

*Engenderment of Labour Force Surveys:
Indian Experience*

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Introduction:

“ It is important to walk a mile in another person’s shoes. As it possible to grow up in the same family, neighbourhood, school... And yet have totally different experiences depending on whether you are a man or a woman”

- Justice L’Heureux Dube’ (Retd.), Supreme Court of Canada (Source: Walking Wisdom : A Creative Learning Experience)

Engendering is a process through which it is possible to produce reliable gender responsive information needed to increase the visibility of women’s situation and inequality between men and women. This can be done basically mainstreaming gender into census / surveys through introduction of appropriate gender responsive questions in the *schedule of enquiry*, reducing *non-sampling error* in the data collection system through appropriate mix of women and men enumerators and appropriate gender responsive data analysis. Thus, engenderment of statistics does not end at desegregation of data by sex, but it goes into the entire framework of data collection to data analysis so that it is possible to understand gender issues through data pulse. Government Statisticians should strongly recognize the need for development of reliable gender responsive data system for policy analysis and policy advocacy. Engenderment of labour force surveys is an important strategy to understand inequality between women and men.

Fourth World conference on women: Beijing Platform of action:

To assess the volume and structure of employment and unemployment, the first Labour force survey was conducted in India during 1955 (May – September) followed by adoption of a system of quinquennial labour force surveys covering about 0.14 million households, through intensive questionnaire commencing from 1972-73 (September-October). The quinquennial labour force surveys was engendered from the beginning and provided sex-disaggregated data on Indian labour force. The Beijing PFA urged for committing development of an equitable and gender sensitive process and accordingly the Govt. of India took up a National Plan of Action to bridge data gaps in order to carry forward the torch of Beijing Platform for Action. The National Plan of Action (NPA) identified many areas where sex-disaggregated data were missing – both in administrative and surveys data system. These data gaps have

since been bridged through appropriate implementation of the National Plan of Action.

Labour Force Surveys:

The last quinquennial labour force survey was conducted in 2004-05 (July-June). Apart from quinquennial labour force surveys, employment and unemployment data are collected annually through thin schedule of consumer expenditure surveys or more recently through separate thin schedule of enquiry. The National Sample Surveys Organisation (NSSO) is the major sample survey organization in India which has about 4500 staff including 3500 field staff stationed throughout the country.

In India estimates of employment and unemployment are measured in terms of **3 basic approaches viz. usual status, current weekly status and current daily status** . The reference period for these approaches differs - it being 365 days preceding the date of survey for 'usual status', 7 days preceding the date of survey for 'current weekly status' and each day of the 7 days preceding the date of survey for 'current daily status'.

Survey Design:

Stratified multi-stage sampling design is adopted for selection of sampling units – both for rural as well as urban areas. Generally, census villages are the first stage units (FSU) and in urban area, urban frame survey blocks are the FSUs. On an average 13-14 thousand FSUs are chosen for nationwide annual labour force surveys. Generally, the FSUs are chosen based on PPS with population as size criteria and Second Stage Units (households) are drawn based on circular systematic sampling. The entire survey operation continues for one full year from July-June being the agriculture year and the samples are divided into four sub-rounds of 'three months' duration and each sub-round is divided into two independent sub-samples.

Activity status: It is the activity situation in which a person was found during a reference period with regard to the person's participation in economic and non-economic activities. According to this, a person could be in one or a combination of the following three broad activity statuses during a reference period:

- (i) working or being engaged in economic activity (work) as defined above,
- (ii) being not engaged in economic activity (work) but either making tangible efforts to seek 'work' or being available for 'work' if there was 'work' and
- (iii) being not engaged in any economic activity (work) and also not available for 'work'.

Broad activity statuses mentioned in (i) and (ii) above are associated with 'being in the labour force' and status (iii) with 'not being in the labour force'. Within the labour force, broad activity status (i) and (ii) were associated with 'employment' and 'unemployment', respectively.

Engenderment of labour force surveys:

The design of labour force makes it possible to find the gender differential in the worker population ratio (WPR) in India. As per latest survey, WPR is 55 percent for males and 33 percent for females in the rural areas, and 55 percent for males and 17 percent for females in the urban areas. According to the survey estimates, a little over **73 per cent of the households belonged to rural India** and accounted for nearly **75 per cent of total population.**

About 11 per cent of households in both the rural and urban areas were headed by females. Compared to all households, **they had, on an average, a relatively smaller household size and a much higher sex-ratio.**

Besides above, the present system also provides data on WPR both according to broad economic activity and MPCE (monthly per capita expenditure) classes.

Domestic Duties performed by women :

In India a sizeable section of women usually engaged in domestic duties, who could participate nominally in some activities that would result in economic benefits to their households. This including borderline case of economic activity are not reflected in the usual indicators of employment.

The labour force schedule has been designed in such a way so that the domestic duties performed by women become visible. Data are also collected on whether such women are willing to accept work on the household premises, and if so, what is the nature of work acceptable to them and what type of assistance they need.

The term *economic activity* used in India covers the following:

- a) all the market activities performed for pay or profit which resulted in production of goods and services for exchange
- b) Non-market activities namely,
 - i) all activities relating to the primary sector (Div 01 to 14 of ISIC 3.1) which resulted in production (including free collection of

- uncultivated crops, forestry, firewood, hunting, fishing, mining, quarrying etc.) of primary goods for own consumption
- ii) the activities relating to the own-account production of fixed asset (Own-account production of fixed assets included construction of own houses, roads, wells etc., and of machinery, tools etc., for household enterprise and also construction of any private or community facilities free of charge. A person may have been engaged in own-account construction in the capacity of either a labourer or a supervisor.)

In order to assess the domestic duties performed by women, a set of probing questions is put in the Labour Force surveys. Each women categorised as *usually engaged* in domestic duties according to *principal status* is asked whether she also pursued more or less regularly certain specific activities for household consumption along with her normal domestic chores. The activities are grouped into three broad categories:

Category (i): activities relating to agricultural production like maintenance of kitchen garden, work in household poultry, dairy, etc., including free collection of agricultural products for household consumption,

Category (ii): processing of primary products produced by the households for households' consumption and

Category (iii): other activities for own consumption but resulting in economic benefits to the household.

As mentioned above, although the information are collected for all engaged in domestic duties according to the usual principal status, the proportion of persons engaged in domestic duties, according to the survey estimates, it is found to be 37.9 per cent among females but only 0.4 per cent among males at the all-India level. .

Time Use Surveys:

India conducted a Time Use Survey (TUS) in eight states out of 35 States and Union Territories during 1998-99 in order to a) to assess the contribution of the women & men in the national economy through unpaid household work and b) to study the gender discrimination in household activities

The activities were grouped into following categories:

- SNA (Productive and Economic) Activities
 - I. Primary production activities

- II. Secondary activities
- III. Trade, business and services
- Extended SNA Activities
 - IV. Household maintenance, management and shopping for own households
 - V. Care for children, the sick, elderly and disabled for own household
 - VI. Community services and help to other households
- Non-SNA Activities
 - VII. Learning
 - VIII. Social and cultural activities, mass media etc
 - IX. Personal care and self maintenance

Attempt was made to compare labour force estimate from TUS with the regular labour force survey data in respect of SNA activities and it revealed extremely valuable information on the volume of unpaid work done by women which are neither valued nor mainstreamed for computation of WPR. While the males spent more time on SNA activities, the females spend ten times more on extended SNA activities.

Home Based Worker : INDIA initiatives

The South Asian Meeting on Women Workers in the Informal Economy Sector, held at Kathmandu on 18-20 October 2000 resolved (popularly known as Kathmandu declaration) as follows:

“There are at least 50 million home based workers in South Asia out of whom around 80% are women. They include own account or self employed workers as well as those who do work for contractors at piece rate.

While these workers contribute significantly to the National Economy, they are mostly illiterate, invisible, unrepresented, voiceless and are not generally incorporated in the National Development agendas ”

Therefore, in order to bring these home workers into the national economic mainstream in accordance with **ILO** Convention no. 177, the said meeting recommended:

- Formulation of National Policy on home based workers by each country.
- Minimum protection, which would include right to organise, minimum remuneration, occupational health and safety, statutory social protection, maternity, childcare, skill development and literacy programme.
- Access to markets and economic resources including raw materials, marketing infrastructure, technology, credit and information.

- Set up Social Funds for home based workers, which would provide insurance against risks of illness, death, old age accidents, loss of livelihood assets and contingencies as locally required.
- Incorporate into official statistics baseline data regarding various categories of workers in the informal Sector.

India initiatives on HBW:

From Indian experience it is observed that a large number of unorganized enterprises are operated from “Home” and the workers including the contributory family workers do not get properly reflected in the definition of Home Worker as per ILO convention since such Home workers do not necessarily work from “Home”. The Government India, therefore, in close collaboration with UNIFEM, SRO set up an independent group on firming up the definition of Home Based Worker (HBW) as distinct from Home Worker (HW).

According to conceptual framework, the CSO is of the view that the Home Based Workers should be identified as

“ (i) own account workers or contributing family workers, involved in the production of goods and services, in their ‘home’, for the market and
(ii) those home workers (as per ILO convention 177) who work in their ‘home’ for remuneration, resulting in a product or service as specified by the employer(s), irrespective of who provides the equipment, materials or other inputs used.”

‘Home’ referred to above, is defined as (i) living place and/or (ii) structure attached to living place and/or (iii) open area / detached structure adjacent to the living place.

Journey ahead:

The present data collection system does not make the HBW’s fully visible. It will, therefore, be necessary to go for re-engineering the schedule of enquiry in order to strengthen engendering process of labour force household surveys.