



STATE AND STATUS OF BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN SRIKAKULAM DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

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Abstract: *The economic development of a nation depends on its infrastructure which includes construction sector. The construction activity includes construction from low budgeted house to an industry. This sector consist of men and material, the men are construction labour – masons, plumbers, carpenters, electricians etc. The contribution of construction workers for national development should not be neglected and have to make use of their services in the best way for further national development. However, this segment of workers are deprived of several welfare and other needs. Research agencies, regulatory bodies and government departments have to focus their attention towards the implementation related laws and other statutory welfare measures and to elevate the living conditions of the construction workers in the society..*

INTRODUCTION:

Infrastructure takes momentum since 1991 Economic Reforms in the areas of construction of houses, laying roads, buildings and other infrastructures. The hands involve in this process of infrastructures are “Labor” plays an important role. However, these workers are vulnerable segments of unorganized sector in India. The building and other construction workers are characterized by their inherent risk to the life and limb of this working group at their work place. The works engage by these workforce are also identified as casual in nature, temporary relationship between employers ,owners, contractors and other middlemen who hire the construction workforce, besides uncertain working hours, lack of basic amenities and inadequacy of welfare facilities. Although the provisions of various labor laws are far to this section of workforce in our country.

The policies and programs of union and state governments towards construction of house for BPL and other middle class income groups, booming in real estate sectors , liberalization in sanctioning housing loans by the nationalized and other private banks and growing need infrastructural needs in the country creates more demand of this workforce for construction process. And there is every need to address the issues related to the building and construction worker in the country.

NEED AND IMPORTANCE:

The workforce plays a major role in the industrial development of any nation. The smooth running of any economic system would be possible only when the community of working class is satisfied with the changing conditions of workers, work place, and welfare and security provisions. In India, a very significant portion of working population found engaged in building construction and infrastructure development process. As such, the protection and safe guarding of the interests of this working class becomes a major issue of national policy. The construction and building labor in the Indian working class is not an unknown factor. The employment in construction and building has obviously remained a matter of great concern to the government, particularly in the recent years.

The practice of employing labor in construction and building activities has been in vogue in some large and small scale construction units. The employees or contractors are getting maximum output with minimum labor cost by engaging labor in their construction process. The employers or contractors (gang leaders) engage this sections of workers to escape from the various labor related provisions under different labor laws.

Majority of the building and construction workers are migrating from the rural areas to the urban, semi-urban and even to the nearby areas across the country, where the construction process begins for

livelihoods. The Mestri or contractor (gang leader) who takes the job of constructing a building for owner or any other civil structure, and the same person maintains a team of workforce includes skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled in the areas of masonry, carpenter, electrical, painting, plumbing and other allied jobs at construction area. Mestri, the real to this group or workers, owner or contractor is employer to the Mestri. The construction workers are poor, unorganized, illiterate/literate, with high level of commitment and contributing for economic development. Their role should not be neglect and let there must some studies to be conducted on this area of building and construction workers and their state and status like, socio economic profile, working conditions, compensation, training and development and welfare and also there is every need to identify the areas which can make their role more meaning full to the society at large.

Objectives:

The construction labour engage in different construction works was not limited to a particular district or state in the country, and several countries had engage this section of labour for different construction activities. It has given rise to labour exploitation and deliberate avoidance of different labour Acts by the construction labour in our country and basing on the importance and scope of construction labour in the district of Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh, the following objectives have been set for the present study.

1. To enquire the nature of employment of construction workers in the three divisions of Srikakulam District in Andhra Pradesh.
2. To examine the terms of employment and working conditions of the construction workers.
3. To know the awareness among the construction workers about the related laws and cess collected for the welfare of construction workers.
4. To suggest guide lines to formulate relevant policies for the overall development of building and construction workers.

Study area and Samples:

The present is conducted in Srikakulam, one of the coastal district of Andhra Pradesh. This district

consists three revenue division of Palakonda, Tekkali and Srikakulam with 38 mandals. This is one of the backward district of Andhra Pradesh. The district is completely agro based, and jute, cashew are the agro based industries in some parts of the district. For the purpose of the present study, 35 samples randomly have been taken from each of all the three revenue divisions with a structured questionnaire with 10 questions related with problems of construction workers in the selected divisions of the district. Thus, the total respondents are 100 engaged in in different construction activities such as masonry, carpentering, electrification, plumbing and painting. The outcomes from the Personal interviews with workers, building owners, and contractors (gang leaders) and observation at work sites also used in preparing this report. The statistical techniques of percentages and averages also used for data analysis

Review of Literature:

With present emphasis on creating infrastructure, massive investment is planned during the existing Plan and subsequent plans. The construction industry would play a crucial role, in this regard, it has to gear itself to meet the challenges. In order to meet the intended investment targets in time, the current capacity of the domestic construction industry would need considerable strength.

Several studies have been taken on this area globally and national, however, there is need of concrete research to be focused on these areas with high rate of regional, nationally and globally relevancy. Building and construction workers working conditions, their problems ,relevant legislation, relations with their respective employers ,contractors and gang leaders etc., have been addressed in the earlier studies . In this context, there is every need to make an elaborate study with fast changing needs in this sector.

International Status:

The construction industry have a major contribution to the economy of all countries. The output of the construction industry worldwide estimated at around \$3000 billion per annum, and the industry also generated employment for more than 110 million people worldwide¹.The United States Bureau of labour Statistics reveals that the construction industry is one of the most dangerous

occupations in the world, incurring more occupational accidents than any other industry both in United States and in the European Union². The ILO study disclosed that how technology differentiate the engagement of construction labour in technology adopted developed countries. There is wide choice of technology available for most types of construction activities, where labour is expensive replaced with machines which is more cost effective. Whereas, in developing countries, where labour is cheap, and majority of construction works are still engage labour with minimal use machinery and equipment³. The building and construction workers were an integral part of national development, whose services were not only essential but also critical⁴. The 2nd Africa and Middle East Conference of Building workers International in Abuja, the trade unions of construction workers assured that they are committed to work towards better agreements to address the insecure work as well as social protection, the conference also demand for decent job, safe working conditions, better wages and dignity and justice in the work place and community⁵. The Construction and Building workers union of Urkine, appealed the government to make necessary budget allocation for training of construction workers⁶. The ILO study also observed that, the construction jobs in most countries are undertaken almost exclusively by men. Whereas, in the countries of South Asia, women play an important role which consists of performing unskilled tasks for low pay⁷.

The International surveys and studies on building and construction workers reveals that differences of wages, gender discrimination, working hours, health and safety prevails across the globe. There is every need to take make necessary policies for building and construction workers and their significant role in development of nations.

National Status:

The study of Nithan Prasad, Vittala Rao and Nagesh observed that the workers in building and construction sector face inherent risk to life and bodily injures including loss of vital organs. The work is of casual nature and temporary and there is no continuity of relations between employer and employee. Uncertain working hours, lack of basic amenities and inadequacy of welfare facilities are the major drawbacks of this working group in the

country⁸. A report on Indian Road Construction Industry, lamented that the government should extend vocational and technical education system to the rural areas and setup centers of excellence for specific trades for groups like construction workers⁹. Planning Commission reports indicates that over 94 per cent of India's working population is part of unorganized sector which includes the building and construction sector¹⁰. Prasad Sarma, observed in his study that the workmen at construction site do not keep their schedules, skip work and do not turn up on a day time are the general complaints reflecting lack of professionalism. This results unnecessary delay of work and running around them and also observed that many of the construction workers lacking required skills¹¹. Ajay Dsouza paper on "Building workers on Un-certain times" disclosed that, the construction industry's fortunes are linked closely to the face of economic growth, with infrastructure and industrial segment drivers¹². Minister of labor appealed to the officials concerned to do something for the workers' children without waiting for the consent from government on spending¹³. Umashankar and Sammak in their study found that, 'the construction work is dominated by male workers and they play a major role in construction activity, only few women workers are found in the activity, and they are selftrained¹⁴. The National Building Construction Workers Organization, stated that the living conditions of building workers is to be improved, as they are not in a position to match their work with wage, the report also discloses wage rates to the skilled ,semi-skilled and unskilled building workers¹⁵.

PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS:

Table shows the opinion of the respondent workers about problems in building and construction sector.

Problems of building and construction workers	Palakonda (Total Respondents - 50)			Srikakulam (Total Respondents-60)			Tekkali (Total Respondents -50)			Total (Total Response-160)		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
1. Temporary/uncertain nature of employment.	46 (92.00)	04 (8.00)	50 (100)	53 (88.00)	07 (12.00)	60 (100)	44 (88.00)	06 (12.00)	50 (100)	143 (89.00)	17 (11.00)	160 (100)
2.No social security	42 (84.00)	08 (16.00)	50 (100)	55 (92.00)	05 (8.00)	60 (100)	41 (82.00)	09 (18.00)	50 (100)	138 (86.00)	22 (14.00)	160 (100)
3. Irregular working hours	39 (78.00)	11 (22.00)	50 (100)	56 (93.00)	04 (7.00)	60 (100)	37 (74.00)	13 (26.00)	50 (100)	132 (82.50)	28 (17.50)	160 (100)
4.Hazardious working conditions	48 (96.00)	02 (4.00)	50 (100)	56 (92.00)	04 (8.00)	60 (100)	47 (94.00)	03 (6.00)	50 (100)	151 (94.00)	09 (6.00)	160 (100)
5.occupational diseases	42 (84.00)	08 (16.00)	50 (100)	55 (92.00)	05 (8.00)	60 (100)	44 (88.00)	06 (12.00)	50 (100)	141 (88.00)	19 (12.00)	160 (100)
6.Fatal injuries	35 (70.00)	15 (10.00)	50 (100)	50 (83.00)	10 (17.00)	60 (100)	39 (78.00)	11 (22.00)	50 (100)	124 (77.00)	36 (23.00)	160 (100)
7. Working at high places	38 (76.00)	12 (24.00)	50 (50.00)	52 (87.00)	08 (13.00)	60 (100)	41 (82.00)	09 (18.00)	50 (100)	121 (100)	29 (29.00)	160 (100)
8.Non-availability of raw materials	29 (58.00)	21 (42.00)	50 (100)	48 (80.00)	12 (20.00)	60 (100)	32 (64.00)	18 (36.00)	50 (100)	109 (68.00)	51 (32.00)	160 (100)
9.Awareness about Welfare Acts and Cess collected	43 (86.00)	07 (14.00)	50 (50.00)	56 (93.00)	04 (7.00)	60 (100)	43 (86.00)	07 (14.00)	50 (100)	142 (89.00)	18 (11.00)	160 (1000)
10. Cess collected for the workers welfare.	41 (82.00)	09 (18.00)	50 (100)	52 (87.00)	08 (13.00)	60 (100)	45 (90.00)	05 (10.00)	50 (100)	138 (86.00)	22 (14.00)	160 (100)

TEMPORARY/UNCERTAIN NATURE OF EMPLOYMENT

The building and construction work itself is time bound work. The workforce deployed in this sector is also very restricted to time period, once the project is completed, automatically the total workforce will be ideal. In fact, no one either contractor, owner, or builder gives any assurance of job to the workers for their continuation. Rainy season, harvesting season in rural areas, scarcity material and festivals are others factors which makes the employment a very casual. The study

reveals that 89 per cent of total respondents expressed that their work in construction sector is very uncertain, and they use to search alternative work before closing of the existing project. This is a major problem of this segment of workforce which badly effects the family income and which leads to tension, stress and dependency among the building and construction workers. The respondent workers of 92 per cent of Palakonda division expressed that their condition is different compared with Tekkali and Srikakulam division workers, both are prone to get alternative works, where as in

Palkonda the only alternative to migrate to Visakhapatnam, Hyderabad, Chennai. There is every need to formulate a policy for accommodate the construction workforce for the gap period between the project to project.

NO SOCIAL SECURITY:

The workers in building and construction industry are far away from the benefits of social security, labor welfare programs and related labor laws. As a result, these workers have to work for long hours, unsafe and hazardous work places, no safety measures, no first aid facility, wage discrimination and poor coverage of insurance. Thus, there is an absence of social security schemes in building and construction sector. Among the total respondents 86 per cent opined that there is no any social security for their work ,contractor or gang leader implement the scheme of no work no pay policy. Further continuation of a worker, after completion or during the work in progress depends on the discretion of the Mestri or the gang leader. It is observed that the workers of the same region, same community and those who loyal to Mestri will continue.

IRREGULAR WORKING HOURS:

Irregular working hours, weekly holidays, statutory leaves, is another major issues of construction workers working in building and construction sector. The normal working hours in any organized of government organizations are 8.00 hours, but in the construction sector, working late hours ie. up to 6.30 Or 7.00 PM is a common practice, as majority of civil and construction works are on contract, due to this the contractor or the gang leader forced to complete the given work within that day and the other significant reason is exhausting or drying of material may be mixer of cement and sand or concrete mixer will be waste if it is not used in that particular time. Hence, there is no way for the contractor to take the extra hours and for this, workers getting pay. Among the total respondents, 82 percent of workers also felt the same and they also specified other reasons for long hours are, pressure from the owner to complete the work due to auspicious dates (muhurtams) and expire of contract period. In some cases the workers are also taking work contract and ready work for more hours for more pay.

OCCUPATIONAL DISCEASES:

The health issues like cough, asthma, skin allergy, lungs problem, body pains and body injurious are common among the working community of this sector. Women workers also have some gynecology problems, especially the lactating women. The reasons behind the health problems are due to the work involves, sand, mud, cement, other related chemicals, brick dust, wood dust etc. This working group of workers are deprived of safety items like gloves, helmet, shoes, uniform etc . The women worker use to wear shirts on their sarees to avoid dropping of cement mixture and other material and to protect their body from the sun, exposure. Among the total respondents 94 per cent respondents are opined that this a common phenomenon in their work. In case some long illness or accident, the contractor or gang leader will enquire about absent and extend some amount for medical aid and pay the hospital bill to those workers who have long experience with the particular team. As the majority of the work force in this construction sector are under BPL, and some of the state governments extends health schemes like Arogya Sri in the state of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, to those who have white ration cards and health cards. These schemes are the boon for the un-organized workforce. The policy makers have to focus on the issue, and to extend the support of ESI and other health schemes to this construction workers both at state and central level and also have to make it mandate to supply safety items to the construction workers.

FATAL INJURIES

The activities in building and construction sector leads to injure which cause physical, mental and, fiscal problems. Minor to major accidents are quite common to the workers who are in this sector, as the major part of the activities in building and construction sector involves, using hammer, cutting machine, sickle, spade, axe, chisel, drilling machines, working at higher places etc., along with workers who are not skilled and untrained of using tools for construction operations. Thus, masons, carpenters electricians, painters, plumbers, and painters are the victims of minor to major accidents in this industry. Replacement of traditional tools with advanced technology tools and equipment creates both qualitative and quantative work and minimization of accidents in urban areas, whereas, still in rural areas, technology transformation in the construction sector is going on. Out of the total

respondents, 77 per cent of respondents feel the fatal injuries are common in their day to day work. It is observed that no contractor, owner of the building or the gang leader of the team provide any first aid box in the work spot. If any accident or injury any of the workers, in case of towns the victim will be rushed to the nearby hospital, if it is rural, the plight of the victim depends on the mercy of the gang leader, builder or the contractor. The respondents also expressed, that they are far to quality treatment in corporate hospital, the other alternative to the of the victims of this sector is their health cards by the Governments under BPL scheme.

WORKING AT HIGH PLACES:

It is observed that the height of the houses and building is higher, construction of a single ground floor is a rarest phenomenon in the present context, as owners and builders (in case of flats) prefer to go for multi stored buildings. Working at on high places become very dangerous. The building workers who work at high places face the problems of fear, tension, shivering, giddiness, and headache and leg pain. The severity of these problems leads severe accidents, injuries, absenteeism and low level of efficiency. Out of the total respondent 81 percent of workers felt that they have been facing the problem, and they know the high risk factor in their work, but no other alternative to get their bread and butter. To minimize the high risk of accidents at high places, the only remedy is to introduce the latest technology and necessary training to the workforce at high places. There is every need of deployment of government machinery during highly risked construction operations and seeking the prior permission from the contractor is to be make mandate.

NON-AVAILABILITY OF RAW MATERIALS:

In India, building and construction sector generates employment and source income for 2.8 crore people. However, this employment generation purely depends on the availability of raw materials such as stone, sand, bricks, cement, steel, wood, water and paint etc. The scarcity and non-availability of building raw material have its tremendous impact on building and construction workers and their livelihoods and sources of income. Both the natural calamities and manmade

obstruction leads to shortage and stoppage of raw material, which ultimately have significant impact on construction workers. Thus, overall study indicates that out of total respondents 68 per cent opined that their regular work is highly affected non availability and sudden escalation of prices of cement, steel, bricks, sand etc.

AWARENESS AMONG WORKERS ABOUT WELFARE ACTS AND CESS:

As per the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Working Condition)Act,1996,every employer or owner of the building have to pay a cess of not more than two percent and less than one percent.

With over 37,000 crore rupees collected as Cess to be used for the welfare of 2.8 crores registered construction workers across the country, the Supreme court has a new worry- whether the huge sum of money will really be used for the benefit of laborers in the high risk and hazardous construction industry mostly controlled by private contractors. Number of workers registered under the Building and Other Construction Workers(Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Services)Act-1996 has increased from 2.15 crore to 2.8 crore.

The Cess collected, which includes the hard-earned savings of residential flat buyers, has also seen a marked hike from Rs.25, 477 crore to Rs.37.482 crore. As on 30th June, 2017, the amount utilized from Rs.5,371 crore to Rs.9,491 crore by the Ministry of Labor GOI, for Building and Construction workers. The Govt. also have proposal to take assistance of NGO in creating awareness about fund and its utilization among the really beneficiaries. Among the total respondent workers from the construction sector, 82 per cent of workers have no idea about the pooling of the cess and how it is utilized for the welfare of the workers. Collection of cess from the owners of the building and its utilization is to be properly channelized to reach the benefits to the workers in construction sector. Rigid guidelines in collecting the cess and strict regulation on utilization of funds to be made a high priority and periodical review also highly needed.

SUGGESTIONS:

The socio-economic status of the workers showed that they were poor. They are daily wage earners

and maintain their family with small income with difficulty. It was noted that most of them were literate. They were addicted to alcohol, smoking. They did not consume adequate amount of nutritious food. In most of the cases it was found that they need safe working conditions, minimum wages, insurance and regular work. And also training on latest techniques in the construction sector and frequent awareness programs on health, hygiene and safety. The policy makers and other related agencies, regulatory authorities also have to focus on the following suggestions;

- Need to investigate the violators (Agents, Contractors and Employers) of related laws and other regulations of construction workers, and initiate stringent action as per the applicable laws. And also have to create awareness among the construction workers of their legitimate rights and setup mechanism for redressal.
- Adequate intervention of Government machinery ensuring health, safety and welfare of the construction workers.
- NGOs, Steel, Cement and, other industries directly related with construction sector have to take initiatives as part of their CSR activities, and have extend their helping hand in providing primary education to children of construction labor, training in the related areas, and health camps at the working locations.
- Need to organize medical camps where construction work is going on.
- Constant inspection of government agencies highly needed to reduce the sorry state of construction workers.

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