



**Enhancing Women Workers' Awareness to their Rights and Labor Laws of
District Sukkur**

Context Analyses

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Acronyms

AF- Aurat Foundation

CBOs-Community Based Organization

FGD-Focus Group Discussion

GEP-Gender Equity Program

HR-Human Resource

IDI-In-Depth-Interviews

KII-Key informant Interviews

NGOs-Non Governmental Organization

SDTS- SEWA Development Trust Sind

TORs-Terms of References

Table of Contents

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Dr.Khadim.H.Dahot
Executive Director

Executive Summary

District Sukkur has been an important administrative unit that plays an important role in the economy, trade and history of upper Sindh. Sukkur houses several production and processing units and factories for biscuits, dates "Khajoor & Chohara, Sukkur Beverages, Gul Bottlers, Engro Foods, continental Biscuits where a substantial numbers of women are working on different types of pay scales as daily wages and monthly salary pattern.

This research study aimed to understand the level of awareness and knowledge among women workers from informal sector about human/women rights, labour rights including wages, leaves, working conditions and work place facilities such as water & sanitation, day care center or paid maternity leaves. It also focused to understand that how economic empowerment influence women role in decision making process within family unit. Study also included the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in awareness raising and improving the status of women economic empowerment in the area. Considering media one of significant pillar of society study also included understanding level of awareness among media personnel (both print & electronic) about human/women rights.

Data collection was based on qualitative research methodology by having focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with working women in these local industries of Sukkur and also other major stakeholders including, journalists, factory owners, and representatives of CBOs, NGOs and employer from informal sector.

Women in district Sukkur are working in Continental Biscuits Factory, Sukkur beverages, Gul Bottlers and Dates market. Home based trades are Kite making, candle making and embroidery. Some other trades include, door to door product selling, private schools, tuition centers, cell phone franchises. The number of women in health sector is also growing. They are working as Nurses and Technicians. Domestic help is another area where numbers of women are engaged is being paid either on daily wages or monthly salary practices.

Education is playing a vital role in shifting the trend for women economic employments opportunities. Study findings conclude that more women are becoming lawyers and currently there are 25 women lawyers in district Sukkur which is encouraging indeed.

Study findings conclude Economic empowerment for these working women do not translate into its true meanings but doing job or earning money is usually considered mere a duty to support their family. It does not empower these women or make them significant for decision making. Men are the decision makers anyways and women are hardly consulted in fact are informed once they decisions are made.

Awareness raising about human/women rights needs an extensive exercise where all major stakeholders including policymakers, human/women rights activists and public private sector partnership should be taken on board. More women need to be included in awareness raising

initiatives, their capacity on labour rights should be enhanced and along with employers capacity building is equally important to mark a significant change for good.

Background Information

District Sukkur has been an important administrative unit that plays an important role in the economy, trade and history of upper Sindh. Sukkur houses several production and Processing units and factories for biscuits, dates "Khajoor¹ & Chohara²", Sukkur Beverages, Gul Bottlers, Engro Foods and continental Biscuits where a substantial numbers of women are working in informal sectors on different types of pay scales as daily wages and monthly salary pattern.

Issues and Challenges Faced by Women in Formal Sector

There is no training activity for women working within the factories, so their awareness of labor rights is only a dream. These working women, like other parts of the country are prone to gender discrimination. These women from informal sector do not have a certified skill set and do not have any job security too. They work on daily wages in some fields they are hired on monthly salaries too. On the other hand, only few large organizations have provided separate toilets, but the child care facility is totally nonexistent. Hygiene and sanitation practices are not too encouraging and no much attention has paid to this regard which indicated that employer themselves have less or no awareness about the significance of health and hygiene to be ensured at work place.

Status of Informal Sector in Sukkur

Home based informal sector has greater contribution in household livelihood and also contribute in the economy of the area at larger. Women are associated with stitching, embroidery, knitting and kite making. Here the demand and supply curves play vital role to determine the monetary reward against the services provided. Negotiations powers are outcome of service provider needs and the demand created for work. In informal sector women are usually linked through their own networks where their family members such mother, mother in law, sister in law or neighbors play a vital role to get them work if it is sewing, stitching, embroidery, knitting or kite making.

Lack of awareness and opportunities to link with mainstream customers or markets is equally a challenge for these home based informal sector working women, therefore they rely on what they get from their close network. They lack in trainings and also to avail opportunities to specialize in their fields or sharpen their exiting skill set with some exposures to latest trends in their respective fields. "Rally³" making is yet again ancient and cultural works women do in informal sector, it demands fluctuate but it is never out of racks so it helps these home based workers to manage their livelihood throughout.

Issues and Challenges to Women

The main challenges include that of electricity. As compared to industrial areas, the electric supply is very unpredictable; people are often deprived of electricity for hours and even days

¹ "Khajoor" local name for dates

² "Chohara" local name for dry dates

because of load shedding. Law and Order situation is another challenge as the supply chain from raw material to finished goods is often disturbed by regular law and order conditions. Other major challenges faced by women include, lack of awareness, lack of access to mainstream clientele, exposure to new trends and capacity building trainings/workshops.

Rational for Situation Analyses

Situation analysis of the district to map the prevailing circumstance of women worker their participation in the formal and informal sectors and an overarching analysis of the situation of the implementation of worker /labor laws. This situation analysis will serve to provide a detailed overview of women worker in Sukkur and will assist in undertaking and refining subsequent sub grant activities in a contextualized and qualitative manner.

Core Objectives of Situation Analyses

Considering the issues and challenges confronted by the women workers both in formal and informal sector at district Sukkur SDTS proposed to conduct a situation analysis to better comprehend the magnitude of concerns met by women workers and also to draw recommendations to make a plan of action. Following are some of the core objectives for this situation analyses;

- To understand the level of awareness and knowledge among women workers about human/women rights and labour laws
- To understand the level of awareness and knowledge among women workers about good human resource management (HRM) practices i.e. recruitments, job contracts and benefits etc.
- To understand the level of awareness and knowledge among women workers about anti-harassment act at work places and its application in their respective organizations
- To understand the level of awareness and knowledge among women workers about the importance of sanitation and hygiene at work places
- To understand the level of women empowerment at decision making being contributing to family financial status
- To understand the level of awareness and knowledge among the employers about women/human rights and labour laws
- To understand the level of efforts made by NGOs in the area to enhance women rights and economic empowerment
- To understand the level of awareness and knowledge among media personnel (both print & electronic) about human/women rights

Methodology for Data Collection

Data collection for this situation analyses was based on using a qualitative method of research where we had different tools including focus group discussion, in-depth interviews and key informant interviews as primary source of information. However, secondary data was based on desk review concluded prior to primary data collection.

Data Collection Tools & Scope of Work

Data collection tools were designed to probe five major categories of the information to understand the situation in district Sukkur for women work force both formal and informal sectors. These five major categories included;

- Recruitment policies and procedures
- Work place access, sanitation and safety conditions
- Work place harassment
- Gender roles and economic empowerment
- Knowledge about labour laws/rights

Details of Focus Group Discussion (FGD):

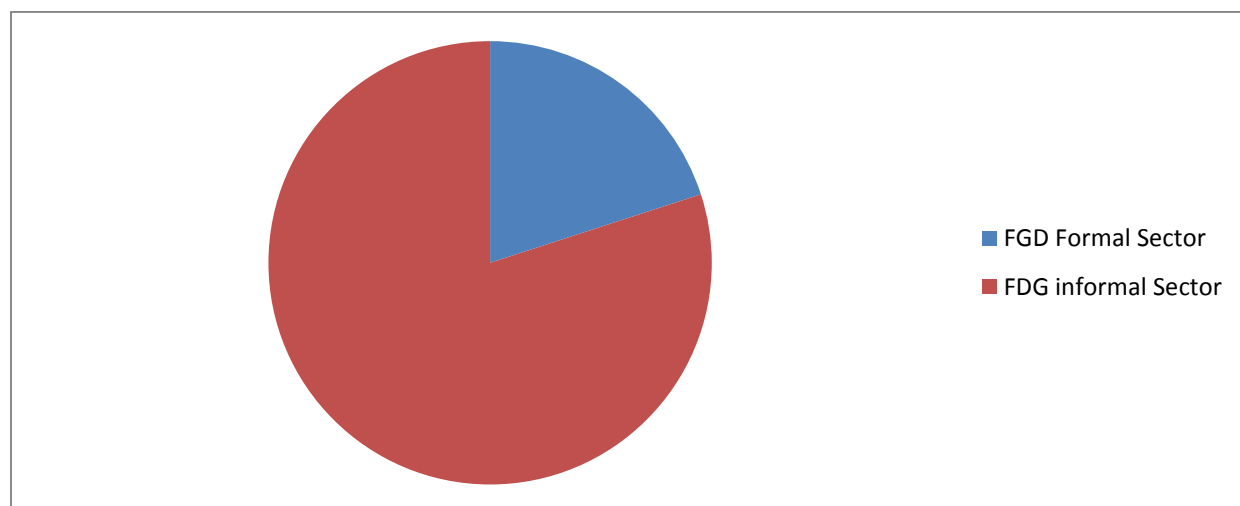


Figure 1.1 # of Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

Sector wise	# of FGD held	Total # of FGD held	# of women workers/respondent	Total # of women/respondent
Formal Sector	01	05	6	43
Informal Sector	04		37	

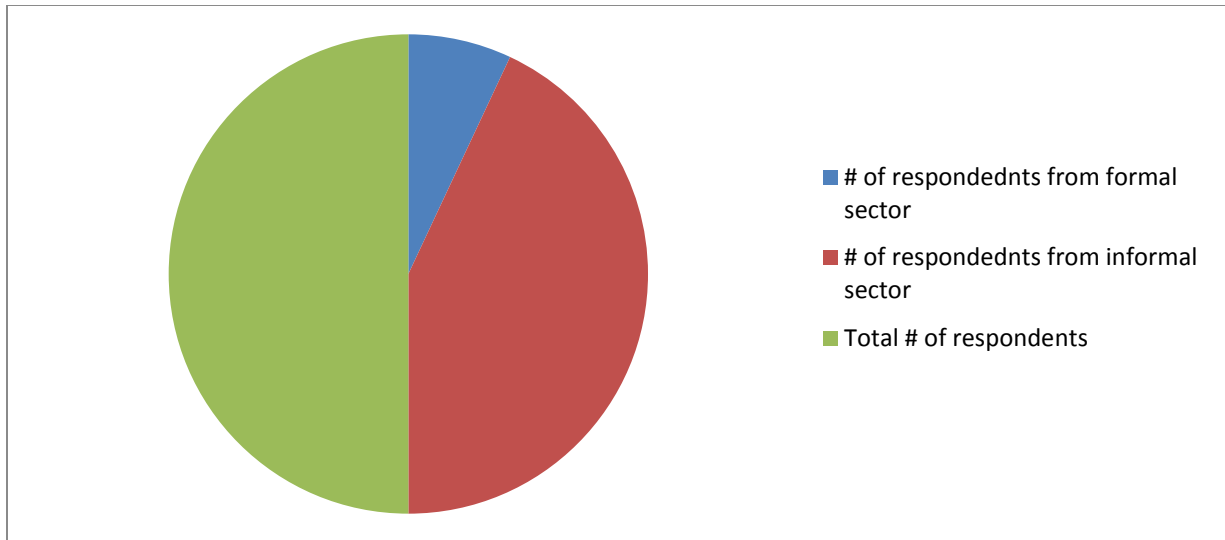


Figure 2.1 Numbers (#) of respondents for FGDs

Details of In-Depth Interview (IDIs)

SDTS held 20 IDIs with key stakeholders including; employers of informal sector.

*** Both the tools for FGDs and IDIs are attached with this report for further reference

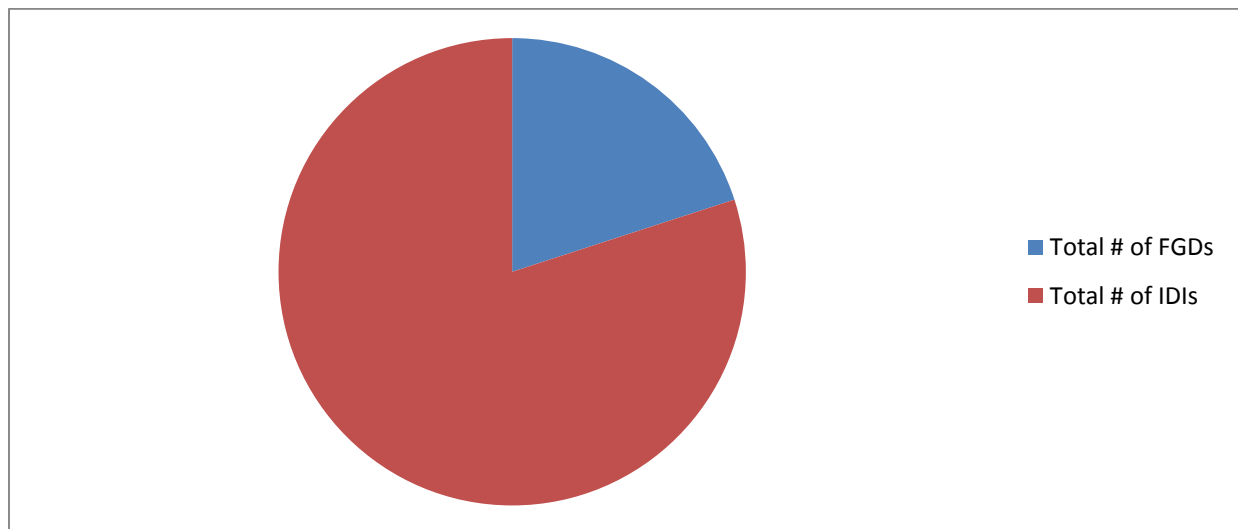


Figure 3.1 Total Numbers of FGDs & IDIs

Findings & Conclusions

Sukkur offers number of employment opportunities and it has also the capacity to provide job opportunities to women living there. It offers plenty of employment both in formal and informal sectors.

Leading Occupation includes; big companies like Sukkur Beverages, Gul Bottlers, Engro Foods and continental Biscuits factories in the area providing packing and other administrative jobs both to women and men. However informal sector is not much different compare to rest of the country interior areas, like wise Sukkur also offers traditional home based jobs for women like

sewing, knitting, stitching and patch work. Packing and sorting out the dates both fresh and dry is yet again a largest industry in Sukkur where women are usually placed as daily wagers.

Larger number of women is into domestic labour doing paid work of washing, cleaning the house and doing the dishes etc. Some of them are giving paid services to rich families or sometimes working women as baby sitter to their kids.

Trend is changing in district Sukkur where women that are more educated are joining workforce such as lawyer; there are approximately 25 women lawyers at district Sukkur that is encouraging indeed.

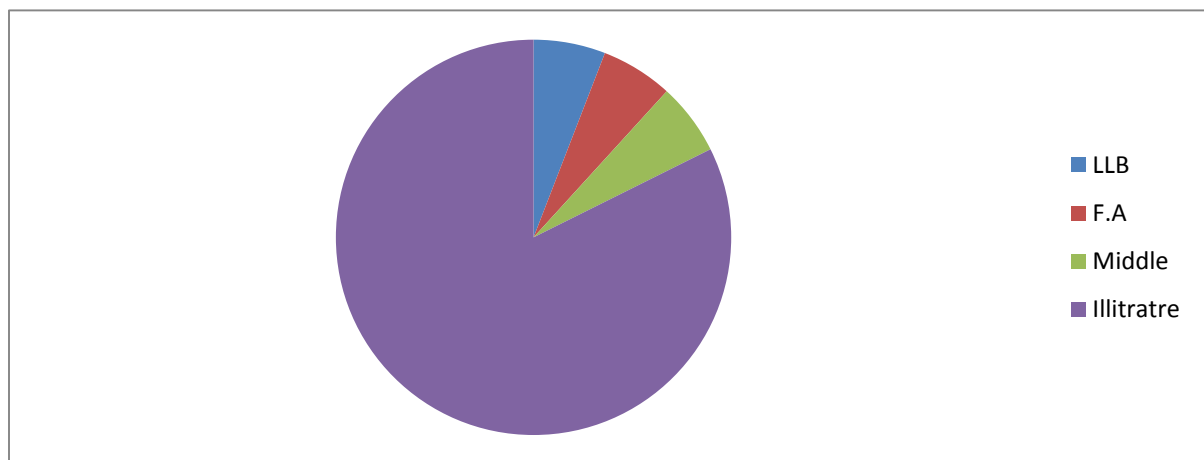


Figure 4.1 Education

There is no formal recruitment procedures, usually women get to know about new openings from their neighbors, or their husband/son/father/brother as a word of mouth reaching from one point to other. Most of the times in practice is through reference of those already working in those working places/markets or factories.

Women are usually not provided with the information or awareness about work place sanitation or hygiene at first hand secondly the nature of job they do also determine if they will be provided with such facilities or not. Women working in dates' market work in open air spaces and they are hardly provided with basic facilities such as separate toilets, day care center or common room for women where they can enjoy their lunch break or have some food.

Age factor is yet again another significant component to choose a profession for women like for dates' market usually aged and married women are into this field. Young girls but usually married are working in factories where they have a comparatively better place to work with a separate toilets but no baby day care center for their kids.

Women work force associated with home based work includes those doing, sewing, knitting, rally making, kite and candle making usually do not have to come out of their houses so they are provided with all the share facilities with their family members. Women who are working as

domestic help are usually provided with separate toilets at places they work but sometimes they usually use the common toilets as of the owner of the houses use.

Workplace access varies to each sector both formal and informal, women working in factories such as Continental Biscuits, Sukkur Beverages or Gul bottlers are usually provided with pick and drop facility by the company. However, women into informal sector like those working in Dates' market, domestic help, or selling women related products door-to-door travel by local vans, buses or horse carts by their own. Their employers for bus/van fare usually provide domestic workers with some extra money. Women work force is contribute at significant level to their household economy as majority of them is into work for more than a decade. They are not educated women (in most of the cases) but their experience over the years has helped them to understand the environment around them, demand and supply curve of labour and wages determined accordingly.

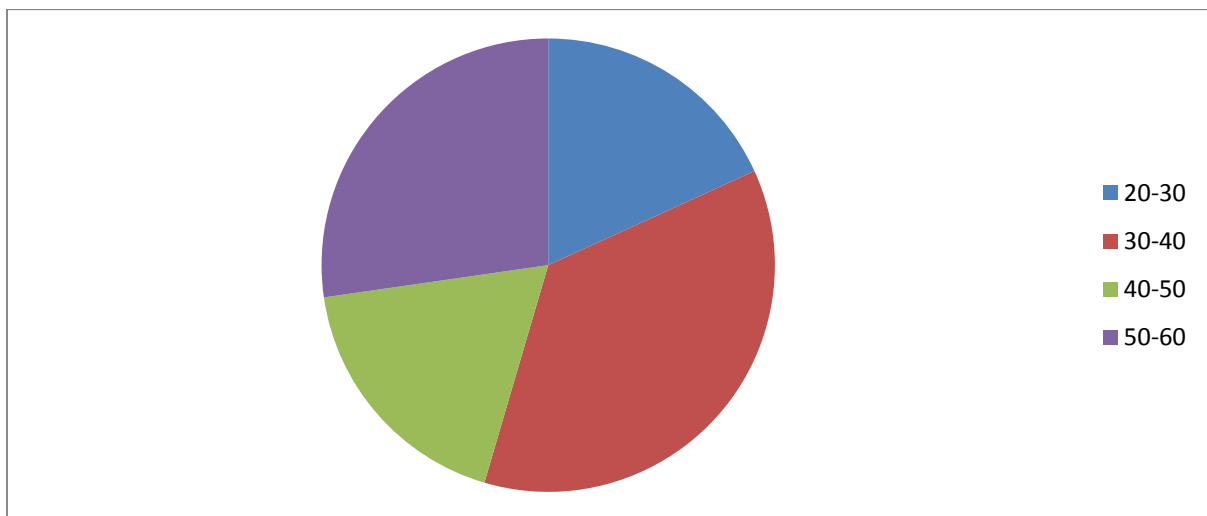


Figure 5.1 Age

Work place harassment is not known to many women in its literal meanings, however, these women shared their perceptions that if they happen to travel alone they might get prey of such harassment but they prefer to travel in a group of women so they are safe protected.

Those women working in Dates' market explained that their economic condition is not so good to afford good clothing or anything added to make themselves more presentable or attractive and this poverty or scared resources sometime work as blessing in disguise as no one attracts to them so no chance of harassment at all.

Women are transforming into larger workforce across the country and so is the case with Sukkur district too, here women are also increasing in number despite the fact that there are no much expansion in employment sector both formal and informal. This demand and supply bumpy curve has also shown a decline in their per day wage rates. Ever increasing workforce supply curve force those to work on 120 to 150 per day wage rate.

There is no social security, health insurance, perks or benefits from the employer to women in work force, they are not offered paid maternity leaves in formal sector or daily wage market. However women working as domestic help are sometime supported by the employer as paid maternity leave/sick leaves and also offered some financial assistance to take care of medical expenses from PKR 1000-2000 (average).

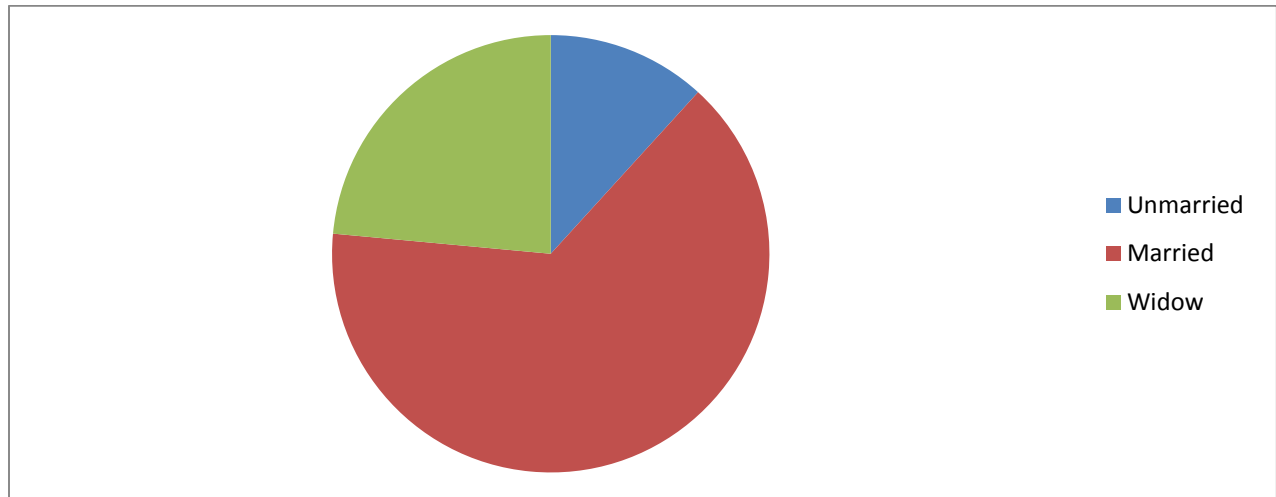


Figure 6.1 Marital Status

Economic empowerment for these working women do not translate into its true meanings but doing job or earning money is usually considered mere a duty to support their family. It does not empower these women or make them significant for decision making. Men are the decision makers anyways and women are hardly consulted in fact are informed once they decisions are made.

Urban migration is another threat to women work force of the district Sukkur, more people in the city means less the opportunities to earn their livelihood. Women work force in district Sukkur both formal and informal sector are not well educated or not educated at all. Awareness and information about labour laws and rights is inadequate among them. They have no orientation about how important it is to make a written agreement with their employer to protect their legal and economic rights. They are unaware about the complaint mechanism, employee old age benefits schemes, small or medium credits or loan schemes, how to claim their paid leaves, how to raise voice against inequality between men and women regarding daily wages and working hours too.

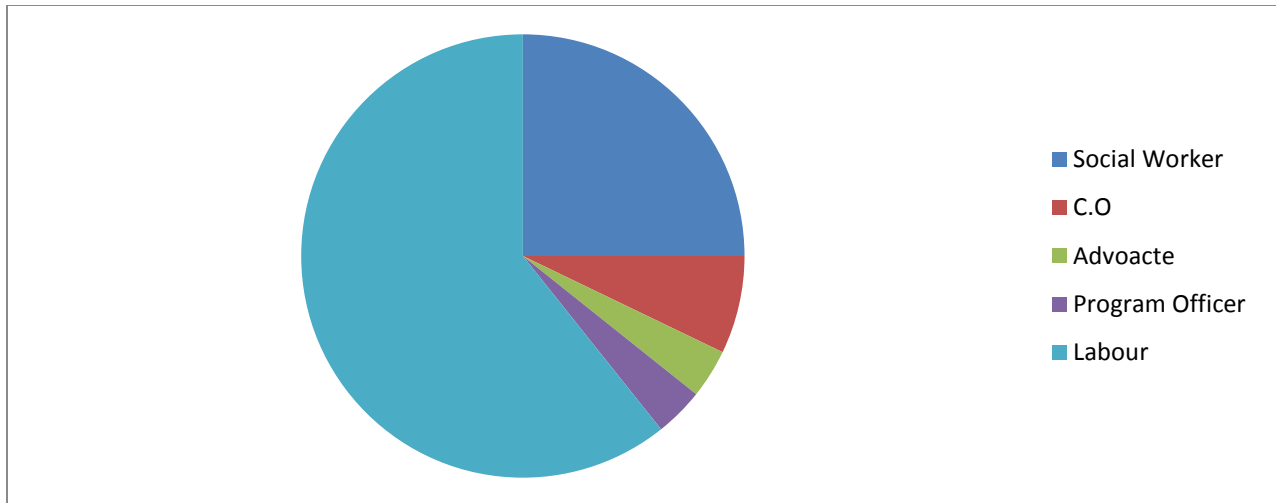


Figure 7.1 Study Respondents

Women can complain if they are put into night shifts but they have no clue where to complain and how to exercise their right. They are unaware how to claim or ensure to get paid for over times. Job leaving or joining mechanisms are not decided or written therefore employer can hire a woman worker on any agreed daily wage rate and can fire without any prior notice.

These women are not aware about work place harassment act except of those who are lawyers or are working in media as reporters/journalist but many among them also have no deep inside of this act.

Women are not aware about trade/labor unions, few factories like Continetal Biscuits have a labour union but that is for men only no participation from women workers.

Level of awareness and knowledge about women/human rights is found very low in the group this study focused on. Women know very little about human rights or women rights, they watch or hear about these terms on media like TV or radio. This ignorance about rights further leads obliviousness about labour rights, the terms women protection, anti-harassment act, labour laws, minimum wage standards, paid holidays especially paid maternity leaves are not known to women. They do not understand what actually it does mean even if they have heard about these terms.

There is no concept of women participation in labour unions or trade unions. Women are never involved in decision making at work places and therefore their very basic needs such as having separate washrooms/toilets or day care center are ignored. Women lack of participation leads to gender biased policies and structure for recruitment and other work related decisions. CBOs and NGOs working in the area do reach to women for awareness programmes but the number is very limited and majority of women groups are excluded from these awareness sessions.

Bigger organizations such as Aurat Foundation and Home net are working in the area for awareness raising and inclusive policies for women workforce but that needs to scale up to

ensure maximum number of women benefiting out of it. The core issue with such programmes is being of short term projects however these changes in behaviors and practices need a long lasting sustainable approach.

Recommendations

Based on the findings this study concluded following are the key recommendations to be considered to make a plan for action in district Sukkur to enhance Working Women' awareness on labor rights;

- SDTS must develop a training manual for working women including the information about human rights, women rights in general and labour rights in particular
- SDTS must organize a series of trainings for working women in Sukkur from both formal and informal sector and build their capacity about women rights especially on women protection, anti-harassment act at work place and also minimum wage standards and gender equality
- SDTS is strongly recommended to organize trainings separately for both formal and informal sector considering their distinctive needs and level of jobs
- SDTS must mobilize an advocacy campaign with factories' owners and other informal sector employers to ensure that complete anti-harassment act is displayed at visible spotting their respective outlets preferably in Urdu or if any other local language is widely read and understood
- SDTS must campaign to sensitize labour and trade unions leaders and decisions makers to ensure women participation in unions not only as a member but in executive body too
- SDTS must get engaged with political leadership to mobilize them to bound employers in the area to provide equal opportunities for women in terms of number and nature of work
- SDTS must work in close coordination with the employers of the areas from both formal and informal sector to ensure that middle man or job agent role is minimized if not complete finished
- SDTS must sensitize employers to ensure a written agreement between the employer and employee and also to form an anti-harassment committee with a mandatory representation of women
- SDTS must facilitate employers in the area to establish a complaints desk at every factory or industry where women can easily register their complaints in case they are sexually harassed or abused

- SDTS must engage media both print and electronic to disseminate awareness about women rights and labour rights
- SDTS must work in close collaboration with other CBOs and NGOs of the area to have MOUs to promote women labour rights as a collective effort to mark deeper impact
- SDTS must engage with labor department to organize trainings for the staff on new labour policies and laws
- SDTS must engage with labor department to ensure the provision of safety equipment and also sensitize the authorities to ensure the safe working spaces for women working in labour department.

Picture Gallery



Figure 8.1 Meeting with Dr.Irshad Mahar (Director Nangnet Sukkur)



Figure 9.1 Meeting with Mumtaz Bukhari (KTN),Yasin Junejo (APP) & Saleem Satho (ABTAK) @ Sukkur Press Club



Figure 10.1 IDI with Mr.Hadi Bux @ HRCP Office Sukkur



Figure 11.1 Meeting with Mr. Dilber Jogi (community member)



Figure 12.1 Meeting with Representative Dar-ul-aman Sukkur