

Women in Indian Labour Market

Emerging Options

Expanding women's access to the labour market and enhancing their employability, apart from all its other impact, contributes to the GDP substantially. It is important to generate creative partnerships between the states, the grass root units of democracy, the civil society organisations, the industry, the financial institutions, and the education and skill providers to align the women who are not in labour force with the economic growth.

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In this essay, we examine the structure of labour force in India, using the National Sample Survey (NSS) 68th Round for the year 2011-12, to identify opportunities that can be catalyst to shape a pattern of more desirable inclusive economic growth. In the age group of 15 years and above a whopping percentage of women (61 per cent) are engaged in unpaid domestic chores while only 0.4 percent of men do the same. Interestingly, the count of women who are engaged in unpaid domestic chores is approximately 270 million (Table 1).

Quite important, for women, the largest category in employment is self employment, sizing 49 million workers while there are 175 million who are in self employed category. However, the roles of men and women in self-employment differ (Table 1). Close to two third of women who pursue self employment are helpers in household enterprises. On the other hand, only one-fifth of men who are engaged in self employment are employed as helpers. Slightly above three fourth of men in self employment are own account workers. While there are 6.3 million male employers, count of female employers is just 0.46 million. The number of men who are in casual employment is 103 million; 3.3 million women are in casual employment. While 8.5 million men are unemployed, the number of women who are unemployed is 3.8 million.

As depicted in Table 2, combining two categories of persons in unpaid domestic duty, there are more than 0.2 million women per 1000 men. However, there are only 73 women employers for 1000 male employers. Further, there are only 239 women for 1000 men in regular employment.

Would Gross Domestic Product be different if these women who are engaged in unpaid domestic chores been absorbed in part time work-for example, daily 4 hours for at least a half of a year- at the wage rate of Rs. 100. A back of envelope calculation posits if there are 200 days of part time paid work, India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at factor prices may expand by 5.4 lakh crore rupees¹, generating a growth rate of 5 per cent.

¹ 1 Lakh = One Tenth of a Million; 1 Crore = 1 Million

Table 1: Composition of Population (15 years and above) in India (2011-2012) (Usual Principal Status)

Labour Market Status	(Age Group: 15 years above)					
	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons
	Percentage Distribution					
Self Employed						
worked in household enterprise self-employed own account worker	13,29,78,804	1,74,90,863	15,04,69,667	29.6	4.0	16.9
Employer	63,46,566	4,64,621	68,11,187	1.4	0.1	0.8
worked as helper in household enterprise	3,58,59,665	3,12,04,000	6,70,63,665	8.0	7.1	7.5
Regular Employment						
worked as regular salaried wage employee	6,95,35,799	1,66,48,694	8,61,84,492	15.5	3.8	9.7
Casual Employment						
worked as casual wage labour in public works	26,33,126	13,30,431	39,63,557	0.6	0.3	0.4
in other types of work	9,99,30,626	3,17,94,909	13,17,25,534	22.2	7.2	14.8
Unemployed						
did not work but was seeking and or available for work	85,49,785	37,90,641	1,23,40,426	1.9	0.9	1.4
Not in Labour Force						
attended educational institution	6,27,22,765	4,31,71,510	10,58,94,275	13.9	9.8	11.9
attended domestic duties only	10,55,401	14,40,63,356	14,51,18,757	0.2	32.7	16.3
attended domestic duties and was also engaged in free collection of goods for household use	10,63,489	12,39,91,886	12,50,55,376	0.2	28.2	14.1
rentiers, pensioners remittance recipients	1,20,46,117	66,66,534	1,87,12,650	2.7	1.5	2.1
not able to work due to disability	73,47,636	70,13,443	1,43,61,079	1.6	1.6	1.6
Others	99,30,222	1,23,69,113	2,22,99,335	2.2	2.8	2.5
Total						
Total	45,00,00,000	44,00,00,000	89,00,00,000	100.0	100.0	100.0

Computed from National Sample Survey 68th Round Unit Records

Table 3 provides disaggregation of employment by economic activity, for both the rural and the urban, and, further, decomposed with respect to male and female. Quite noticeably, in the rural three fourth of women are employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing, while close to three fifth of rural men are absorbed in the same economic activity. In the urban, manufacturing appears to be the principal source of employment for women (27 per cent), followed by education (15 per cent), trade and repair (10 per cent) and so on. Interestingly, in the rural, there are 1563 women per 1000 men in agriculture, forestry, and fishing. Albeit abysmal share in employment of women in rural India, activities such as activities of household as employers, undifferentiated goods and services producing activities of household for own use (10605), education (4093), and health and social work (3230) report discernibly higher number of women per 1000 men.

Table 2: Number of women for 1000 men (15 years and above) in India by Category of Labour Force (2011-2012) (Usual Principal Status)

Category of Labour Force	Number of Female for 1000 Male
worked in HH enterprise self-employed own account worker	132
Employer	73
worked as helper in household enterprise	870
worked as regular salaried wage employee	239
worked as casual wage labour in public works	505
in other types of work	318
did not work but was seeking and or available for work	443
attended educational institution	688
attended domestic duties only	1,36,501
attended domestic duties and was also engaged in free collection of goods for household use	1,16,590
rentiers, pensioners remittance recipients	553
not able to work due to disability	955
Others	1,246

Computed from National Sample Survey 68th Round Unit Records

As shown in Table 3, quite vividly, urban employment appears to be more diversified than employment in rural India. Drawing cues from Tables 1, 2 & 3, juxtaposing with our argument that connecting women who are in unpaid domestic chores with paid employment, even if it is part time in nature, may cascade to a 4-5 per cent GDP growth, it is important to ideate that there is a dire need for policies and innovative systems that engage women in economic growth in an inclusive manner. Unequivocally, policies for the rural and urban may differ in scope and design. While transforming the agriculture, forestry and fisheries to a more value adding value chain that ploughs back sustainable returns to the basic classes in rural India the manufacturing and services entail to be more gender inclusive, in particular in absorbing women in the workforce. Perhaps, it is important to generate creative partnerships between the state, the grass root units of democracy, the civil society organisations, the industry, the financial institutions, and the education and skill providers to align the women who are not in labour force with the economic growth.

Table 3: Employment by Economic Activity (15 years and above) in India (2011-2012)**(Usual Principal Status)**

Economic Activity National Industrial Classification (NIC) 2008 One Digit					Number of Female per 1000 Male	Number of Female per 1000 Male
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Rural	Urban
	Rural		Urban		Rural	Urban
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	59.1 per cent	74.5 per cent	5.5 per cent	8.7 per cent	1563	334
Mining and Quarrying	0.6 per cent	0.4 per cent	0.9 per cent	0.3 per cent	393	84
Manufacturing	8.1 per cent	9.4 per cent	22.2 per cent	26.5 per cent	1197	256
Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	0.2 per cent	0.0 per cent	0.7 per cent	0.5 per cent	671	143
Water Supply, Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	0.1 per cent	0.1 per cent	0.7 per cent	0.6 per cent	959	205
Construction	13.1 per cent	5.1 per cent	10.7 per cent	4.4 per cent	408	87
Wholesale and Retail Trade, Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	7.0 per cent	3.0 per cent	22.0 per cent	10.3 per cent	467	100
Transport and Storage	4.1 per cent	0.1 per cent	9.2 per cent	0.8 per cent	86	18
Accommodation and Food Service Activities	1.0 per cent	0.6 per cent	4.0 per cent	2.7 per cent	682	146
Information and communication	0.2 per cent	0.1 per cent	2.7 per cent	2.4 per cent	887	189
Financial and Insurance Activities	0.4 per cent	0.2 per cent	2.6 per cent	2.5 per cent	963	206
Real Estate Activities	0.1 per cent	0.0 per cent	0.7 per cent	0.1 per cent	199	42
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	0.2 per cent	0.0 per cent	1.8 per cent	1.2 per cent	707	151
Administrative and Support Activities	0.3 per cent	0.0 per cent	2.1 per cent	1.1 per cent	554	118
Public Administration and Defence, Compulsory Social Security	1.0 per cent	0.4 per cent	4.6 per cent	3.1 per cent	678	145
Education	1.8 per cent	3.5 per cent	3.5 per cent	14.5 per cent	4093	874
Health and Social Work	0.4 per cent	0.9 per cent	1.6 per cent	5.2 per cent	3230	689
Arts, Entertainment and recreation	0.2 per cent	0.0 per cent	0.5 per cent	0.2 per cent	408	87
Other Activities	1.8 per cent	1.0 per cent	3.3 per cent	5.9 per cent	1782	380
Activities of Household as Employers, Undifferentiated Goods and Services Producing Activities of Household for Own use	0.2 per cent	0.7 per cent	0.8 per cent	8.9 per cent	10605	2264
Total	100.0 per cent	100.0 per cent	100.0 per cent	100.0 per cent	312	213

Computed from National Sample Survey 68th Round Unit Records.