

Women in the work force

10.14 Women constitute a significant part of the work force in the country. Amongst rural women workers, a majority are employed in agriculture as labourers and cultivators. In the urban areas, women workers are primarily employed in the unorganized sectors such as household industries, petty trades and services, buildings and construction etc. As on March 31, 1999, women constituted about 17.2 per cent of the organized sector (both public and private) employment. Though the overall proportion of women's employment to total employment registered an increase of 0.8 per cent as compared to the corresponding proportion of women employed in 1998, it still constitutes a far from satisfactory achievement in desired employment levels. The distribution of women employees across industries reveals that community, social and personnel services sectors employed 55.6 per cent of women workers followed by manufacturing (21.4 per cent) agriculture and allied occupations (9.8 per cent) and finance, insurance, real estate and business (4.9 per cent). In 1997 women workers employed in factories, mines and plantations constituted 14 per cent, 6 per cent and 51 per cent respectively of the total work force.

10.15 A major finding of the Time Use Surveys across the globe has been that women carry a disproportionately greater burden of work than men and since women are responsible for a greater share of non-SNA (System of National Accounts) work in the care economy (i.e. home-based work which is difficult to measure) they enter the labour market already overburdened with work (*Report on Gender Diagnosis and Budgeting in India* of National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, December, 2001). This dual work burden is neither recognized in the data nor considered adequately in socio-economic policy making. A macrolevel Time Use Survey was conducted in six major States viz. Gujarat, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Orissa and Tamil Nadu during July 1998 to June 1999 by the Central Statistical Organisation covering 18,591 households and taking into account all members of the household aged 6 years and

above. According to the Survey, in the production of own-account services which qualify for inclusion in the satellite accounts, on an average a female spent 34.6 hours per week as compared to 3.6 hours spent by a male.

10.16 The Female Economic Activity Rate (FEAR) is the proportion of female population aged 15 years and above who furnish or are available to furnish, the supply of labour for production of goods and services in accordance with SNA. FEAR ranges from 55.6 per cent in Australia and 55 per cent in Indonesia to 82.9 per cent in Mozambique. For India the FEAR is 42 per cent (Human Development Report 2001). The female to male ratio of participation in economic activity (F/M) is less than 100 in all countries except China. For India the F/M ratio is 50. Trends in work participation rate in India as per NSSO estimates indicate that the work participation rates across gender in rural and urban areas has registered a sharp decline between 1983 and 1999. The sectoral profile of female work force indicates that more than 80 per cent of female workers are engaged in the agriculture sector in rural India. In the urban areas, diversion of female work participation from the primary to the tertiary sector is visible which may indicate that urban women have been able to take advantage of the increased employment opportunities. In urban areas, female work participation in the tertiary sector has increased appreciably from 37.6 per cent in 1983 to 52.9 per cent in 1999.

10.17 The distribution of female work participation by status of employment indicates that there is a pronounced declining trend in the importance of the self employed category in both rural and urban areas and an overall increase in the casualisation of the women work force from 31.4 per cent in 1972-73 to 40.9 per cent in 1997 in rural India with a marginal decline to 39.6 per cent in 1999-2000. In urban India there is a reversal of this trend with an increase in work participation rates of females under regular employment category and a decline in casualisation. Further, as per the NSSO 55th Round on Employment and Unemployment in India 1999-2000, women tend to enter the labour

market later than men. Work participation of males is considerable higher in the age group of 15 – 29. In rural areas female work participation rate has been the highest at 58.6 per cent in the age group of 40-44 and is above 50 per cent in the age group 30-54. In urban areas female work participation rate is highest at 28.5 per cent in the age group 35-39 and is 28.3 per cent in age group 40-44. Early marriage and multiple child bearing depress the female work force participation rates in the 15-29 age group. In most developed and developing countries, the age group 15-25 exhibits a peak in women's work force participation rates.

10.18 Looking to the requirements for providing a supportive legal framework, the Equal Remuneration Act 1976 provides for payment of equal remuneration to men and women for work of a similar nature. The Supreme Court in its order dated 13.8.97 has laid down guidelines for the prevention of sexual harassment of women employees at the workplace. In February 1998, an amendment in the Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964 has been carried out to give effect to the guidelines. The Ministry of

Labour has also amended the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act 1964 to make the Supreme Court guidelines applicable to private employees. Improvement in the quality of women's employment depends upon increased access to education and skill development training. The Women's Vocational Training Programme was launched by Ministry of Labour in 1974. A separate Women's Cell has also been formed for the purpose and has now developed into the Women's Occupational Training Directorate. Under this Directorate, the institutional network includes a National Vocational Training Institute at Noida and 10 regional Vocational Training Institutes in different parts of the country. There are about 765 Institutes (231 Women Industrial Training Institutes and 534 Women Wings in General Industrial Training Institutes (ITI) /Private ITI with about 46,750 training seats for providing vocational training facilities for women at craftsman level. Statutory provisions have also been made in existing labour laws for organizing child care centers for the benefit of women workers.