Chapter 2

UNORGANISED WOMEN WORKERS IN INDIA

This chapter deals with the women workers in unorganised sector of economy in India. The term 'unorganized' is often used in the Indian context to refer to the vast numbers of women and men engaged in different forms of employment. These forms include home-based work (e.g.rolling papads and beedis), self-employment (e.g., selling vegetables), employment in household enterprises, small units, on land as agricultural workers, labour on construction sites, domestic work, and many other forms of casual or temporary employment. The unorganized sector is physically more visible in India. It is found in almost all the industrial segments of the Indian economy, that is, in agriculture, industry, household and the services sectors. But though it has been in existence in India for a long time in one form or the other, it is only in the 1970s that it drew the attention of the policy-makers and researchers notably from the point of view of opportunities for participation in and reaping the benefits of development. In India, the formal sector which received significantly large resources has failed to provide employment to the growing labour force, resulting in the problem of labour force explosion. Under these circumstances the surplus labour force has been forced to generate its own means of income and employment. This new class of petty- bourgeois is engaged in a variety of economic activities. In all major aspects of employment including the terms and conditions of employment, job security, earnings, perquisites, social security and retirement benefits, the unorganized labour is found to be in a disadvantageous position (S.K.G.Sundaram 2000). Workers India Federation is a CBCI (Catholic Bishop Conference of India) response to unorganized workers of India. Of 460 million of India's workers, 93% are estimated to belong to the unorganized workers. It was in the year 1972 that CBCI set up a commission for labour to work for the welfare and rights of workers in the country. As a result of labour movements efforts and follow up, the Government of India has in the past years woken up to the concerns of unorganized sector. Yielding to the sustained campaign by these

movements, the government has enacted social security act. WIF (Workers India Federation) is also proposing to assist the government by opening facilities centers for dissemination of important information to the working class with social security schemes and programmes. Early steps in this direction have already been taken by WIF to build up a strong nation with secured workers. WIF is now a registered body. The Labour Department of the Union government has approved WIF as an organization for unorganized workers, which may be able to achieve national trade union status for unorganized workers of India in near future (Vattakuzhy 2010).

The constitution of the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector in September 20, 2004, was one of the first steps taken by UPA Government, in pursuance of its Common Minimum Programme that committed itself "to ensure the welfare and well-being of all workers, particularly those in the unorgansied sector who constitute 93% of our workforce". Although the Indian economy experienced a reasonably high growth rate till then, this was not seen as inclusive enough by the majority of the population. The policies pursued by the new Government made "inclusive growth" as its central plank (Sengupta 2007).The non-institutionalized unorganized sector comprises workers doing casual work like domestic workers, sweepers, scavengers etc. A key factor in the growth of informal activity in most developing regions has been the plummeting value of wage. The informal sector has not only offered the possibility of work to the unemployed, but has permitted survival of many households with wage earners. Some division of labour exists between formal and informal sectors on the basis of gender. It has been suggested that women tend to stay within the informal sector because of the flexibility of working arrangements and diversity of opportunities. The position of women in the unorganised sector has been poor. The ShramShakti Report (IIa Bhatt Commision1988) has brought out comprehensively the nature of self-employment taken up by women in this sector and has offered several suggestions for both men and women workers in this sector. The existing problems of domestic workers have been studied by many researchers, social activists and voluntary organizations at different levels. But they have not

succeeded in providing a feasible solution to the problem. Perhaps, lack of a common perspective in this area is the main cause for it. Since the problems of women domestic workers are multifaceted, it should be studied holistically covering economic, legal, social, physical and psychological aspects. To achieve this objective, it is immensely needed to have an integrated approach to understand the issue and it is also important to develop a collective programme to improve their social status and working condition of women in general and women domestic workers in particular (http://deshkalindia.com /publisher:Deshkal).

I

UNORGANIZED WOMEN WORKERS: THE INDIAN SCENARIO

Women in our society have so far had only a secondary status and the economic dependence of women upon men is one of the primary reasons which has pushed them into the background and resulted into their secondary status both within and outside the family (Wadhera 1976). In spite of the fact that the women have proved their mettle in every walk of life, their contribution is not given due credit in most cases. In India women constitute nearly half of the total population and they play a vital role in domestic sphere, in the rural field and also in urban economy. Yet, their economic status is still low as it reflects from the census data, particularly of those who are engaged in the informal sector of urban economy (Tripathy and Das 1991). It is found that among all categories in the informal sector, domestic servants' income is the lowest and the problems are many (Sundaram 1996). They are engaged in household tasks, which include washing utensils, floor cleaning, washing of clothes, cooking as well as some outdoor tasks such as purchase of vegetables etc. Most of them live in slums; lead a monotonous life without any colour, struggle everyday for their survival and face numerous problems in day to- day life like long hours of work, insecurity of job, low status at home and outside (Gathia 1983). Women workers contribute significantly to national development by performing remunerated/paid and unremunerated/unpaid work. They also struggle to combine their roles to look after their families. In many- a –case, they are at disadvantage as their workplace

is in people's private homes, outside the arena of labour inspectors. Women household workers have a double burden as there is greater demand for their skills as care-givers and service workers outside home but they also work inside home doing the same work which is unpaid.

According to an ILO estimate, the value of unpaid household work constitutes 25 to 39 percent of GNP. Women's contribution to the economy by and large remains unrecognized. Yet, their services are valuable. The World Bank in its Annual Report in 1989 observed that 35 per cent of Indian households below the poverty line are headed by women, and in most cases, are thus, dependent exclusively on female income (Soni 2001).The Census of 1991 shows that number of women workers in India is 91 million out of a total workforce of about 315 million. Majority of these women are engaged in the occupations of unorganised sector such as agriculture, cotton and tea plucking, pottery, handloom, construction and domestic services (http://deshkalindia.com/ publisher:Deshkal).Women workers in domestic services in1999-2000 constituted 3.2% of the workforce and this comprised 39, 25,000 workers. The services provided include cooking, cleaning utensils, washing, and babysitting amongst other responsibilities. In the 'global economy' there has been an emergence of a new professional class of workers that include well educated women. With this there has been a need for domestic servants to help the professionals in their daily chores (Padma 2002).

Unorganized sector always play a vital role in terms of providing employment opportunities to a large segment of the workforce in India. Near about 92% of the total employment in the Indian economy during the period 1999-2000 was accounted for by the unorganized/informal sector (NSSO 55th Round 1999-2000). In most states the share of informal workers is approximately the same as the national average. In West Bengal, 89% male workers and 94% female workers were unorganized workers. According to Unni & Rani (1999) due to steady decline in the growth of the formal sector a larger section of the growing labour force is being absorbed in informal sector, resulting in a progressive increase in employment in that sector. Generally, major section of the

informal workers are either absorbed in the agricultural sector or in traditional crafts, village and cottage industries or they migrate to cities to do different types of informal jobs like rickshaw puller, weight carrier, waiters in different restaurants, vendors etc. The proportion of women in the country's workforce has increased during the last three decades. In 2001, the workforce participation rate for women in the urban area is 11.55%. Almost 80% of that workforce is working in unorganized sector. A large number of such urban informal labour forces among the women are engaged in domestic work. According to Domestic Work Link (Vol-12, No-1, 2003), female domestic workers occupy the largest segment of unorganized female workers in India. International Labour Organization (ILO) broadly defines a domestic worker as 'someone who carries out household work in private households in return for wages. In comparison, India's Commission of Justice Development and Peace defined domestic worker as 'an individual employed to do household chores on a temporary, permanent, part-time or full-time basis'. The commission further states that this unorganized sector of the society produces materials for consumption in the households, but those commodities are not for profit or sale. The majority of the domestic workers are women with the world's estimates putting the proportion at 90%. Predominance of women in this type of occupation reflects a traditional attitude that household chores are women's work. Actually in this activity large numbers of poor illiterate and semi-literate urban women are engaged. Domestic work is still absent in the domain of unorganized work. Female domestic workers are chosen because of the overwhelming majority of domestic workers are women who are socially and politically constructed to provide wage substitute for the unused labour, which has been traditionally considered as women's work. According to the 1989 Shramshakti report, there were at that time 16.8 lakh female domestic workers in the country where the presence of male domestic workers were negligible. The same picture is also observed in Kolkata (Banerjee 1985), though no proper study has been done recently on female domestic workers.

The great majority of women in India do home-based work, are self-employed, employed in household enterprises, small units, on land as agricultural workers, as labourers on construction sites, as domestic workers, and in many

other forms of temporary employment, in rural as well as urban areas. Liberalisation has ensured that when employment becomes sub-contractual or piecemeal, an even greater number of women join the ranks of the unorganised. As women in a vulnerable and impoverished sector, they face the additional inequalities of gender. These translate into many tangibles -- unequal wages, no maternity benefits, sexual harassment, and poor nutrition and ill- health. Women in the unorganised sector as well as countless other women invariably also do a wide variety of "invisible" work, and often shoulder the dual burden of paid and unpaid labour. The unpaid contribution of many of the activities associated with household maintenance, provisioning and reproduction -- which are typically performed by women or female children -- tends to be ignored in calculations of labour (Joshi 2007).

Acharya(1987) Saradamoni (1995)state that women workers are exposed more to the risk of sexual harassment and exploitation. Breman (1985) reports women workers often have to work till the last stage of pregnancy and have to resume work soon after child birth exposing themselves and the child to considerable danger .Saradamoni, (1995) reports that female labourers mostly from Kerala in the fish processing industries in Gujarat are subject to various forms of hardship and exploitation at the hands of their superiors. Rao and Suryanarayana (2013) consider that with the entry of younger women in the export processing zones, market segmentation is being accentuated; female-dominated jobs are being devalued, degraded and least paid. Though this does not augur well for women development, it has not deterred women from contributing to family survival, and studies are not wanting which highlight that it is women who settle down in the labour market as flower/ fruit vendors, domestic servants and allow the men to find suitable job leisurely or improve their skill.

As women are found in a vulnerable and impoverished sector, they face the additional inequalities of gender. These translate into many tangibles-unequal wages, no maternity benefits, sexual harassment, and poor nutrition and ill-health. Women in the unorganized sector as well as countless other women invariably also do a wide variety of “invisible” work, and often shoulder the dual

burden of paid and unpaid labour. The unpaid contribution of many of these activities associated with household maintenance, provisioning and reproduction-which are typically performed by women or female children –tends to be ignored in calculations for labour (Sharmila Joshi 2007).

The stigma attached to domestic work has long been ingrained in the mindset of the Indian society. Domestic work is seen as menial and impure occupation traditionally performed by people, mostly women and children, whose lives are still dominated by a caste system that assigned people his/her place in the society. Domestic work has a long history in India with both men and women working in others homes as servants. The affluent had servants; mostly men with loyalty, obligation and patronage which bring the salient aspects of this relationship. Caste defined the hierarchy – lower castes performed the dirty work of cleaning while higher caste men cooked. Though domestic work is not a new phenomenon in India, it cannot simply be viewed as an extension of historical feudal culture where the affluent employed 'servants'. Both in the urban and rural contexts, the nature of work and workers have been rapidly changing. The sector now primarily comprises women domestic workers who are not recognized as workers while their work is undervalued. This is primarily due to the gendered notion of housework; value is not ascribed to women's work in homes, and by extension, even paid work in others' homes is not given any value or regarded as work. It is also undervalued because it is often performed by poor, migrant women from lower castes. All these contribute to the inferior status of their work, both in their own minds and in society. Domestic work, however, is still undervalued. It is looked upon as unskilled because most women have traditionally been considered capable of doing the work, and the skills they are taught by other women in the home are perceived to be innate. When paid, therefore, the work remains undervalued and poorly regulated. By contrast, studies that provide space for domestic workers to speak often reveal their belief in the dignity of their hard work, and, as such, it warrants recognition and respect and calls for regulation (D. Roberts 1997). Domestic work includes mental, manual and emotional aspects, including care work that is necessary to maintain people and communities (Anderson 2000). Domestic work is thus viewed as

reproductive work that creates not only labour units but also people and social relations. Anderson further draws attention to domestic work being rooted in the community. By the doing of domestic work we literally reproduce our communities and our place within them (ibid: 14). In this context, it is important to note who does the domestic work as this reflects the relations between genders, races and classes. The employer-employee relationship is a complex one and is viewed as one of domination, dependence and inequality. Also, this is an area of work where the employer and the employee are mostly females. As home is the site of work, relations between employer and employee are often not limited to work but spill over as larger support systems. Domestic workers in India took access to sufficient and effective statutory measures and institutional mechanisms for their protection. Steps have been taken by the government both at the national and state levels to protect their rights. Nevertheless, the few labour laws enacted by the national and state governments addressing domestic workers face the challenge of implementation. This is aggravated by the discriminating attitude of many employers against the domestic workers, including caste prejudices. As a result, those who carry out domestic work are largely ignored in working sectors often socially excluded and economically exploited. On the other hand, the government recognizes the prominent role of migrant domestic workers as a source of foreign exchange in the Indian economy and a solution to the country's unemployment issues. Compared to their local counterparts, a higher degree of regulation is exerted by the government in the process of their deployment. But despite efforts by the government, Indian domestic workers within and outside the country remain vulnerable to all forms of exploitation from the moment they enter the recruitment process till they enter the workplace. In its contemporary manifestation, domestic work is a global phenomenon that perpetuates hierarchies based on race, ethnicity, indigenous status, caste and nationality (J. Andall 2004). Care work in the household whether performed by paid employees or by unpaid household members as part of their family responsibilities and as a "labour of love" is quite simply indispensable for the economy outside the household function (D. Roberts 1997). The growing participation of women in the labour force, changes in the organization of work and the intensification of

work, as well as the lack of policies reconciling work and family life, the decline in state provision of care services, the feminization of international migration and the ageing of societies have all increased the demand for care work in recent years.

Women workers in the unorganized sector-the farm workers, vendors, casual construction labour, domestic help, and home-based workers-are even far more neglected and unaccounted-for part of the informal economy. This is so, since the self-employed women work from homes and their contribution is mostly not calculated into the national economic data. However, according to the National Sample Survey 2005, one-third of the informal sector workforce (about 120 mn) comprises women. Collectively, they accounted for 96% of the female workforce in the country and contribute to about 20% GDP of India. A gloomy scenario for unorganized sector and holds that globalization of Indian economy would mean cheaper imported substitutes for indigenously manufactured goods. The unorganized sector is the biggest source of female employment. The threat posed by foreign capital as well as trade liberalization will seriously affect availability of employment opportunities for women in this sector .Women entered the market for wage labour after the industrial revolutions, creating employment opportunities. Their significance was considered marginal and they constituted the reserved labour force. They entered the labour market only when the economic necessities forced them to supplement the meager family earnings. That unorganized sector is a vast and significant segment of Indian economy in terms of its economic worth through their economic contribution and the growing number of the workers the sector engages.

The life of unorganized sector workers is very tough. Social workers and educationists have been for a long time concerned more with women empowerment and have contributed a great deal in focusing attention of the people to the importance of several factors which should be taken care of in helping women to develop fully. The supremacy of male is reflected in all the acts in the family but women's autonomy is essential to rectify this imbalance and attain gender equality. The workers in an unorganized sector have legal

protection in terms of job security, wages or working conditions. In 2005 the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) commissioned a study titled 'Understanding the Levels of Women's Empowerment in the Work Place" revealed that women constitute only 6% of total workforce in corporate houses. The percentage of women in leading managerial positions is abysmally low. Only 7% labour force is in the organized sector and 93% work in unorganized or informal sector. The reason for the employment of women in such large numbers in the informal sector is women's weaker bargaining power, low skilled labour, generally lower wages than men and lack of unionization. The precise effects of women's participation in wage work on the family-based household have received little detailed attention until recently. This is particularly the case in the urban context of many developing countries where female labour force participation. Despite the existence of various constitutional and legal provisions safeguarding women's employment a large number of women workers, particularly in the unorganized sector suffer from various disadvantages relating to their working lives as well as home. The coverage of labour laws has not benefited these women workers in many crucial area, especially health, maternal and social security. A striking feature of most unorganized sector employment is that workers are employed largely through unorganized contractors or subcontractors (Sankaran Kamala and Roopa Madhav 2011).

The urgency of extending social security to the unorganized sector brings up the issues involved in providing social security to their unorganized workers. The role of women in rural development covers such aspects like labour migration, decision- making role and socio-economic characteristics of women in male- dominated households. The activities covered are agriculture, fisheries, beedi-rolling. Nature of women's workforce participation influence women decision to work, the type of work they do, the constraints they face, and the perceived benefits and costs of engaging in paid work outside home. Most working women do not have access to paid leave or provident fund. This reflects the informal structures within which women work. After Independence Indian constitution makes provisions for no discrimination between men and women so

far as rights and privileges are concerned. In spite of this, the status of women is at par with men neither in economically affluent classes nor in working classes (Phukan 1992).

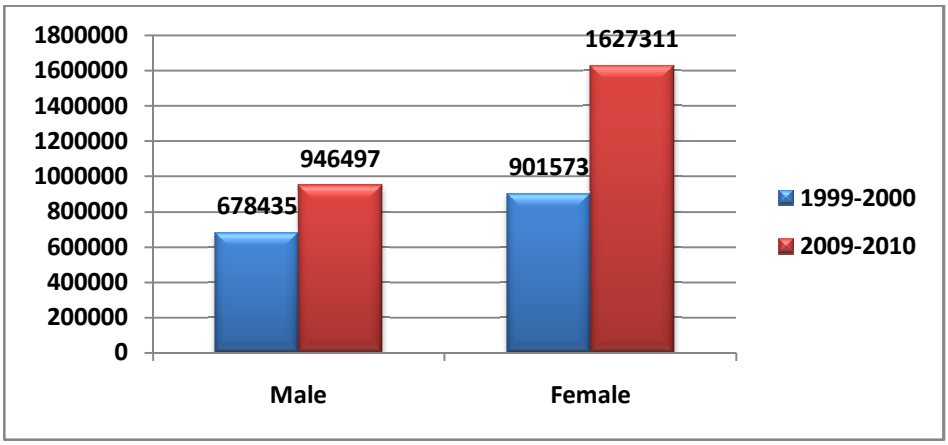
There are many obstacles to organize women in the informal sector. Women with the dual burden of working for long hours in poor working conditions, on the one hand, and raising children and the domestic chores, on the other hand, find it hard to come to meetings. The Korean Women Workers Associations United and Korean Women's Trade Union organized an international workshop in 2000 entitled "Perspectives and Solidarity of Women's Trade Union Movement". There were extensive discussions on strategies to organize informal and part time workers. One of the strategies that were discussed was to encourage union activists to visit the women at their workplaces and start active campaigns to inform women about their rights (Padma 2002).

II
WOMEN DOMESTIC WORKERS IN INDIA

The growth of domestic work as a service sector is being continually fueled by supply and demand factors. Demographic changes such as aging populations, decline in welfare provision, increasing labour force participation of women, and the challenges of balancing working life and family life in urban areas and developed countries contribute to greater demand for domestic workers. On the supply side rural poverty, gender discrimination in the labour market as well as limited employment opportunities in general in rural communities and countries of origin ensures a continuous supply of workers to the sector. Domestic work is a predominately female-dominated sector that is poorly regulated and often unprotected by labour law. It is also often embedded within socio-cultural structures, which may make it difficult for employers to see themselves as such. Moreover, issues of gender, class, ethnicity and caste also come into play heightening the weak bargaining power of domestic workers. Domestic workers themselves often work long hours; have poor remuneration, and little access to social protection. Their isolation and vulnerability as workers is made more complex by their invisibility in private homes and their dependence on the good

will of their employers. Many though not all, come from poor households, often in rural communities, where limited access to education and skills development, leave them with few employment opportunities and choices. Others, especially those migrating abroad, may be skilled, yet, unable to find employment commensurate with their levels of education. With the recognition of the numerous decent work- deficit characteristic of domestic work, the ILO, both, in field and headquarters, has been working at different levels to support the organisation of domestic workers, their access to social protection and the enforcement of their rights as workers (D'Souza. 2010). The Chart 1 shows that of total domestic workers in the country in 2009-10, more than two-thirds lived in urban India and 57 per cent of them were women. This is a lower rate of female involvement in this type of employment than in many other countries, and reflects the combination of several forces: the long history in India of the affluent employing domestic servants, which created aspirations of such hiring patterns also among the newly affluent; low employment generation in other activities as well as uncertain household income generation prospects that have increased the supply of such workers; and changes in income distribution and GDP growth patterns that have created a new middle class that is able to afford to demand such workers. Not only is this activity becoming more feminised, but it is becoming more important in the total employment of women, especially in urban India.

Chart 1: Numbers of Urban Domestic Workers in India



Source: Estimated from NSSO Report No 537 on Employment and Unemployment in India, 2009-10 and population figures from Census of India, cited from Chandrasekhar and Ghosh (2012).

Domestic work happens to be a feminine occupation for which significant part of demand for labour comes from the urban sector. Domestic work seems to be the destiny of significantly huge number of women workers in India who seek employment opportunities in urban sector, often rendering an invisible workforce who are not paid well, and deprived of rights to ensure decency in work. Reflecting on indecent working and living condition of women domestic workers, National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector (NCEUS 2007: 86) views: "Working in the unregulated domain of a private home, mostly without the protection of national labour legislation, allows for female domestic workers to be maltreated by their employers with impunity. Women are often subjected to long working hours and excessively arduous tasks. They may be strictly confined to their places of work. The domestic workforce is excluded from labour laws that look after important employment-related issues such as conditions of work, wages, social security, provident funds, old age pensions, and maternity leave." It is important to note that there were active initiatives to mobilize domestic workers in India, paving way for lobbying for rights such as minimum wage. In 1959, New Delhi-based All India Domestic Workers Union (AIDWU) called for a one-day solidarity strike which received a thumping response from domestic workers. Interestingly, this initiative attracted legislators' attention; two bills –on minimum wages and the timely payment of wages, maximum working hours, weekly rest and annual leave periods, as well as the establishment of a servant's registry to be maintained by the local police, in deference to employers- were introduced. However, these bills were withdrawn later. Further, the development of organizing workers had a major setback when Supreme Court of India ruled that isolated workers cannot form organized labour, implying that occupational categories like domestic work is not entitled to the status of organized labour (ILO 2010a). In fact, discrete outcomes of this nature punctured the organic growth in organizing domestic workers, one of the reasons why domestic work remains as an occupation not entitled to rights such as minimum wage and social security. However, ongoing legislative initiatives such as Unorganized Sector Workers' Social Security Bill, which covers a broad range of security schemes for workers in the informal sector, including domestic

workers, is a major breakthrough with a potential for desirable improvements in working and living condition of domestic workers. While pervasive deficits in working and living conditions remain scary, inducing voices of dissent against lack of volition from the state to assure decent work for domestic workers, India lags behind other nations in extending rights to domestic workers. As shown by ILO (2010a), India is yet to provide core entitlements for decent work like maternity benefit. On the other hand, 26 nations, including developed and developing countries provide 12-14 weeks of maternity leave for domestic workers. Moreover, National Minimum Wage Act 1948 excludes domestic workers from its purview. However, states, members of federal union, may fix minimum wage for domestic workers within their territory. Another important deficit is lack of social security to domestic workers in India while there have been noteworthy initiatives by other countries to provide different types of social security to domestic workers-occupational safety and health, workers' compensation for employment injuries, general health care, pension and unemployment insurance-. In fact, for women engaged in domestic work, in particular in urban India, even generating subsistence level income entails a complex process of scheduling of activities since they tend to work with multiple employers, who prefer flexible forms of labour contracts like part time engagement of domestic workers. Unfortunately, these workers, incurring the risk of working in indecent conditions, are enmeshed in a system with excess supply of workers; they tend to offer services to relatively well-off households, who are likely to have much better availability of rights and entitlements (Paul Bino, Susanta Datta &Venkatesha Murthy R 2011).

Domestic workers are especially vulnerable to forced labour because of the unprotected nature of their work and the highly personalized relationship between the worker and employer....domestic service is also used as a cover to lure women into employment abroad while deceiving them about the real nature of their work. Many migrant domestic workers in cities live on pavements or in slums and serve others' houses. A women domestic worker has to sweep, swab, wash utensils and clothes in houses twice a day, morning and evening. Sometimes, she has to stand in a long queue to get water. She has to repeat the

same work at her own home and at other homes where she works. She has to put in extra work if guests stay on for several days. No extra remuneration for this. Women domestic workers often get a paltry sum for the unpleasant work they undertake. Some women domestic workers are sexually assaulted by their employers.

According to Soni (2001) the declining trend of women participation in the workforce may be due to the following three developments; viz., (i) The technological and occupational structure of the economy might have under gone a male- biased transformation to such an extent that there has been a smaller expansion of the sectors where women workers have a relative advantage; (ii) Indian economy has failed to attract many of potential women workers into the workforce the growth in work participation is not in tune with growth in investment and output and this has naturally caused the composition of the labour force to be tilted in favour of the male; and (iii) urbanization is found to have dealt a severe blow to the rural household industries where women are normally found in large numbers. Also, there has been a declining trend in the sex ratio of the population.

Domestic workers suffer significant "decent work deficits" as well as organization and representations. Domestic workers are exploited, undervalued- as essential there are several common features of domestic work that set it apart from other types of paid work. First and foremost, domestic workers are employed in homes of others by an individual or a family (not a firm or enterprise). Second, since they are hired to work in people's homes and to perform a range of care taking functions, domestic workers tend to have a personal and intimate knowledge of their employers, but the relationship is highly unequal, leaving many domestic workers vulnerable to verbal, physical or sexual abuse by their employers often differences in race, class and citizenship between the employer and the domestic worker exacerbate this inequality and vulnerability. Third, most of the tasks involved in domestic work are seen as women's work and, therefore, as being of low status and value with the exception of tasks such as gardening, driving, or guarding, which are typically performed by

men, cooking for others in their homes is often valued and compensated more highly than other domestic tasks. This may be due to the fact that, in some societies and countries, men are more likely than women to be hired to cook for others in their homes. Fourth, domestic workers tend to be invisible as workers and isolated from others in this sector because the physical workspace is also the private household. Domestic workers tend to have lower wages, fewer benefits, and less legal or social protections compared to most other wage workers, with the probable exception of casual day labourers and industrial outworkers. Further, although home is widely viewed as a "safe haven" and some domestic workers feel protected in the private sphere of a private home. There is growing evidence that domestic workers are exposed to a wide range of unhealthy and hazardous working conditions (Peggie Smith 2011). In sum, the earnings of domestic workers are among the lowest of all occupations and the earnings of women are lower than men's due, in part, to the fact that women and men tend to do different tasks within domestic sphere. Further, a significant proportion of domestic workers live below the poverty line. Also, very few domestic workers have labour contracts or social protection, and women in domestic work are in a worse position than men. Certain categories of domestic workers face specific working conditions that exacerbate or reinforce the common challenges and disadvantages faced by all domestic workers (Jagori 2012).According to the most recent global and regional estimates of domestic workers produced by the ILO's Conditions of Work and Employment Programme (TRAVAIL), at least 52.6 million women and men above the age of 15 were domestic workers in their main job in 2010 (ILO, 2011a). This figure represents a significant share of global wage employment, some 3.6 per cent worldwide. Women comprise the overwhelming majority of domestic workers, 43.6 million or some 83 per cent of the total. Domestic work is an important source of wage employment for women, accounting for 7.5 per cent of women employees worldwide (ILO, 2011a). In spite of the valuable role played by domestic workers in the functioning of individual households and society as a whole, they remain one of the least protected groups of workers under national labour legislation. The ILO law and practice report on domestic work, which had been prepared for the

99th Session of the International Labour Conference in June 2010, presented information on the legislative practices of member States in a range of policy areas concerning working conditions, social protection, freedom of association and collective bargaining (ILO, 2009). While some countries have put in place policies and laws that extend labour and social protection - albeit in varying degrees and ways - to domestic workers, this group remains unprotected in many other places. Extending the reach of labour law is a means of bringing domestic workers within the formal economy and the mainstream of the Decent Work Agenda. As articulated by the International Labour Conference in its 2002 Resolution concerning decent work and the informal economy, the challenge of reducing decent work deficits is greatest where work is performed outside the scope or application of the legal and institutional frameworks" (International Labour Conference, 2002, para. 2). Over the last few years, studies on domestic work in India have noted the increase in the numbers of migrant female domestic workers in the cities. They have also observed that domestic work is highly informal in its organization and highlighted the vulnerabilities of domestic workers who belong to the poorer and uneducated sections of society. These studies also note that women from marginalized castes form a substantive group of domestic workers (Kaur 2006).

In the Indian context, domestic work is generally defined in terms of types of work performed and the time spent at work, i.e., in the employer's home. Live- out and live-in are two distinct categories of domestic work. Live-out work is primarily of two types: first, those who work in one house for the whole day and go back to their homes in the evening and; secondly, those who work in different houses, moving from one to the other, performing one or more tasks in each household. They may clean in one house, chop vegetables in another and wash clothes in the third, while some others may perform only one task, such as cooking. They often visit these households twice a day though the requirements in some families may be limited to only once a day. Another form of part-time live-out work is in terms of piece-rate. It is often applied to washing clothes and wages are calculated on the basis of family size. Another critical issue is that of the age of the domestic worker. Despite laws to

prevent it, child domestic labour is still prevalent in India. The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulations) Act 1986 lists domestic work in the schedule of "hazards" whereby the permissible age for work is 18 years. Yet, given the socio-economic conditions in the country, 15 years may appear permissible but most organizations working on the issue and child rights advocate the age of admission to domestic work as 18 years. They argue that these children work long hours, are not given nutritious food, are often sexually abused and have no way of raising their voices. Based on the 2001 census, about 185,595 children are employed as domestic workers and in dhabas (roadside tea and food stalls) (UNICEF 2007). Employers prefer children as they are cheap. They are often paid as little as Rs. 300 per month for a work for ten hours a day and seven days a week. They are also beaten up and in some cases, sexually abused. Dimensions of trafficking can be seen here as well. Children are often brought in from poor areas of the country and made to work as bonded labourers. Many are not allowed to contact with their families. They live in their employers' homes without any support system.

Domestic workers constitute one of the largest women sectors and also represent one of the largest numbers of workers in the informal economy of the country. The varying statistics on their population would illustrate the significance of their participation in India's workforce. According to Indian National Sample Survey (NSS) data, there were 2.0 million female workers and 0.3 million male workers in 2001 as compared to 1.2 million female and 0.3 male workers in 1983, showing a substantial issues in the number of female workers (Mehrotra 2008). It is generally held that the official figures are unreliable and grossly inadequate as domestic work is notoriously under enumerated. (Gothoskar 2005: 29; Raghuram 2005, Social Alert 2000: 19) on the basis of information from several Indian civil society organizations, it is estimated that there are around 20 million domestic workers in India. Of them about 20% are estimated to be aged under fourteen and 20-25% are fifteen to twenty. While domestic workers in most countries are mainly women and girls, in India there are relatively large numbers of male workers. Despite this, domestic work is increasingly feminized in India (Ray 2000b), around 90% of

these workers being female (Social Alert 2000). This makes it one of the few sectors which has a female majority (Raghuram 2005: 5), and one of the largest employment providers for women and girls in India. According to the National Domestic Workers' Movement [NDWM], an estimated 20million people work as domestics throughout the country. Of these workers, 90 percent are women and children between the ages of 12 to 75 while those below 14years old make up 25 percent of the workers (NDWM). A significant population of women and children domestic workers tends to be concentrated in large cities of the country. In Mumbai alone, an estimated 600,000 domestic workers exist, of whom 80,000 are on full time employment (D. Lakshmi Rani & Mr. Manabendranath Roy, 2005). Bangalore is reportedly a host to 500,000 domestic workers. They are mainly migrant women workers, 25 percent of whom are girls 10-16 years of age who dropped out of primary school and accompany their mothers to work and would soon end up being workers in their own right (D. Lakshmi Rani and Manabendranath Roy 2005). Ahmadabad city has more than 50,000 domestic workers constituting mostly women (SEWA 2008). On the other hand, 5,000 children mostly girls work as domestic in the Bhubaneswar, the large city of Orissa, India (Press Trust of India, 2005). Domestic workers, in particular women domestic workers, are constantly growing section of workers in the informal sector of urban India. The last three decades have seen a sharp increase in their numbers, especially in contrast to male domestic workers (Neetha 2004).

Research has shown that till 2000, the urban workforce participation of women in India has been lower than those of rural women. Marginal increases were observed in 2000-04. In 2004, the figure of national urban female workforce participation reached an all-time high of16 percent. In 2004-05, there were 30.5 million women domestic workers in urban India marking an increase by 22 percent from 1999-2000 (Chandrashekar and Ghoosh 2007).This increase in the number of domestic workers is linked to shift from agrarian economy to a manufacture and service based economy. It is also associated with the growth of the urban middle class, especially the increase in the number of women working outside home and the availability of cheap domestic labour.

The migration from the tribal belt is ascribed to "ecological degradation, landlessness and land alienation, unemployment and poverty". Migration of girls is also attributed to the transition in the tribal societies as educated tribal girls do not want to work in the agriculture sector (Kujur and Jha 2008:25). Push and pull factors for local domestic workers NDWM (National Domestic Workers Movement) identified the following socio-economic circumstances (NDWM).Poverty is the main reason why many women and children engage in domestic work. In almost all cases, these domestic workers are the product of internal migration in search of employment.

Domestic workers are the backbone of Indian economy and their jobs are very important to the development of our country. Their work, though sometimes invisible and seen by many as not important, supports thousands of men and women go to work to support the economy and children to go to school to get education to support the future development of the country. For years they have been clamoring for change and their burning issues remain the same. To date there has been little improvement in their wages, and working conditions. Because of this situation, the ILO has seen it fit to support a Domestic Workers Convention in 2010 and to promote a Decent Work Agenda for Domestic Workers. Domestic Workers are fighting for their recognition as workers and to enjoy and exercise their rights like all other categories of workers. They are also fighting for their recognition as women workers because Indian women and men do not have equality in the labour market. Women are concentrated in occupations like domestic work that provide lower wages and poor working conditions. Thousands of Indian women are employed as domestic workers but relatively few are registered with the organizations such as National Domestic Workers' Movement.

In India as in many other parts of the world, their paid work is seen as an extension of their reproductive roles and, as a result, their jobs are given low status and low value. Their experience is similar to that of domestic workers all over the world. As result, there is an urgent need to provide domestic workers with minimum basic protection that would guarantee them social justice, dignity

and self- respect. The majority of domestic workers in India are women between the ages of 26-50 years. Many of the domestic workers started this type of work as children before they were 15 years of age which means they were child domestic workers. The women who are occupied in domestic work sector belong to the lowest stratum of society and are often considered as cheap labour. In the recent past the trend shows that all big cities of country have become the centers to recruit poor women as domestic workers. The non-availability of job in rural or tribal areas facilitates continuous supply of women workers to Delhi and other cities. These middle class employed women have shifted their household workload to the poor working women as their "maids". In some cases it is seen that the middle and upper classes in order to keep their upward mobility and status symbol have withdrawn themselves from household duties. The increasing demand of *domestic workers in Delhi* has played a major role in migration of women from far-flung rural and tribal areas. Most of the women who migrate to Delhi are from poor families and are illiterate. Their lack of education and skill make their choice very limited and when they come to big cities such as Delhi they have to face number of problems and because of their inexperience and lack of skill they become easy victims of exploitation. It is disheartening to note that domestic workers as part of unorganised work force remain the most exploited ones even after five decades of Independence (http://deshkalindia.com/ publisher: Deshkal). As women workers they contribute significantly to national development through the performance of their remunerated/ paid and unremunerated/ unpaid work. They also struggle to combine their roles to look after their families. They are at a disadvantage as their workplace is in people's private homes, outside the arena of labour inspectors. Women household workers have a double burden as there is greater demand for their skills as caregivers and service workers outside but they also work inside doing the same work which is unpaid.

I. Structural Conditions of Women Domestic Workers in India

Domestic work, a predominantly female occupation, has been increasing in India. Growing urbanization, the increased participation rate of women, and

the decline of extended families are the primary reasons for the exponential growth of this sector. Despite this growth, there are few (if any) laws and policies to regulate domestic work and protect domestic workers. In recent years, efforts have been made at the state and central levels to legislate for these workers. Most domestic workers are from the marginalized sections of society and a large number of them are migrant workers. Workers range from full-time to part-time workers, skilled and unskilled workers. Largely women who already know how to clean and cook, domestic workers are seen as requiring very little skill training. Besides, the work is seen as allowing women, who also shoulder the responsibility of their own households, some degree of flexibility. 'This fact reinforces sexual division of labour within the world of work and of race , caste, class, poorer economies apart from gender as well .As far as Indian scenario is concerned, we find through the statistics that women workers constitute only one third of the total workforce in India.

The social injustice is inherent in our customs and religion which prevented the women from participating in outward activities and some corrective steps are needed to be taken to improve their lot. Women are suppressed thoroughly in the Indian history and positive measures were initiated only during the British period. Despite the several schemes, there is exploitation of women and discrimination in wages. Domestic service has been and still is an important field of employment for many women. Yet, the ways in which it is organized have changed considerably throughout history and these changes have followed different trajectories. There is no direct contract with the employers. The contract is made with a third party of agent and so the exploitation runs beyond the employer-employee relationship. In domestic service rest is considered a luxury by the employers and this problem has serious consequences on women's health. Women do not go to hospital due to fear of the hospital and long delays there. Most of the women hold a number of jobs and time is of great value to them. Of all services in India, there is not any other more unregulated or disorganized form of work than the domestic service. There are no regulated hours of work for women in domestic service, nor have laws been passed to protect them. The risk areas include high level of insecurity, deplorable wages,

long working hours, the segregation of women in certain occupations, wage differentials between men and women for the same job, low and falling work participation rates of women etc. Many reasons of urban migration, most important being the mass poverty and high level of illiteracy. Migration among the poor domestic workers is sought as a 'coping strategy' for the survival of the families. They face mental trauma. Migrant women face various problems after the migration while social networking plays a major role in overcoming their social and psychological insecurities and low socio-economic status. Major hurdle in providing a solution to the problem is absence of a legal protection system. It is encouraging to see that there are possible ways of intervention to improve their condition. Some immediate interventions can be made at the following levels:

1. The organization of domestic workers is very important. A systematic mobilization is needed to help them in making their own associations and unions so that they can share some solidarity and build their own leadership.

2. There is a need to create public opinion on behalf of domestic workers to grant them the status of workers and dignified working conditions. A proper mutual dialogue may be useful in developing a suitable legislative mechanism.

3. The problems of women domestic workers have still not received adequate attention by researchers, members of voluntary organizations and other social activists as yet. A collaboration, frequent interactions and wider networking with the people and organizations working on the similar issue are required to intensity the movement for improving the overall condition of domestic workers.

4. There is also an urgent need to sensitize the wider society regarding their attitude towards 'Servant-Master' relationship and change it into a respectable 'Employee – Employer' relationship. Therefore it is extremely

important to create an environment where the domestic workers may enjoy their rights, duties and interests like other segments of the society.

Sex discrimination in the wage rate is a common feature despite the constitutional provisions of equal work for men and women under the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976. Women employed in the unorganized sector belong to families on the brink of subsistence. Even though they work for unusually long hours outside home, few of them could not afford to buy any gadgets to reduce drudgery of house-work, nor could it be said that their work enabled them to give their children a significantly better life. Globalization which unifies the markets all over the globe has resulted into the displacement of women workers who are exposed to deplorable conditions. Women have to look after their households in these congested conditions and with no income other than their low salary. Besides, as they move away from traditional systems it renders their knowledge and role in agriculture useless. That affects both their economic and social status. The modernization has resulted in erosion of the little power that the women had in society. There is a need for women to create a situation in favour of gender equity in their society and economy. Many women also work in the informal sector, where their labour remained unacknowledged, under-paid and sometimes even unpaid. These sections of women face many problems at their work place and majority of them are deprived of the privileges like maternity leave, pension etc. Employment agencies place the migrant women for domestic work and the conditions of these women's work violate several laws, including Bonded Labour Act, Child Labour Act and Juvenile Justice Act. The agencies take no responsibility for the girls. They do not check the well being and working conditions; they do not even look after them if they fell sick. Agencies are not registered bodies, labour department or the police. They have no license. Employers treat the domestic workers as slaves. The working conditions are very poor- more work, less food; they sleep in the kitchen and are denied rest and relaxation. Women suffer verbal and physical abuse, including beating and sexual abuse. No laws to regulate their working conditions. There is no prescribed minimum wage for domestic workers in most parts of India. Domestic workers

are confined to the house, refused to receive or make calls to their families or receive and write letters.

The unorganized sector employs a large section of the workforce, especially women, in urban India. There is wide gap between the organized and unorganized sectors, in terms of wages and working conditions, as well as bargaining power. Domestic workers have employment throughout the year, but their wages are exploitatively low. They are not aware of minimum wage laws for their categories of work. For these workers, it is pertinent to bring in policies relating to conditions of work, holidays, payment of wages, overtime etc. Some mobilization of workers must be attempted in order to organize them and increase their bargaining power capacities. These were physically, mentally or sexually abused .The study (Whole time domestic child labour in Metropolitan Indian Pediatrics web page: http://www.indianpediatrics.net/july2008/july-579-582.htm.htm) highlights the poor state of domestic labor. Most of them were illiterate, a significant proportion of the cohort were school drop-outs, probably due to adverse financial status. They are engaged as maid servants that included delivering services like cleaning ,sweeping, washing up clothes and utensils, dusting, fetching water etc. and involved primarily in baby care, cooking and outdoor duties. To reduce the adverse impact in the short run, there is a need to understand the emerging process of job recess since these processes would control female labour force participation. But despite the precariousness of the work, with its instability, insecurity and social and economic vulnerability, the women, given their poverty and lack of skills, would have a very little option by to tolerate exploitation. The meager incomes they get would be precious for their own and for their family's survival as they form substantial proportions of their equally low family/household incomes. By and large, there are three types of issues of unorganized sector workers that need to be addressed. One is the regulation of their working conditions, the second is provisioning for conditions in which they are unable to continue to work, such as old age and disability, and the third is measures to help them overcome situations of insecurity, such as major illnesses and the liability of losing employment or being laid off at the will of the employer, for which they have no legal remedy (Moghe 2000).

II. Nature /Status of Women Domestic Labour

In 2000, the UN Human Rights Commission declared domestic workers as a form of cotemporary slavery. Organizing domestic workers has been a huge challenge as the work place is inaccessible and multiple, marked by a high rate of attrition and instability. As a result, the demand for the better wages of working conditions through an organized union has been weak and scattered a strong and well organized work force has been pivotal in ensuring progressive policy and legislation, while simultaneously enabling better enforcement of existing legislations (Sankaran Kamala, Shalini Sinha and Roopa Madhav).

Women are treated as the object of pleasure or merely machines to serve and reproduce like voiceless puppets. The socio economic conditions of women workers in South Asia are poor because they are concentrated in low paid occupations. This is primarily because the society has discriminated against women by not allowing them to act as major players in economic activities. The issue of informal sector is common to the developing countries, but has to be understood in the context where informal systems of work are promoted and encouraged among the working poor. The character of this sector is connected to highly exploitative irregular working conditions and wage discriminations. The workers in unorganized sector remain unprotected by law. They are the most vulnerable section of the society and they enjoy no job or income security with little bargaining power. The emerging labour market is likely to prove even more problematic in the case of women workers than for the rest of Indian workers. The proposal for participating in the workforce made by feminist literature and the gender empowerment measure (proposed by UNDP) may not empower women; rather it will burden the women more and more.

The gender segregation of jobs has two distinct elements: One refers to bunching of workers in jobs and the other refers to the social and occupational hierarchy that permeates it. Women's economic tasks in India can be divided into three categories; namely, as an entrepreneur, as a participant and as a contributor to the family's real income. There is no uniform official policy as to whether or

not all these three categories of tasks are to be taken into account for measuring women's employment. The employment was regular for working women and their wage rate was significantly lower as compared to those for men with equal qualifications. With steady decline in the growth of the formal sector in India following the introduction of the SAP, a large section of the growing labour force is being absorbed in agriculture and the unorganized informal structure, resulting in a progressive increase in employment in the informal sector. The most important and the large sector of employed women includes the landless agricultural labourers, workers in traditional crafts, village and cottage industries, migrants to the cities, employed as domestic workers and vendors. Various problems are being faced by women domestic workers who are displaced to the new resettlement. The real life experience of some women domestic workers gives a deeper understanding of their lives. Women go to work because of the irregular nature of employment that their men are involved in and the low incomes they make. Regarding the kind of work opportunity open to women in the unorganized sector, very often they choose the type of work that their parents or relatives are involved in. Also, they prefer to stick on the same kind of work as they are familiar with and pick closer by locations.

III. Social Implications of Women Domestic Labour

The maid servants are leading a miserable life. They suffer from low wage, long hours of work, shift in nature of job, lack of freedom and low prestige due to inferior status of the job. Due to lack of coordination their children are neglected and familial relations become tense. The fragmented nature of their job, lack of education and low bargaining capacity refrain them from organizing collectively. According to the Report on Working Condition of Domestic Servants in Delhi by the Ministry of Labour, Government of India, nearly 90 per cent of domestic workers are women. According to the National Survey conducted by the School of Social Work, women constituted 87.09 per cent of domestic workers in Karnataka, 82.38 per cent on Ranchi, 75 per cent in Kerala and 90.78 per cent in Andhra Pradesh.

The domestic workers face various problems and one of them is deplorable wage level. The wages of domestic workers have not kept pace with the spiraling price-rise. Every price rise cuts their real wage and further nutritional deficiency for them. The studies conducted in Bombay and Pune indicate that women domestic workers are often the sole supporters of their families. These women have to perform a dual role relating to production and reproduction. while bearing and rearing children remain their primary responsibility , they are invariably involved in the remunerative activities also .These women are unprotected and suffer from economic exploitation. Their ignorance, illiteracy and poverty add to their woes all the more. A great majority of them have not been benefitted from the protective legislation in the critical areas of wages, maternity benefits, children and social security. Despite the universally recognized obligation of social security, large section of people (70% and above), especially in developing countries have little or no social security. These sections of the people usually work in the unorganized sector, or in the 'informal economy. In India, 93% of the total workforce is in the unorganized sector, and has virtually no social security. The unorganized sector includes self-employed workers in various occupations (including small and marginal farmers), agricultural laborers, street vendors and home –based workers.

Srinivas (1997) in a survey on "The Changing Position of Indian Women since the End of Second World War" found that a rapidly increasing concern both with the role and the position of women has resulted into a greater equality between the sexes now than before. In fact, the urban working women have taken a very bold step to greater equality with men in every field. But the women of village and tribal community are still lagging behind. The report of the committee on the status of women in India (1975) argued that lack of adequate planning and co-ordination, inadequate machinery and resources and multiplicity of agencies have been major causes for the failure of well intentioned policies and programmes which were launched for the welfare and development of women

IV. The Measures (of Government & NGOs) Undertaken for Uplift of Domestic Women Labour

It is a universally observed that in a society which is characterized by gender segregation and social stratification, certain sections unfortunately occupy a subordinate position. Indian constitution guarantees democracy and confers the right of equality to all strata. But the reality is that this guarantee and right of equality have not reached many lower sections of society. It is those people who struggle, are impoverished, alienated and concerned with basics for survival. The case of the domestic workers is evidence to the fact that despite the guaranteed constitutional rights their struggle for equality and survival continues. The existing problems of domestic workers have been studied by many researchers, social activists and voluntary organizations at different levels. But they have not succeeded in providing a feasible solution to the problem. Perhaps lack of a common perspective in this area is a main cause for it. Since the problems of women domestic workers are multifaceted, it should be studied holistically covering economic, legal, social, physical and psychological aspects. For this, it is immensely needed to have an integrated approach to understand the issue and it is also important to develop a collective programme to improve their social status and working condition. Almost 400 million people - more than 85% of the working population in India - work in the unorganized sector, of which, at least 120 million are women. Arjun Sengupta Committee report (2006) is a stark reminder of the huge size and poor conditions in this sector. A subsequent draft Bill to provide security to workers, which bypasses regulatory measures and budgetary provisions, has generated intense debate. Workers engaged in the unorganized sector do not have the benefit of several laws such as the Minimum Wages Act or the Factories Act. The National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector brought out a 394 page report inspired by the CMP (Common Minimum Programme) of the UPA Government which said that it was "firmly committed to ensure the welfare and well-being of all workers, particularly those in the unorganized sector who constitute 93% of our workforce" (National Policy 2006). NCW March (2008) recommended that

mandatory registration of workers, employers and service providers or placement agencies. Registration authority will be state and district level boards. No one below the age of 18 is employed in domestic work. The NCW draft is far from perfect. But it is significant first steps towards regulation of employment in the hugely exploitative sector of domestic work. Labour laws which affect women workers, introduced by the UPA Govt. in 2005 prohibit women from doing night shift. No provisions have been made for medical facilities, maternity benefits or protection from sexual harassment. Workers in unorganized sector do not get protection in terms of job security, wages, working conditions and welfare. The least implemented laws of all the labour laws in the country are the laws related to women – the maternity benefit act, the equal remuneration for equal work act and protection from sexual harassment act. Problems of women workers revolve round issues such as unequal wages lack of maternity benefits and childcare facilities and discrimination at the workplace. Women urgently need social policy to protect the right of women workers in the unorganized sector.

There are a few organizations working for unorganised labour. Of these, trade unions working for the economic betterment of workers registered under the Trade Unions Act 1926. These trade unions differ in size, from industry to industry and from region to region. Almost all central and regional trade unions have separate/ special arrangements for mobilizing unorganized labour and working for them. The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) of Ahmadabad is an excellent example of a trade union doubling up as voluntary agency to help poor women. It works on Gandhian lines and has been highly effective in mobilizing the women workers. SEWA was instrumental in getting the Convention on home-based workers passed in the ILO. Working Women's Forum (WWF) in Madras is another NGO which in operation in the upliftment of women workers in unorganized sector. NGOs are another important type of organizations working for unorganized labour. Generally registered under the Public Trusts Act or Societies Registration Act, the NGOs function quite independently. The Annapurna Mahila Mondal (AMM) in Mumbai is an excellent example of a well diversified NGO working for poor women and self- employed .the main advantage of for the NGOs is that they do not have

the obligation for working only for the economic betterment of labour. They have freedom of operation .they are considered more flexible and goal oriented with clarity of purpose and commitment. Cooperatives mobilize more the self-employed. The success story of the Amul Milk Cooperative in Gujarat is world known. A large number of small farmers were mobilized into a cooperative which brought tremendous benefits to them. Labour Boards are tripartite organizations ensuring the welfare of unorganized labour in some services. They are considered highly effective in states like Kerala and Maharashtra. Government Organizations: Government and its supported organizations help unorganized labour in training, marketing and other services. For example, the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) help in marketing products of rural artisans and the self-employed in urban areas. There are special such agencies for women. The Small Industries Service Institutes (SISIs) in different states offer a large number of vocational and technical courses for the educated unemployed and for disadvantage sections. Similarly there are special vocational training institutions for women. Political Parties too promote their own organizations, trusts, etc. that help workers in getting training, finance and business opportunities. They mobilize the unemployed unorganized youth and help them in getting access to self-employment schemes like those for auto – rickshaw drivers, PCO stall operators, etc. Educational Institutions like the universities and colleges have also helped the unorganized labour in getting training and access to facilities like finance. For example, the SNDT Women's University runs a production centre in Gujarat where women workers are mobilized and trained for employment and self-employment. Associations are generally of the self-employed, registered or unregistered. It takes up common issues with appropriate authorities. For example in Mumbai there is the India Bakers' Association (IBA) which protects individual baker's interests like availability of flour or maida at a reasonable price. Similarly there is the Bombay Tiffin Box Suppliers Association (BTBSA) which helps individual' dabaawalas' in facing common problems and in reaching lunch boxes to people working in offices. Religious Organizations promote NGO –like organizations to cater for certain sections of unorganized labour, for example, the child labour, rag pickers,

etc. For example , in Mumbai the "Bandra East Community Center' (BECC) established through the efforts of a group of priests , is and NGO working for slum and pavement -dwellers and street children , among others. The BECC runs youth programmes like training in auto-rickshaw driving, tailoring classes for women for self-employment, and training for typing. Apex Organizations: there are also some apex organizations which cut across different types of labour organizations. They coordinated and help labour organizations that work for the disadvantaged and underprivileged sections including unorganized labour. The National Center for Labour (NCL) is one such organisation. The issues that were proposed to be taken up by the NCL included minimum wage for unorganized labour, dealing with child labour, women workers ' problems , dalit workers' issues , legal and social protection to home based workers ,etc. There are many NGOs working in Mumbai and trying to grapple with its various problems. The problems of slums, housing and poverty have received more attention at the hands of the NGOs while income generation, employment and integrated development have not been the NGOS main agenda (Sundaram 2000).

The Domestic Workers Movement (DWM) has been responding to the issues concern of domestic workers since 1985. The DWM works at several levels: with the workers themselves, it seeks to educate them about their rights; with the general public, it seeks to increase awareness of the concerns of domestic workers; with government and other official bodies it lobbies for protection and other benefits for these workers. Domestic workers are one of the most exploited groups of unorganized workers. A Sister of the Bombay House workers' Solidarity highlighted the plight of domestic workers by narrating the experiences of several victims .She emphasized that domestic workers must be registered and it must be ensured that they get standard wages and other amenities .Since there are no specific laws relating to them, employers can hire and fire them as they please. Therefore domestic workers remain victims of unmitigated injustice, and are totally powerless and voiceless. They are treated a subjects and non-persons. The Domestic Workers' Movement (DWM) has over two million members in India, of which 95% are women. By fighting for the recognition of domestic workers and improved working conditions, it gives

dignity to an occupation that is usually confined to the informal economy equal treatment, and respect, dignity. The Domestic Workers Movement empowers domestic workers and strands for the following:

(i) All domestic work has dignity; it is an indirect participation in production and it contributes to the quality of life.

(ii) The personal dignity of each domestic worker is ensured by being in contact and creating for them 'a place to go'; crises intervention and counseling; helping in their formal and non-formal education; providing a space and occasion to meet each other and evoking their cultural expressions through annual get together and celebrations.

(iii) Together with the workers it struggles for justice, for work contracts, just wages, work hours, rest and leave, for their recognition as 'workers', for a legislation for domestic workers (Conditions of Service Bill) and for a public awareness of their dignity and neither rights.

(iv) Empowering domestic workers is a priority through leadership training group and collective solidarity.

(v) Networking both at the national and international level with domestic workers' organizations and support groups with other associated groups like women's groups, human rights groups, migrant works' rights groups, etc.

The DWM has also finalized a draft bill (the Domestic Workers Bill, 1996) which can ensure the betterment of domestic workers. In India, the domestic workers are not legally recognized as workers and thus have no rights. They are almost slaves-utterly dependent on the benevolence of their employers. It is necessary to ensure that all domestic workers are registered with an appropriate authority and are provided with benefits like wages at standard rates, weekly holidays, etc. There must be watchdog committees to ensure proper implementation of legal provisions for these workers.The DWM is helping these workers in the unorganized sector and now the workers are becoming more assertive and conscious about their rights and dignity (Sundaram 2000). Thus, there are some organizations working for unorganized labour.

III

WOMEN DOMESTIC WORKERS IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

Issues related to women gain importance today due to the various incidents that take place in the society, beginning with rape, child marriage, trafficking of women, women violence due to dowry etc. There is a crying need for the emancipation of women. Even in labour economy women folk are neglected to the extent that they go through mental trauma, physical torture, and sexual abuse, physical and verbal abuse etc. Labour of women domestic workers is indispensible today in every society of upper middle class and affluent families. North East Region is no exception to it. Though there is not a sufficient number of such studies conducted on this region, the awareness is created by the members of the NWDM (National Women Domestic Movement) and NWDM has been formed in all the states of North Eastern states. The following reports appeared in the news papers and articles (accessed):

Assam: on the occasion of International women's day celebration the President of the AITUA (All India Trade Union Association) invited speakers to emphasize on the need for awareness programmes and literary drive. They also stressed on unity in the struggle against all sorts of harassment and for better means of livelihood and for that, they were prepared to go even a long way. In conclusion, president of the union addressed specially to "Domestic Workers and told that Government of Assam (labour Department) has issued Notification on Feb.2010, declaring that "minimum rates of wages should be fixed under the Minimum Wages Act 1948 (Act XI of 1948) in the context of the "Employment of Domestic Workers" in the state. A copy of the above Notification was especially addressed to the Domestic Workers' Union which was a great achievement. It came after a long way struggle launched by the union for inclusion of the Domestic Workers in the minimum wage schedule (Pranati 2010).

International Domestic Workers Day is being held for the first time in Nagaland organised by Nagaland Region Domestic Workers Movement. The Movement was officially recognised in June 2008. Coordinator of the Movement

Sr. Therese briefing the overview of the movement said at the moment there was no minimum wage for domestic workers in Nagaland, the current daily minimum wage for other laborers in the state is Rs 80 unskilled Rs 100 per day for the skilled respectively and wages of domestic workers are between Rs 200- 1500 per month. Also, highlighting the special need for domestic workers, Sr. Therese called upon general public to extend help in procuring BPL ration card. Women domestic workers proved that they were good not only at work but were good at acting too as Moni Saikia and Co with their natural role play on life of a domestic worker entertained the gathering who laughed their way out (Nagaland Post 2009).

The Mizoram unit of the National Domestic Workers Movement Welfare Trust (NDWMWT) has contended that a large number of domestic workers in Mizoram, mostly Myanmarese migrants, are being subjected to not only sexual, but also verbal and physical abuse. The NDWMWT had been endeavouring to educate the domestic workers about their rights and protection, but the message could not be reached out to the majority of them due lack of social awareness. "We conduct workshops every Sunday which is their only off day, but only 20 to 30 of them turn up. This is mainly because many of them do not want to be identified as Myanmarese migrants for fear of deportation. At the same time, their employers do not allow them to attend the workshop," a NDWMWT worker said (Mizoram's domestic workers vulnerable to abuse 2008).

Patrica Mukhim (2011), a member of the National Security Advisory Board, today advised the North East Region Domestic Workers Movement, a worker's body, to set up a complaint cell for the benefit of its members. Speaking at the International Domestic Workers' Day on 9th Jan. 2011 at the Don Bosco Youth Centre here, Mukhim, while urging the domestic workers to stand united in the fight for their rights, said a complaint cell would help such workers to register their grievances. Speaking of the Supreme Court ruling which says that an organization with 20 women employees should have a complaint cell, Mukhim said domestic workers faced a lot of harassment in workplace." However, they never complain for fear of losing their jobs. She said that a few

women take advantage of their position to extract undue favour, which in turn, injures the interests of the majority. The workers' body enlisted certain demands for the protection of their rights. Domestic workers requested the centre to support the adoption of Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers at the International Labour convention to be held in Geneva in June. They also asked the government to ensure that domestic workers were brought under the Protection of Women against Sexual Harassment at Workplace Bill, 2010, and requested a comprehensive act to protect their rights. Women domestic workers were not included within the ambit of the Protection of Women against Sexual Harassment Bill, 2010, which was tabled in Parliament recently. The government contended that as domestic workers were in the non- formal sector, it was difficult to bring them with the scope of the bill. "The large emerging middle class in India built their prosperity walking with the aid of crutches provided by the most unorganized , unprotected and vulnerable sections of our workforce- the domestic workers . It is in the interest of the country and the middle class who employ them to protect and ensure their well-being", the workers' body said in a memorandum to be submitted to be submitted to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. It said the most important factor in protecting domestic workers' rights was to recognize domestic work as a work on a par with other workers and with necessary legislations. At the end of the progrmme, a signature campaign was held to gather support for the recognition of the rights and privileges of domestic workers, which would be then sent to the Prime Minister (The Telegraph, Monday, January 10, 2011).

According to Rakesh Kumar Singh (2013) the concerns of domestic workers have recently attracted attention of social workers and Non- Government organisations across the world including the United Nations. The government all over the world is also making efforts to streamline the basic rights of this unorganised sector which is almost the biggest labour supplier. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) adopted the convention 189 and Recommendation on "Decent Work for Domestic Workers" on June 16, 2011. And thus 16 June is observed as Domestic Workers Day. In Manipur, the awareness programme has been launched by Manipur Domestic Workers Movement Organisation

(MDWMO) founded by Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians in 2008. It was founded in response to scores of violence and injustice towards domestic workers. The objectives of such movements are to empower domestic workers by making them aware of various legislations and laws existing on this issue as well as their basic petty rights which are being denied to them. They are also lobbying with concerned government and labour agencies to uplift the working conditions for the domestic workers. This includes minimum wage, paid leave, sick leave and other work conditions. Manipur Domestic Workers Movement Organisation (MDWMO) is making noble efforts to change that and working to win the protection and recognition that is so well deserved and essential for domestic workforce. MDWMO is empowering them through leadership and capacity building programmes and informing them of their rights. Various awareness campaigns are conducted to sensitize the public, and policy makers about the plight of domestic workers. MDWMO constantly works towards providing due justice to domestic workers along with recognition and dignity of In addition, it is also suggested that such movement to intervene in crisis situations and helps trafficked women and child domestic workers to be re-instated with their families. Advocacy, campaigns and lobbying with government bodies, policy makers and the society should remain the prime agenda for the movement to help liberate and empower the domestic workers. And there should be awareness campaign for the employers of domestic workers; in which they should be sensitized about the trauma and difficulties domestic workers are facing because of denial of certain basic rights and minimum wages. This way the employers may volunteer to do something for them out of compassion. And ultimately the concept of work is worship is reaffirmed and labour of poor is respected labour (The Sangai Express). The Domestic Workers' Movement (DWM) has over two million members in India, of which 95% are women. By fighting for the recognition of domestic workers and improved working conditions , it gives dignity to an occupation that is usually confined to the informal economy equal treatment, and respect, dignity (Sundaram 2000).

IV

WOMEN DOMESTIC WORKERS IN BARAK VALLEY

Over last few decades, there have been a rapid growth in the number of women employed in India with majority of them being engaged in informal sector of the economy where jobs are often low paid and repetitive. As the number of female workers in the informal sector in India has gone up considerably, it implies that employment opportunities for them in the formal sector have become restricted. On account of easy availability of low paid labour in the informal sector, there is every possibility of more and more economic activities in this sector. Therefore, an attempt has been made in this study to trace out the problems associated with the process of women participation as well as the manner in which working women's lives in the informal sector in Silchar town, affected by the process of economic development and social change. An effort has been made to reveal the socio-economic conditions of paid domestic workers in Silchar town. It has been tried to examine the general nature of working conditions of women domestic workers, their special problems and how they combine wage work with domestic responsibility.

They are found in 43 slum pockets out of which nine slum pockets were randomly selected for the purpose of the study. The nine slums were; Malini Bil, Sarat pally, Malugram, Chingkuri Road, Madhur Bandh, Kalibari Char, Tarapur Bhakatpur, Kanakpur. Women folk of these slum pockets are engaged in domestic work to support the financial condition of their family. These slum pockets are situated indifferent wards of Silchar Municipality. It is a known fact or normal phenomenon the urbanization leads to the creation of slums. Poor people from the rural area migrate to the town in search of employment and settle down in slum areas/slums near to the town. The middle class and upper class people who are in need women domestic workers to work in their homes, employ them. Kalibari Char slum is situated near the Barak River (Janiganj). Tarapur slum close to the Railway Station, Chingkuri road slum pocket near G.C.College, Malinibeel situated near Asram Road, Malugram near Gohniwala, Knakpur river side are, Bhakatpur near National High way, Saratpally slum situated at the outskirt of Saratpally. Madhur Bandhwater works road and Lakimpur road. There

is no much diversity in nature and character among the different slim pockets. Therefore a common inference can be drawn that no part of Silchar is industrially as developed as it can distinguish one slum area from another regarding the nature and character. The inference is drawn from the fact that no family is found living in slums for a period of more than 50 years. As per the information provided by them, the area has been established as a permanent living place for a moderate number of populations about twenty five to thirty years back. It has been found that the lion's shares of the population settled during the years are from the surrounding villages. And very negligible part of them hails originally from urban areas. Regarding their previous occupations and incomes, no accurate account can be produced by them. But, it is revealed that, they are mainly from two groups; the agricultural labourers and the fishermen. For an expectation of better life, the rural populations, originally dependent upon agriculture and beel or fens had proceeded and still proceeding towards the urban areas. But it is evident that their expectations are not fulfilled. They themselves fall in the trap of vicious circle of the slum lives and cannot get rid of this life. Living condition of the slum dwellers does not present a happy picture .with the meager incomes; the people are to maintain their foodings, clothing, housings, fuel, medicine and other expenditures. Their living shelters are in hygienic, the most in hygienic aspect relates to latrines and urinals. Most of them use the river bank and open space to respond to the call of nature. The drains are stinking and polluted air is prevalent in the entire area. In spite of this abnormal condition of living, the inflow of new families shows an upward trend. They are living without the living amenities, which a modern urban citizen demands, on the other hand with the meager income, they live hard life in extremely crowded , congested ,polluted and in hygienic condition and on the other they are polluting the entire urban environment.

Women domestic labour is a growing workforce, which signifies worsening conditions and insecurity of vulnerable sections in the society. Yet the phenomenon has been addressed in the context of the large cities only. It varies from region to region and city to city. North eastern region being dominated by

tribal and rural populations has a huge number of women domestic workers whereas few studies carried out related to it.

In sum, women workers contribute significantly to national development through the performance of their remunerated/paid and unremunerated/unpaid work. They also struggle to combine their roles to look after their families. They are at disadvantages as their workplace is in peoples' private homes, outside the arena of labour inspectors. Women household workers have a double burden and there is greater demand for their skills as caregivers and service workers outside but they also work inside doing the same work which is unpaid. (Shirley Pryce 2010). The way, the CBCI (Catholic Bishop Conference of India) Labour Commission addresses the wide range of problems prevailing in the labour sector in India has been emphasizing for providing better opportunities and facilities for the unorganized sector of the labour class, particularly the marginalized, neglected, and those workers unjustly deprived of their privilege. The mandate of the Commission also includes: teaching, guiding, animating, and motivating people and leaders working with workers and the workers they to act justly. Besides, the Commission also envisages equipping all sections of workers for their intelligent participation in social and economic development of the nation, by which they get greater understanding of their responsibilities towards family members, their rights and obligations as citizens and as workers in the society (CBCI, commission for labour undated). The struggles have to start with wages and job security and then move beyond those issues to raising the class consciousness of the workers these struggles have to gradually move from the factories and homes to the streets. The conditions for women workers can ultimately improve only through their participation in the movements and their united fighting for availing their human rights.

REFERENCES

Anderson, Bridget. 2000. Doing the dirty work? The global politics of domestic labour. London, Newyork: Zed Books.

Bannerji,N. 1985. *Women workers in the unorganized sector: The Calcutta experience.* Hyderabad: Sangham Book Pvt. Limited.

Bhatt, Ila.1989. 'Shramshakti Report of the National Commission on self-employed women and women in the informal sector'.

Breman, Jan.1985.*Of peasants, migrants and paupers: Rural labour and capitalist production in West India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

CBCI. Undated. Commission for labour. www.cbcilabour.info.

D'souza, Asha. 2010. *Moving towards decent work for domestic workers: An overview of the ILO's work*, http://www.oit.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publicatio/wcms_142905.pdf

Dutta, Pranati. 2010. Domestic workers in Assam to get minimum wages. www.**newage**weekly.com/**2010/09/domestic-workers-**in-assam-to-get.htm

Dutta,Shantanu.2009.Silentlabour.http://fifthwiseman.blogspot.com/20090101archive.html

Gangrade, K.D. and Gathia, Joseph A. 1983. *Women and child workers in the unorganised sector.* New Delhi: Concept Publishers.

Gothoskar, Sujata .2005. 'New initiatives in organizing strategy in the informal economy- Case study of domestic workers' organizing: Executive summary'. *Committee for Asian women.* http://www.deshkalindia.com/publisher:Deshkal

G D Paul Bino, Susanta Datta,Venkatesha Murthy R. , 2011: Adecco TISS Labour market Research Initiatives (ATLMRI) DISCUSSION PAPER 13 Working and Living Conditions of Women Domestic Workers: Evidences from Mumbai .

Joshi, Sharmila.2007. 'Holding up more than half the sky'. *Info change news and features*.

Kaur, Ravinder.2006. 'Migrating for work: Rewriting gender relations', in Sadhna Arya Anupama Roy (eds.): *Poverty gender and migration: Women migration in Asia*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Kujur, Joseph Marianus and Vikash Jha. 2008. *Tribal women domestic workers in Delhi*. Delhi: ISI.

Mehrotra, Surabhi Tandon and Mewa Bharti. 2008. *Rights and dignity: Women domestic workers in Jaipur*. New Delhi: Jagori.

Mizoram's domestic workers vulnerable to abuse http://news.oneindia.in/2008/06/02/mizorams-domestic-workers-vulnerable-to-abusendwmut- 1212404984.html

Moghe, Kiran.2007. 'Understanding the unorganised sector', www.infochange.com

Mukhim, Patricia. 2011. 'Domestic workers for rights', Calcutta, India: The Telegraph.

Nagaland Post. 2009. 'Domestic workers take a day off'.

Neetha, N. 2004. 'Making of female breadwinners. Migration and social networking of women domestics in Delhi'. *Economic and Political Weekly*. April 24, pp. 1681-88.o

Padma. 2002. Women workers in India in the 21st century-Unemployment and underemployment. http://www.cpiml.org/liberation/year_2004/february/WomenWorkers.htm

Phukan.M.1992. 'Status of labour women in tea gardens of Assam', in S.L.Baruah(ed): *Status of Women in Assam*. New Delhi: Omsons Publications.

Raghuram, Parvati. 2005. 'Global maid trade: Indian domestic workers in the global market', in Shirlena Huang, Noorashikin Abdul Rahman and Brenda Yeoh (eds.): *Asian Transnational Domestic Workers*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish.1–32.

Rani, D. Lakshmi, Aparnaa Bhattacharjee and Manabendranath Roy (eds.). 2005. *Child domestic work: A violation of human rights, Report on the legal position of child domestic workers in India*. New Delhi: Save the Children.

Rao, P. Shanmukha and N.V. S. Suryanarayana. 2013. 'Issues and challenges of female labour migration',http://www.globalrp.org/issues-and-challenges-of-female-labour-migration.html

Roberts D.E. 1997. 'Spiritual and menial housework', *Yale journal of law and feminism*, Vol. 9, No. 51.

Saradamoni, K. 1995. 'Crisis in the fishing industry and women's migration: The case of Kerala' in Schenk Sandbergen (ed.): *Women and seasonal labour migration*. New Delhi: IDPAD Sage.

Sengupta, Arjun. 2007. Report on conditions of work and promotion of livelihoods in the unorganised sector. India: National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector, Government of India.

Shankaran, Kamala, Shalini Sinha and Roopa Madhav.Domesticworkers-Background document, http://wiego.org/sites/wiego.org/ files/resources/files/dw_background_note.pdf (undated).

Sankaran Kamala and Roopa Madhav. 2011 '.Industrial and employment relations' Department and Bureau for Gender Equality International Labour Office • Geneva.

Singh, Rakesh Kumar.2013. 'International domestic workers day', *The Sangai Express: Manipur (*accessed on 25.07.2013).

Smith, Piggei. 2011. 'Pitfalls of home: Protecting the health and safety of paid domestics in the United States', *Canadian journal of women and law.*

Soni, Balbir. 2001. *Reform prospectus for rural development Vol-2*. Delhi: Dominant Publishers & Distributors.

Social Alert. 2000. 'Invisible servitude. An in-depth study on domestic workers of the world. Description and recommendations for global action', Brussels: *Research on Human Rights*.

Sundaram, S.K.G. 2000. *Organising working for the unorganised labour- the case of Mumbai*. New Delhi: Friedrich-Ebert-Stifung.

Tripathy S.N and Das, S. 1991. *Informal women labourer in India*. New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House

UNICEF. 2007. www.unicef.org/india/child_protection_2053.htm.

Unni, Jeemol and Rani Uma. 1999. 'Informal sector women in the emerging labour market'. *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, Vol.42 (4).

Vattakuzy, Jose. 2010. 'CBCI labour commission launches workers' federation', http://www.churchnewssite.com/portal/p=18434

.