, laws and welfare schemes for inclusive growth and working women have been initiated by the government but the state is very slow in improving its position. Sound labour market information is essential to well-inform women with public policies. As the state being primarily an agrarian economy and a major contributor of food grains, so, there is a need to attract more women in this field, make them aware regarding the latest techniques of production, allied activities, organic farming, crop protection, good marketing system, co-operative societies etc. Micro-finance targeting women should be developed. To tackle the problem of under-employment and un-employment, informalisation and casualization, more regular and proper salaried jobs should be provided to the educated girls. Safety and security rules should be strictly implemented in the state. Un-employment benefits, pensions, scholarships to girls, medical facilities, life and health insurance to every woman should be necessarily provided by the state government. Anti-discrimination legislation should be strengthened in employment across all the occupations. Seminars, workshops proper counseling and guidance programs should be organized at each level, free training, vocational courses and easy finance for self-employment at each level should be provided in the state of Punjab. Thus, at last but not the least, the policies and the schemes should be implemented strictly.

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