

CHAPTER-7

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 SUMMARY

“Introduction” includes various aspects namely introduction to the present study, importance of the factor considered for the study i.e., the socio economic condition of women labourers at Global level, Statement of the problem, Objectives and Hypothesis considered, Methodology and Data source for the present work. It also includes chapter contents of the research work in brief.

“Theoretical Base and Empirical Research” deals with aspects, which provide theoretical base for the present study. The contributions of Economists who have tried to establish the need for socio economic development of women is discussed in the chapter. A brief review of Literature has been done, which helps to find the research gap in the area and the socio economic development of women labourers for the present research work.

“An Overview of socio economic condition of women labourers of coffee plantations” contains detailed description of socio economic development of women labourers of coffee plantations at global level and India.

It also explains associations of women in coffee, women’s role in coffee plantations, challenges of women labourers of coffee plantations. Which highlights the encouragement of women labourers participation socio economic conditions of women labourers of coffee plantations by focusing on housing working conditions, lack of contract workers, programmes and policies for women labourers upliftment.

“Dimensions of socio economic conditions of women labourers of coffee plantations of Karnataka” deals with socio economic development of women labourers of Karnataka and the causes responsible for problems of women labourers are also explained. This chapter contains the Governmental measures to improve the conditions of women labourers of coffee plantations in Karnataka.

It focuses on average wages, rest hour, male and female ratio, literacy level of women labourers average wages of male and female women labourers in Karnataka and India.

“Socio economic conditions of women labourers of coffee plantations in Hassan District” forms the core chapter of the present research work. It includes an introduction to the Hassan district, analysis of the socio economic condition of the women labourers in case study area.

A detailed study on 3 taluks of Hassan district viz Belur, Alur and Sakaleshpur taluks are given. The comparative study of socio economic condition of women labourers of coffee plantations of 3 taluks of Hassan district is shown here. The role of Government in Hassan district and the overall development of women labourers of coffee plantations of Hassan district is assessed.

This chapter explains in detail the age structure, wages of male and female labourers, employment of male and female labourers, membership of SHGs, savings in chit funds, literacy rate, day care facilities purpose of loans, account of Commercial Bank, etc.

“Policy Implications” deals with the programmes and policies towards improving Socio economic condition of women labourers in Hassan district and it explains the scope for further research and also highlights how this study is innovative in nature.

“Summary and Suggestions” sums up the research outcome of the present study. The suggestions there by given are on the research findings.

Research findings general suggestions and the recommendations are explained. This chapter also test the chapters hypothesis and gives summary of all.

7.2 HYPOTHESIS TESTING

1. The percentage of women labourers is more than male labourers in coffee plantations.

As per the Indian Labour Statistics of 2014, there are around 63.04 percent of labourers are women in coffee plantations, in addition to this statement, table 4.1

shows that percentage of male labourers is 2 percent and 2.6 percent of female labourers are engaged in coffee plantations. Large majority of women labourers are engaged than men, because as per the case study out of 300 women respondents, the male labourers were less in participation than female in the coffee plantations. Women are engaged in coffee plantations in more number because they are less literate. Majority of them have only primary education and they are unskilled and they have better practice of picking up coffee bean and on other hand, due to increase in the literacy rate of male labourers, they prefer to work in urban skilled and formal jobs or in industries or in the factories. Thus they move from plantations to industrial sectors, modern guys prefer to work in organized jobs than doing hard physical work. Another reason is that the women due to social responsibility prefer to stay in the nearby areas to look after their family but it is not so in respect of male. Thus they move from villages to other formal jobs. Thus, it is clear that women labourers participation is more compared to male labourers in coffee plantations.

From the analysis of data, and case study findings, as per the results of the table 5.12 above Hypothesis is accepted at 5 percent of level of significance and that means the male participation is less than women labourers participation in coffee plantations.

2. Detoriating status of women labourers in coffee plantations is due to inadequate socio economic condition.

As far as socio economic conditions are concerned few variables like education, health, income, savings, expenditure, membership in SHGs etc, are focused. In relation to this in the case study region that is in all the 3 taluks of Alur, Belur and Sakaleshpur, Sakaleshpur is better than Alur and Belur in relation to socio economic conditions of women labourers. Sakaleshpur is complete Malnad region where the coffee output or production is high and labourers are highly skilled and their remuneration is high compared to other 2 taluks of Hassan district. During half season, 2 female and 1 male labourers are employed by small coffee planters, but during peak season, 5 female and 2 male labourers will be employed.

Only few of them who are permanent labourers live in pakka houses(around 50.7 percent). As per the table 5.5 out of 300 women labourers 224 (74.66) of them

are casual labourers, and remaining 76(25.33) are contract labourers. These casual labourers are paid on weekly and monthly basis and they are not employed throughout the year and their job is purely temporary.

Socio economic conditions especially literacy rate is concerned, women are less educated thus they are unaware of welfare measures and they are not in a position to shift to organized skill work. Majority of them are casual labourers and they do not have even maternity leave. Large majority of them are casual labourers where they cannot even raise their voice against planters to increase their wages, due to absence of trade unions. Their social and economic status is pathetic. Their savings is less than Rs.10,000 per annum. Large majority of them borrow loans from SHGs and commercial banks for construction of houses and religious activities and marriages which is more or less unproductive. Out of 300 respondents, 53 have not borrowed loans. Out of 247 respondents 98 are spending productively on such as children education(33 respondents), health (7 respondents), purchasing of vehicles (16 respondents), house construction (42 respondents), in contradictory to this 149 are spending on unproductive purposes such as daily expenditure (94 respondents), religious activities (44 respondents), recreation (3 respondents), others(7 respondents) marriage (1 respondent).

When women is economically strong, her social and political status also enhances but due to lack of socio economic conditions, the status of women has deteriorated and has been depicted in table 5.2, 5.5, 5.6 and 5.8. As far table 5.2 the level of education is concerned majority (59.3%) of them are illiterates and with primary education. This clearly shows that they have to work in unskilled hard labour for meagre wages. At the same time table 5.5 speaks that out of 300, 129 are getting wages between 151 -200 Rs per day, which depicts that their low wages resulting in low economic profile. In addition to this table 5.6 shows that casual labourers out of 300 respondents, 224 are casual labourers, who are in majority among women labourers get less than minimum wage (an average per entire year)as prescribed by Minimum Wage Act results in low savings and low pattern of expenditure. Table 5.8 shows Jandhan programs concerned, majority of the respondent (85%) hold bank account in commercial banks. They are not making use of jandhan and others programs due to illetracy, they have low wages, resulting in low savings..

As per the result of the above hypothesis is accepted at 1 percent level of significance.

3. Women labourers are more discriminated in terms of wage payment

As per the case study results and discussions, women labourers are less paid compared to male labourers, because casual labourers with less skill have no sick or earned leave, in such a case their remuneration is in a very low condition even though there is Minimum wages Act and Equal Pay for Equal Work Act. These act are not applicable to casual labourers who work for less than the minimum number of working days in a year. Women labourers are paid very less compared to men because of the nature of work that they pursue. Women have been employed for picking and cleaning the coffee bean which is not so strenuous job, but male labourers have been deputed for digging the soil, cutting of trees, packing, loading and unloading of output, which is very tedious, thus they are paid more compared to women labourers.

Actual wage payment made for the women labourers vary between 200 to 300 and for male labourers it varies between 300-400 per day, though there exist discrimination between women labourers and male labourers in despite of wages, though actual payment made for women labourers seems to be higher than Minimum Wages Act and Wages recommended by Coffee Board of India. These higher wages are paid only during picking season (2-3 months). But in the remaining season these casual labourers especially women labourers are not at all employed and are not getting any wages, if it is taken for entire year average wages per day are very negligible and lesser than even the minimum wage.

Though the coffee board of India have recommended to increase the wages of labourers from 195 to 200 rupees. In the case study taluks women are paid 200 to 225 in Belur taluk, upto 250 in Alur taluk and 250 to 300 in Sakaleshpur taluk but it is 300 to 400 for male labourers in Belur taluk, 300 to 350 in Alur taluk and 350 to 400 in Sakaleshpur taluk. These payments are above the prescribed amount of remuneration of coffee board of India.

The women labourers are paid more than the prescribed amount of wages by coffee board of India, only during harvest (picking) season due to shortage of

labourers, during off season women labourers get lesser wages than the wages fixed by coffee board of India or the minimum wages act.

As per the results of the table 5.11 hypothesis have been accepted at 5 percent level of significance.

4. Policy Measures Introduced by the Government Have no Positive Impact On the Socio Economic Conditions of the Women Labourers of Coffee Plantations

To test the hypothesis, we have taken five economic and five social variables to know whether they are improved by the various governmental policies and schemes. The economic variables considered are; wages, membership of self-help group, bank account, savings. The social variables are education, health, housing, sanitation and water.

Chi Square test is used to measure the association between women labour force participation and casual labourers in the study area. Chi Square estimated value is 77.961 and it is significant at 1 per cent level of significance.

The table 5.5 depicts that on the whole 224 respondents are casual labourers (74.7 per cent of the total sample respondents), and remaining 76 respondents (25.3 per cent) of them are contract labourers. The above table also reveals that Belur has large contract labourers i.e., 54 per cent of total contract labourers which is followed by Sakaleshpur (22 per cent of total contract labourers) and Alur does not have any contract labourers. large majority of the contract labourers are in Belur compared to the other two taluks of Hassan district because the two big planters of this taluk have adopted the rules of labour act of 1951 which highlights the existence of contract labourers to minimum extent as mandatory thus the contract labourer are more in Belur taluk.

It can also find from the above table that out of 224 casual labourers large amount of 100 respondents are in Alur taluk (44.65 per cent of the casual labourers) and followed by Sakaleshpur and Belur Taluk to the tune of 78 and 46 respondents respectively (34.82 and 20.53 per cent of the total casual labourers) Sakaleshpur has more number of casual labourers i.e., 78.0 per cent of the total casual labourers. Out

of 300 respondents 224 are casual labourers who are paid weekly and monthly basis and whose job is not permanent, thus this is another reason for their low socio economic condition.

Chi Square test is used to measure the association between women labour force participation and wage level of 151 -200 rupees of casual women labourers in the study area. Chi Square estimated value is 136.651 and it is significant at 1 per cent level of significance.

The table 5.6 depicts that on the whole 43 percent of the labourers drawing wages between Rs. 151 to 200 and 36.0 per cent of them are getting Rs. 201 to 250 further Rs. 20.3 per cent of labourers are drawing wages between Rs. 251- 300. Only 0.7 per cent of the labourers are drawing lesser than Rs. 150. The table reveals that large portion of the labourers i.e., 43.7 (Rs. <150 and 150 to 200) are drawing lessor than the minimum standard wages for the agricultural workers.

It is found that in the table 5.6 the inter comparison of wages between the contract workers and casual workers reveals that contract workers are drawing more wages as compared to casual labourers. Because contract workers are the permanent workers who are working since long duration thus they are paid and in the case study area hardly 2 to 4 plantations are following strictly the rules of labour act of 1951 thus large number of women workers are casual labourers, and moreover the majority of respondents were small land holders who pursue in their own fields and involve labourers during season, thus large number belong to casual labour force. The women labourers are getting low wages which leads to deteriorating standard of living of them due to lack of purchasing power thus it proves the lower economic condition of women labourers in the case study area. out of 300 respondents 76 are contract labourers and 224 are casual labourers where out of 224 casual labourers 129 are earning the wage rate between 151 – 200 rupees and contract labourers out of 76 respondents 54 of them are earning between 201 – 250 rupees. Where 224 of them receive less wages and depicts their low economic profile.

Chi Square test is used to measure the association between women labour force participation and membership in SHGs in the study area. Chi Square estimated value is 30.674 and it is significant at 1 per cent level of significance.

Here an attempt is made to collect the details of labourers membership in Self Help Group. The table 5.7 shows that on the whole 52.7 per cent of the labourers are the members of Self Help Group of the and 47.3 percent of them are not part of the self-help groups. Out of 300 respondents 158 are the members of SHGs and among the taluks , Alur has 69 women labourers as members of SHGs, due to localities in large number, membership in SHGs would help them to borrow loans and save money that to at lower cost and less procedural norms, they are adoptable to such easy method of less writing and filling form structures. These membership has helped them to carry day to day economic activities but not at high sophisticated level which again highlights their low social and economic profile.

Chi Square test is used to measure the association between women labour force participation and account holding in commercial banks in the study area. Chi Square estimated value is 9.499 and it is significant at 1 per cent level of significance.

Since all the labourers hold bank account in the study area, here an attempt is made to find that to whether is there any relationship between the level of education and type of bank in which they hold an account. The table 5.8 shows that out of 300 samples 285 labourers hold their account in commercial banks followed by 9 members, 5 members and only 1 in RRBs, cooperative banks and in private banks respectively. The reason behind the 285 respondents holding bank account in commercial banks is the proximity, Jan Dhan programme, due to linkages of SHGs. In the mean while number of cooperative banks, and private banks availability is very less in the study area compared to commercial banks. Direct cash transfer especially LPG subsidies are attached to bank account, at the meanwhile social securities measures like old age pension, widow pensions are attached through Aadhar card to commercial or nationalized banks. Thus 285 of them have their account in commercial banks. Out of 300 respondents 114 are illiterates and 105 of illiterates have their account in commercial bank, the remaining 9 respondents have their account in RRBs and cooperative banks who have access in nearby areas.

Chi Square test is used to measure the association between women labour force participation and savings in chit fund in the study area. Chi Square estimated value is 17.838 and it is significant at 1 per cent level of significance.

It can be seen from the above table 5.9 295 (98.33 percent of the total sample) respondents of the total sample deposit their savings in chits. And only 5 (0.10 per cent of the total respondents) of them save in bank account but most of them have not deposited in the commercial banks. This shows the respondents deposit their savings in chit funds. This is a paradox although 285 have their bank account in commercial banks they save in chit funds. Chit funds would help them to borrow loans and save money at lower cost and less procedural norms at their dwelling areas.

It can also find from the above table that 295 respondents (98.33 per cent of the total population) save lesser than Rs.10,000 and only 5 respondents (1.67 per cent of the total respondents) save Rs. ,10,000 to 30,000. It is interesting to observe from the above table that their Low earnings have led to poor saving habit of women labourers in study area.

If we look into the impact of governmental policies on economic variables, the best of it, can be expressed as far as table 5.6 casual labourers who are in majority (79 percent) among women labourers get less than minimum wage (an average per entire year) as prescribed by Minimum Wage Act. Reason for this is that casual labourers are not coming under per view of Minimum Wage Act. As far table 5.7 Majority of women labourers (53%) are members of SHGs. Since they are not supported by commercial banks and other financial institutions. This speaks of the failure of the government policy of the financial inclusive. As far table 5.2 the level of education is concerned majority (59.3%) of them illiterate with primary education. This clearly shows failure of government policy to provide compulsory education up to age between 6 to 14. As far table 5.8 shows Jandhan programs concerned, majority of the respondent (85%) hold bank account in commercial banks. They are not making use of Jandhan and others programs. This again shows the failure of the banks in helping women labourers.

To test the whether the governmental schemes and policies have improved the social variables especially, educational level in the study area we have conduct one sample t-test. The table 5.13 shows that the mean value is 2.2133 and calculated P-value is (sig. 0.000) lesser than the set P value of 0.05. Therefore, it can be said that the educational level is significantly lower in the study area. Hence, we can say that

and the governmental schemes and policies have not able to bring the improvement in the educational qualification of the women labourers in the study area.

Health is one of the important and main indicators of socio-development. In the present study an attempt is made to find whether the respondents have been prone to diseases like sexual and health problems and communicable diseases such as malaria, TB and water borne diseases, hypertension, cardio – pulmonary diseases and other diseases, and whether they have been treated under the government health scheme.

To test the whether governmental schemes have improved the health condition of labourers in the study area, one – sample t-test has been conducted. The table 5.14 reveals that the calculated P value is 0.015 which is lesser than set P value 0.05. and the mean value is 1.4300 which shows that the people in the study area have been prone to more diseases and the governmental schemes and policies have not been changed the health condition of the women labourers in the coffee plantations.

The table 5.15 depicts that on the whole 148 (49.3 per cent) respondent are living in kaccha house whereas, 152 (50.7 per cent) respondents are living in pukka house. Though they live in pukka houses their socio-economic condition is low low because they have constructed houses by borrowing the loan from the banks, which is heavily economic burden to them. Among these only 106 (35.3 per cent) respondents have built pukka house under the government schemes such as ashrayayojna and other schemes and remaining 46 (15.3 per cent) respondents of these have built house by their own money among these some of the some of them have borrowed loan from SHGs to construct house.

The central government has been promoting number of schemes to improve sanitation particularly in the rural areas. In the present study an attempt is made to find whether or not the various schemes of the government have improved the sanitation in the study area. The above cross tabulation analysis in table 5.16 shows that, on the whole 272 respondents (90.7 per cent) have percent sanitation facility. Among these, 262 (87.3 per cent) respondents have sanitary facility under the government schemes and other 10 (3.3 per cent) respondents have their own. Remaining 28 respondents don't have any sanitation facility.

The table 5.17 shows that all the respondents have drinking water facility under. As per the nirmal yojan and million development goals of world bank to provide portable drinking water to all by the end of 2016 has provided huge financial grants to all countries including India has led to provide 100 percent to all in both urban and rural areas.

The table 5.14 explains that the health condition is concerned, majority of the respondents are prone more diseases such as malaria, TB, water born diseases, hypertension, cardio-pulmonary disease and other diseases. This shows that government health schemes have not shown any positive impact on the health condition of women labourers.

As per the table 5.15 housing condition is concerned, out of the total respondents only 35 percent of them have built pukka houses under the government schemes. This again speaks about failure of housing schemes introduced by the government.

As per the case study 59.3 percent are illiterates (38percent) and primary educated (21.3 percent) and also table 5.13, 5.14, 5.15, 5.16 and 5.17 explains that education is significantly lower in study area, the people in the study area have prone to more diseases, only 106 respondents out of 300 sample (35.3percent) have build pakka houses. On the whole 272 respondents(90.7 percent) have sanitation facility and potable drinking water to all. All these results clearly shows that policy measures introduced by the government by the government have no positive impact on the socio-economic conditions of women labourers in coffee plantations is accepted 5% level of significance.

As the result of the hypothesis ,governmental schemes and policies have not reached substantially has accepted at 5% level of significance.

7.3 GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

The suggestions on the possible formalisation strategies for the women labourers of coffee plantations, plantations involve a two-pronged inter-related approach, namely, bottom-up and top-down. Also, the effectiveness of any formalisation strategy would require the collective involvement of all the key players

in the plantations sector, namely, the government, unions of employers or the management, unions of plantations labourers as well as the plantations labourers (particularly women) and their individual families. The bottom-up approach involves a strategy of generating awareness among the labourers and organising them at the grass root level.

❖ **Awareness Generation**

A major hurdle in ensuring the welfare of labourers is their ignorance about their entitlements under the several existing enactments. It has been found that the labourers themselves are unaware of the existing legislations and the policies that actually result in these legislations. Therefore, the mere passing of legislations and framing of policies is not sufficient. Labourers must be made aware of their entitlements under the law. For example, women represent more than 50 per cent of the estate worker population. But they are particularly ill informed about their rights regarding maternity benefits. Women's issues, particularly family responsibilities, maternity facilities, and childcare matters are rarely discussed at the group or union levels. Therefore, empowering women by creating awareness about gender issues and providing them with greater opportunities in all social programmes is crucial for enabling them to realise their full potential. Findings have shown that there is lack of large-scale awareness about social dialogue among the plantations labourers. Hence, in order to make the social dialogue a success, the labourers' awareness about social dialogue and their involvement in it should be increased. All this indicates the need for the formulation of special programmes for generating awareness among plantations labourers and their families. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in the plantations areas, employers' unions, and even the trade unions can play a major role in ensuring the effective implementation of such programmes. Regular awareness generation campaigns could also be undertaken and labourers may be called upon to individually volunteer for such campaigns.¹

❖ **Organising at Grass root Level**

Organising the plantations labourers so as to provide them with effective representation and accountability is the key to improving their conditions. Any dialogue or conversation between the employers and the labourers can be successful

only when the labourers can raise a strong collective voice against their needs and sufferings. Women labourers in the plantations sector especially lack a voice, whether for pursuing their employment interests through collective bargaining or for lobbying on issues such as access to infrastructure, property rights, and social security. The conditions of women are more miserable than those of their male counterparts because of the multiple roles and responsibilities that women have to fulfil both at the workplace and in the home. Hence, there is an acute necessity of first organising the plantations labourers, particularly women labourers, so that they can strengthen their position and attain the power of collective bargaining. A labourers' organisation is essential not only for promoting their well-being but also for facilitating the efficient use of the plantations labour force itself. In other words, unionisation of the labourers would help in enhancing their overall labour productivity by building a sense of security and unity among them. Such unionisation may also involve self-help strategies, whereby the estate worker families themselves play a wider role (both collectively and individually) in improving their conditions through measures like the construction of new houses or rehabilitation of existing houses, developing better sanitary facilities, and maintenance of the existing infrastructural facilities, among others. The estate management and the government can again play a very important role in facilitating such community efforts of the labourers. As per the ILO report (2002 a), in the cases where there are constraints to labourers joining existing trade unions or establishing their own organisations, the most effective membership-based organisational structure may be that of a cooperative. Cooperatives are jointly owned and democratically managed, and carry out activities that support the economic units of their members, which could include either entrepreneurs or labourers in the plantations economy. Organising in cooperatives could also be seen as a step forward on the path towards formalisation. Many cooperatives start as informal groups and as they grow and become viable, they become formal legal entities. Government policies and legislation are the key elements in determining the enabling or disabling environment for the organisation and representation of the labourers in the plantations economy. In other words, they can play a key role in either supporting or eroding such collective efforts of the estate labourers. The lack of voice cannot be effectively and sustainably addressed in the absence of a supportive legal framework and governance. The most important role of governments in this regard is to guarantee the freedom of all labourers, irrespective of where and how they work, to form and join organisations

of their choice, without fear of reprisal or intimidation. Respect for freedom of association allows the development of the institutional means of representation most relevant to the particular context, be they associations of informal labourers, women's organisations, trade unions, or employers' organisations. It is often the poorest of the world that take the greatest personal risks when they try to become organised and get their voices heard in the corridors of power, whether it is with the estate management, employer, union leader, or public authority. Hence, policies and programmes for collective representation of interests of the poorest should evolve in a way that most appropriately addresses the particular issues of concern, be it a negotiation concerning housing conditions; a campaign against child labour; or a demand for wage increase. As far as the existing trade unions are concerned, it has been found that they are not catering to the interests and needs of the plantations labour at all. They are no longer labourers' organisations serving the plantations community at the grassroots level. They are unable to fulfil the twin objectives of 'representation' and 'accountability' of the plantations labourers. Rather, there is a growing resentment among labourers against such trade unions. Also, they do not offer representation and voice to the women workers, thereby leaving the crucial issues concerning more than half the plantations labourers unaddressed. In this regard, as per the ILO report, a clear distinction needs to be made between organisations/unions that derive their legitimacy from the membership they represent and can, therefore, legitimately speak in the name of the labourers, on one hand, and organisations, on the other hand, which, while being instrumental in advancing the cause of labourers, cannot speak on their behalf. In other words, a difference between the roles of representation (the former) and advocacy (the latter) must be understood. It must also be understood that the rights are to be guaranteed to labourers and not to the trade unions. It is wrong and counter-productive to confuse the right of labourers to organise with the obligation of trade unions to organise. Hence, it is necessary to properly re-frame the responsibilities of trade unions so as to make them representative of the labourers, in view of their specific needs and with a view to collectively protecting their interests as well as ensuring accountability towards the fulfilment of their commitments. Unions too need to review and revise their internal regulations and statutes in order to remove limitations to their ability to organise and represent the plantations labourers. The top-down approach involves strategies which may be undertaken for the overall

development and upliftment of the plantations labourers by the management and the government.²

❖ **Human Resource Development**

The most valuable asset in any industry is its human resource or people, who must be motivated to achieve their full potential so as to meet the objectives of the organisation. There is a strong correlation between the fulfilment of an organisation's vision and the programmes for enhancing the skills, knowledge, and learning and innovative capabilities of the employees. With a spread in realisation of the importance of investing in people, human resource development has now become a primary area of business policy and strategy. Employers are recognizing that employees hold the key to more productive and efficient organisation. The manner in which the employees are managed and developed at work has a substantial impact on both product quality and cost. Effective human resource development policies rely heavily on trust, collaboration, recognition, and the mutual interest of both employees and the organisation. These policies and strategies have to evolve with time in order to take into account the changing global environment and rising competition, both locally and internationally. Similarly, the plantations industry is a labour-intensive industry and, therefore, devising an effective human resource development strategy is the key to its long-term success and sustainability. The deplorable conditions of the plantations labourers are largely due to the apathetic attitude of the employers/management towards labour welfare. It is imperative to recognise the fact that labour is an asset rather than a drain on the treasury. It could, in fact, lead to higher productivity, something that this industry badly needs if it has to face global competition. Till recently, there had been no serious attempt to adopt a comprehensive approach to human resource development policies and programmes in the plantations sector. But now some efforts are being made in this direction. As per the ILO report, the human resource development programmes currently in operation for the labourers in the plantations sector include: (a) Skill development programmes for estate labourers. (b) Team building and quality circle programmes for estate labourers. (c) Drug and alcohol reduction, family health and education, savings habits, and other life skills development programmes for labourers. (d) Programmes for the estate children. The report indicates that in the recent past, the number of estates with

a satisfactory level of worker attendance has increased as a result of the human resource development and other measures taken by the estate management. These programmes have had a positive impact in building trust and confidence between the labourers and the managers, and in changing the attitudes of both the parties in achieving the common objectives that are beneficial for both employers and employees. Encouraging, rewarding, and empowering labourers for their ideas, initiatives, and creativity may go a long way towards increasing the productivity of the plantations industry in the global market.³

❖ Education and Employment

Education and training are the most important components within the human resource development programmes. A low level of education and skills is the basic barrier to productivity growth in the plantations sector. Hence, improving the infrastructure for education, skill upgradation, and training is the most important requirement. This is particularly important for women who form a majority of the plantations workforce. Also, adult literacy and training programmes, especially for women, would enable and empower them to participate in trade union activities. Studies indicate that there is a growing dislike among the estate youth towards plantations employment. It is not that employment in nearby shops and establishments, construction activities, etc. always offers them a higher wage. But the common belief is that these ‘outside’ jobs carry inherent job satisfaction and a reasonable scope for career advancement that the estates are unable to offer. Hence, it is also necessary to establish centres wherein technical training can be imparted to members of the younger generation so that they can take up other activities. There is a need to create new avenues of employment for the family members/ dependents of plantations labourers. Development of the areas outside the plantations would create more avenues of employment near plantations. It would also reduce the isolation of the plantations. An important recommendation for overcoming the unemployment problem in the plantations industry is to diversify into agriculture processing. Unions of labourers and employers, management, government as well as other development agencies and NGOs can collectively play a very important role in the overall process of education and employment generation in the plantations areas.⁴

❖ Social Protection

The lack of social protection is a critical aspect of social exclusion. Those in the informal economy are most in need of social protection, not only because of insecurity stemming from their jobs and incomes but also because of the greater likelihood of their being exposed to poor working conditions, lack of occupational safety, and health hazards. Such exposure impairs the productivity as well as the quality of life of informal workers and their families. For the women informal workers, who combine productive activities in their home with child-rearing and household chores, the usual hazards are compounded by poor housekeeping and long hours of work. Often the labourers are themselves not aware of the risks they face and the measures that need to be taken to avoid them. Besides lack of awareness, poor labourers are unable to save for the social security schemes because they spend their income on meeting their more immediate survival needs, such as food, housing, education, and healthcare for themselves and their families. Living from one day to the next, they have differing social priorities, which keep them in a state of permanent indebtedness through out their lives. Although plantations labourers are covered by many legislations, which have provisions for social security, it has been found that the existing enforcement machinery does not necessarily ensure their implementation especially when punitive action for violations is mild, thereby reducing the conditions of plantations labourers to those of informal workers. NGOs could play an important role in improving the state of the plantations labourers, particularly women and children. They may be invited to provide social protection including healthcare services, education, and skill training to female plantations labourers. However, for providing social protection, NGOs must work together with the labourers, their families, trade unions, the government, and the employers. All these parties together may undertake a package scheme to provide plantations labourers social protection including health insurance, training, credit, and savings facilities. The scheme should also include general education, health education, and legal assistance. All this would empower the plantations labourers and enable them to be involved with trade unionism actively, thereby to raise a strong collective voice against their exploitation.⁵

❖ Social Dialogue

The success of the various formalisation strategies mentioned above would depend upon the effectiveness of a social dialogue among all the parties in the plantations sector, that is, the government, the employers/management, the trade unions, and the general labourers. A social dialogue can help in building a mutually beneficial consensus on the existing as well as prospective strategies for awareness generation, representation, and accountability of labourers, human resources development, and social protection, among other things. The growth of companies in the global industry with a high proportion of labour indicates that their success can be attributed to the level of recognition they have given to their labourers by enhancing their responsibilities and ensuring their participation in profit-sharing. And social dialogue can be very helpful in building such a mutual understanding. The areas for purposeful social dialogue include labour legislation, women empowerment, child labour, occupational safety, housing and sanitary conditions, wage increments, productivity improvements, education, skill development, training and other developmental concerns. For social dialogue to be fruitful, it is essential to devise a meaningful consultative and decision-making process involving all the players, and to ensure that they work together for addressing all the contentious issues. The discussion should be based on sentiments of justice and humanity as well as on the desire to secure permanent peace in the world, as stated in the Preamble to the Constitution of the ILO. The objective of promoting social dialogue is to ease conflicting situations arising out of the mutually exclusive interests of the government, unions, employers, and labourers. The plantations industry has survived on a philosophy of exploitation of land and labour. This notion of exploitation of resources for results must give way to a philosophy of optimally managing the available resources for the benefit of both the nation and its people. Collective action based on social dialogue among all the parties can provide a longterm solution to the problems of the plantations labourers, which will, in turn, enhance the competitiveness of the industry in the world market. For instance, collective bargaining, a form of social dialogue, has also helped significantly in reducing wage discrimination in Sri Lanka. The successive sessions of the Committee on Plantations of the ILO have emphasized that collective bargaining should be regarded as a means of improving the living and working conditions of plantations labourers. In most

plantations, it can be found that all that has been achieved through the legislative framework is because of the labourers' collective action. These include demands for the repair of houses, improving water supply in the labour lines, and providing better canteen facilities. Hence, one of the means of ensuring the implementation of the provisions of the enactments could be by strengthening collective bargaining. Enhancing the frequency of activities like dialogue, conversation, and negotiation, can help in fostering a closer relationship between the labourers and employers. In other words, the estate management must increasingly recognise that without a motivated and dedicated workforce, it is not possible for the plantations industry to be successful on a sustainable basis.⁶

7.4 FINDINGS

1. Out of 300 respondents 68.3 per cent of labourers belong to the age group of 31 to 50 years, this age group labourers are more in all the Taluks. Among them Alur has 87.00 percent of labourers are belong to this age group.
2. Large percentage of labourers in the study area are illiterate and have primary education (38.0 per cent+ 21.3 percent respectively) i.e. 59.3 percent. Among the Taluks Belur represents 66 percent of the total illiterates. From the above table it can also observe that Alur has highest labourers who have studied up to high school i.e., 26.0 per cent.
3. Out of total samples, large part of the women labourers belong to Schedule Caste (SC) and Schedule Tribes (ST) to 66 per cent (43.7% & 22.3% respectively) which are followed by other Backward caste 30.7 percent and 3.3 per cent other caste women labourers.
4. Above portion of the respondents i.e., 82.7 per cent opined they have not been provided any day care facility for their children.
5. Out of 300, 224 respondents are casual labourers (74.7 per cent of the total sample respondents), and remaining 76 respondents (25.3 per cent) of them are contract labourers. Since they are casual labourers they are not protected by laws and social security measures.
6. Large portion of the labourers i.e., 43.7 (Rs. <150 and 150 to 200) are drawing lesser than the minimum standard wages for the agricultural labourers. If

average wage or earnings per year is concerned, the wages earned by the casual labourers are very meager or negligible.

7. Out of 300 women labourers whole 52.7 per cent of the labourers are the members of Self Help Group of the and 47.3 percent of them are not part of the self-help groups. Out of 300 respondents 158 are the members of SHGs and among the taluks .
8. Out of 300 samples 285 labourers hold their account in commercial banks followed by 9 members, 5 members and only 1 in RRBs, cooperative banks and in private banks respectively. The reason behind the 285 respondents holding bank account in commercial banks is due to Jan Dhan and other subsidies given by the Government. But most of them do banking transaction with the funding SHGs.
9. 295 (98.33 percent of the total sample) respondents of the total sample deposit their savings in chits. And only 5 (0.10 per cent of the total respondents) of them save in bank account but most of them have not deposited in the commercial banks. This show the respondents deposit their savings in chit funds. This is a paradox although 285 have their bank account in commercial banks they save in chit funds.
10. It is found that 53 (17.17 per cent) respondents have not borrowed loan. 94 respondents (31.33 percent) have borrowed loan for their daily needs even though they are earning regularly they said they have borrowed loan for their daily needs.
11. Women labourers are paid 200 to 225 in Belur taluk, upto 250 in Alur taluk and 250 to 300 in Sakaleshpur taluk but it is 300 to 400 for male labourers in Belur taluk, 300 to 350 in Alur taluk and 350 to 400 in Sakaleshpur taluk. These payments are above the prescribed amount of remuneration of coffee board of India.
12. There are no unions of women labourers to find better remedies for their problems (Grievance) this is because most of them are casual labourers who are working on hour basis without job security. Thus it has resulted in low bargaining power of women labourers to claim better facilities.

7.5 SUGGESTIONS

- 1) To improve the socio economic condition of women labourers majority of them who are employed as casual labourers shall made as the permanent employees with better wages, this go a long way in improving the socio economic condition.
- 2) The case study explains that 59.3 percent of women labourers are illiterates, but the programmes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyana has to be extended in these taluks of Hassan district and such programmes should be in practice and not only in papers.
- 3) Right to Education to all children between 6 to 14 years have to be implemented strictly. Which enhances literacy rate and contributes to work in other jobs which are highly remunerative.
- 4) Public awareness camps, informal education, Adult Literacy programmes have to be implemented to create awareness regarding the importance of Education, using of Bank Account, awareness regarding health programmes, which directly helps to improve social and economic conditions of women labour force.
- 5) As per the Labour Act of 1951, Day Care or Creches are Mandatory, but only in Belur taluk there are Day Care facilities, meanwhile local women who start up Day Care Centres also provide job opportunity by employing few more women maid servants and women teachers and leads to overall women empowerment in the study area.
- 6) Firstly the planters have to reduce the casual workers and have to employ them on permanent basis and have to utilize them completely during pick reason and these planters have to bring the Labour Act of 1951. During off season these labourers have to be provided with alternative jobs by planters by engaging them in furniture making, growing of Zerbera and Anthorium which are most adaptable to the climatic conditions of study area and where there is greater demand for such flowers within and outside India for decoration and for preparing flower bouquets. Job security has to be given to these labourers.
- 7) Labour Welfare Fund has to be created and has to spend such amount on their children education and to meet labourers unforeseen condition.

- 8) As per recent MNREGA, equal wages has to given to male and women labourers and are paying 225 rupees per day to the labourers along with providing job cards where they get basic ratio through Public Distribution System. if it is the case planters have to increase the wage level, because large amount of labourers are getting wages between 151 to 200 rupees and thus by increasing their wages can make them to remain in the same jobs and can increase their economic status.
- 9) Out of 300 respondents, only 158 are the members of SHGs, but the membership in SHGs have to be increased and planters should encourage self help groups and bank linkages to such SHGs. SHGs should develop like an association to purchase and sell the crops grown in the plantations during off season.
- 10) Out of 300 respondents, 285 have their account in commercial Banks where these banks have to give loans to the women labourers by taking the surety of planters, SHGs when such loans facility has been provided by Commercial Banks the labourers can make use of huge amount of loan for construction of houses, purchasing of bullock carts and for higher education of their children which are productive and increases their standard of living of women labourers.
- 11) Commercial Banks have to provide soft loans at lesser interest rate to these women labourers on priority basis. This well helps them to make use of the loan facility to the maximum extent to improve their socio economic condition.
- 12) The Governmental programmes such as Jan Dhan, Nirmal, Indira Awas Yojan etc must be implemented with due care and true spirit to improve the socio economic status of women labourers.

7.6 CONCLUSION

It may be concluded that the informal characteristics of the plantations sector can be eliminated through a number of formalisation strategies, which involve the collective efforts of the estate management, government, trade unions, and the labourers especially women labourers themselves. The two bottom-up strategies of awareness generation and unionisation with effective representation and responsibility

would empower and the plantations labourers at the grass root level and enable them to achieve better working and living conditions. The top down strategies will help in the overall development of the plantations labourers through human resource development programmes such as education, employment and training programmes and social security schemes. Such an approach would not only help in improving the living and working conditions of the plantations women labourers but would also facilitate higher productivity of the plantations industry in a sustained manner.

END NOTE

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