



## Socio-Economic Conditions of Rural Women Agricultural Labours: A Case Study

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### ABSTRACT

Agriculture is still a major activity in our country percentage of female population, as a whole, is directly or indirectly, involved in farming as cultivators or labour Majority of women in villages participate in agriculture as agricultural labour. Women's participation as cultivators is minimal. In India, nearly 70 percent of the male and 87 percent of the female workers are dependent upon agriculture, livestock, forestry etc. for their livelihood. Women are engaged in a number of farm operations along with men. Activities such as application of manure, land preparation, seed grading, sowing, dabbling, planting, irrigation, fertilizers application, plant protection, harvesting, threshing, shelling, hulling, winnowing, cleaning and storing grain, feeding cattle, looking after mulch animal, poultry and kitchen gardening are the main occupations of farm women<sup>2</sup>. The present case study tries to present a brief scenario of women labour participated in agriculture and the socio-economic conditions of the women agricultural labour in Pamuruu Mandal of Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh.

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### 1. Introduction

Women are the backbone of the village economy of rural India. Women take up different works to eke out their livelihood and the majority of the rural women depend on unorganized sector like agriculture. Many of them are landless, homeless and belong to the socially depressed class of the society despite the seasonal poor nature of employment in the field of agriculture for labourers since the beginning of this century. Indian women live in rural areas, comprising around 5,00,000 villages. They contribute to the production of about half of our food. They are involved in operation like planning, weeding thinning, manure spreading, harvesting and storage. A woman of landless family also works as a daily wage earner at somebody else's farm.

The majority of the rural women sustain their livelihood by working on land in a number of ways. Based on this, rural women are classified as landless women, near landless women and small peasant women. A large number of rural women primarily sustain their livelihood by working as wage labourers and agricultural farmers. A high proportion of working forces in India are employed in the unorganized sector mainly in Agriculture, livestock and forestry. Working women are manifested in agricultural activities. The nature of work in agriculture which women labourers perform exposes especially in south India, rice transplanting is done primarily by women labourers. This increases their susceptibility to a number of ailments such as intestinal and parasitic infections, arthritis rheumatic joints, and Lucy bile. Having analyzed the participation of women in Indian Agricultural the conclusion can be made to say that women's contribution is very high in Indian agriculture.

#### 1.1 Women Participation in Indian Agriculture

India has a geographical area of 328.73 million hectares of which reported area for land use is 306.04 million hectares. The net area cultivated is about 142.60 million hectares i.e. about 46.6 per cent of the total reported area. Since nearly 50 million hectares of area is sown more than once, the cropping intensity works out to 135.1 forests account for about 68.97 million hectares i.e. 22.5 percent of the total reported land area. Also nearly 13.97 million hectares are cultivable wastelands and 9.91 million hectares are fallow lands. Only about 30 percent of the total cropped area is irrigated and the remaining area is rain fed. The available statistics further shows that only about 66 percent of the gross cropped area is under food crops and nearly 34 percent area under nonfood crops. Cereals and pulses account for nearly 52.93 percent and 12.64 percent of the area respectively. Fruits and vegetables occupy nearly 4.24 percent of area<sup>3</sup>.

**Table-1**  
Statistics about Women in India (in millions)

1	Total Women Population (2011)	494.83
2	Total Women Workers (2011)	127.05
3	Total Women Main Workers (2011)	72.65
4	Total Women Marginal workers (2011)	54.40
5	Total Women Owner Cultivators (2011)	41.30
6	Total Women Agriculture Wage Workers (2011)	50.09
7	Total Women Household Industry Workers (2011)	8.08
8	Total Women Other Workers (2011)	27.57
9	Total Women in Organized Sector (1999)	4.80
10.	Total Women in Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Plantation, Orchards and activities (2001)	1.32

Source: Census of India, 2011.

Note: For serial numbers 1 to 8 Censuses 2011

For serial number 9 Tenth Five Year Plan

For serial number 10 censuses 2001.

The above table indicates that according to population census of India gives the number of women in agriculture, plantation and other rural activities. Women are the backbone of the village economy of rural India. Women take up different works to eke out their livelihood and the majority of the rural women depend on unorganized sector like agriculture. Many of them are landless, homeless and belong to the socially depressed class of the society despite the seasonal poor nature of employment in the field of agriculture for labourers since the beginning of this century.

The inequality of women in the third world countries stems from economic backwardness which is the resultant factor of colonial legacy. This situation thus poses certain problems and constraints of the overall human development. Further the contradictions inherent in the existing socio-economic, cultural frame work of women are the result of the various changes that have taken place in the society. Sexual division of labour in the family and the superior – subordinate relation in the social production speak to their position in society of all workers, women workers are the most oppressed strata of the society as such. In India like in any other backward post – colonial women workers are treated as cheap labour.

A large number of women who depend mainly on this economic activity in rural India live below the subsistence level. The female agricultural labour is very high despite facing difficulties in the field of the existing socio – economic framework of Indian society. Casual nature of employment, absence of opportunities to improve the skills, segregation of work, ignorance and less vocal nature of the workers, unemployment, lack of other revenues, commercialization and mechanization of agriculture, sexual exploitation and some of the problems that have oppressed the female agricultural labour in the country. In general, in sixty years of independence, constitutional safeguards and various developmental programmes adopted by government have not altered the basic life conditions of agricultural labour in general and female labour in particular. It also highlights the level of exploitation that is being carried out on the oppressed in general and women belonging to lower class in particular. The problems of some agricultural labour expose the various dimensions of their everyday life. The present study deals with the various bureaucratic organizations engaged in the implementation of welfare programmes to improve the lot of the rural poor-women.

Women play a very important role in agriculture and rural development. The specific division of labour varies by country and culture more or less along the lines of what Bose up calls, “male and female farming”, and male farming is more common in heavily cultivated areas where permanent fields and planning are used. It is being practiced in developed countries, some parts of Latin America and Asia. Female farming which is largely practiced in tribal society in Africa occurs more in temporary cultivation where ploughs are not used and permanent lands are not held by familie<sup>4</sup>. In female agriculture, men will prepare the soil and help the harvest. In male agriculture, women will help to cultivate and harvest. When temporary farming systems are replaced with fixed farm lands and permanent fields, farming systems are generally more egalitarian. This means that both sexes must put long and hard same into a small plot of land to provide subsistence for the family. This final condition is where the develop mentalists most often

enter introduce technologies that utilize ideally the skills of both men and women and maximize the productivity of the households in limited holding <sup>5</sup>.

## 2. Women Labour Participation In Agriculture Sector

Women Participation in economic activity is common to all countries and their role in the process of economic development has been recognized in the world over. However, the extent of their participation in economic activity depends on a number of factors such as the nature of the economy, social conventions, level of literacy, attitude towards women's in work and so on while in the developed countries these farm women workers to be employed are the labour force. Many developing countries, including India where surplus man power is available, the operation providing employment to women sometimes raises questions which have no categorical answers. Nevertheless, the contribution of women to economic development is underestimated in agriculture National and International statistics in agriculture, as inactive, and when they are counted as active they are often include in the category of unpaid family labour even though they are performing managerial tasks that should assign them to the category of independent farmers. Their unpaid labour falls into four major classes work as farms and field, for household consumption, allied work is poultry, dairy and animal husbandry, household work like fetching water, gathering fuel, repairing dwellings and domestic work involving three categories cooking, cleaning and child rearing. In industry, women are involved more often in the informal economy so neither their work nor their productivity is fully recorded in national statistics. Rural women mostly do the agricultural labour, unpaid domestic works, collection of goods like vegetables including greens and roots, fish, fire wood and cattle feed. They maintain kitchen garden, orchards, poultry, dairy, and so on. Then their role is slightly coming up in all spheres of rural development. In horticulture, they are engaged in nursery, fruit and vegetable nursery, fruit and vegetable growing, kitchen garden, fruit and vegetable processing and marketing <sup>6</sup>.

The economic role played by women can be isolated from the framework of development until recent. They constitute almost half of the population in the world as well as in India. Out of the total female population of the country, about 80 percent are living in rural areas, women perform a major part of agricultural operations like breaking clods of earth, manure, weeding, transplanting, harvesting, threshing and winnowing. Women participate in other activities such as caring for the dairy animals and marketing of the products. They also lend helping land in other small processing. On the domestic house front they get drinking water, fuel for cooking, nourish her children; serve her husband and other family members. It implies that the role of women in all kinds of economic activity in any country, especially in India is involved <sup>7</sup>.

An Indian women lives in rural areas, comprising around 5, 00,000 villages. They contribute to the production of about half of our food. They are involved in operation like planning, weeding thinning, manure spreading, harvesting and storage. A woman of landless family also works as a daily wage earner at somebody else's farm. The majority of the rural women sustain their livelihood by working on land in a number of ways. Based on this, rural women are classified as landless women, near landless women and small peasant women. A large number of rural women primarily sustain their livelihood by working as wage labourers and agricultural farmers <sup>8</sup>.

**Table-2**

Workforce Participation Rates in India

Year	Male			Female			Total		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
1981	52.75	53.78	48.68	14.22	15.92	7.18	34.17	35.33	29.51
1991	53.19	54.52	49.90	20.85	23.89	10.64	37.55	39.46	31.41
2001	51.56	52.50	48.95	22.73	27.20	9.74	37.68	40.24	30.44
2011	51.59	52.11	55.06	25.70	30.79	11.89	39.30	41.75	32.25

Source: Director of Census Operations, Andhra Pradesh, Census of India, 2011.

Table 2 explains that the work participation rate of women steadily rose from 14.22 percent in 1981 to 22.73 in 2001 and to 25.7 in 2011. It is much lower than that of the male work participation rates in both urban and rural areas. The raise in work participation rates of rural women has been steeper from 15.92 in 1981 to 30.79 in 2011, while it is from 7.18 to 11.89 during the same period for urban women.

**Table-3**

## Workforce Participation Rates in Andhra Pradesh

Year	Male			Female			Total		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
1981	58.2	60.2	49.9	24.2	27.4	10.5	41.3	43.9	30.7
1991	57.1	59.5	49.3	27.0	31.9	10.5	42.3	45.9	30.4
2001	55.5	57.9	48.9	34.3	42.5	11.9	45.0	50.3	30.8
2011	56.4	58.5	51.5	34.9	43.2	12.6	45.8	50.9	32.2

Source: Director of Census Operations, Andhra Pradesh, Census of India, 2011.

Table-3 explains that, in Andhra Pradesh, female work participation rates are relatively low when compared to male work participation rates in rural as well as in urban areas. However, female work participation rates in rural areas are relatively higher when compared to urban area in all the period under study from 1981 to 2011. Work participation rates for men and women in Andhra Pradesh are relatively higher when compared to all India rates.

### 3. Objectives

The overall objective of this study is laid on analyzing the socio- economic status of the selected agriculture women worker households in selected study area of Pamuru mandal in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh. The specific objective of the study is to examine the socio-demographic and economic status of the selected agriculture women worker households in the study area.

### 4. Methodology

The Pamuru mandal of Prakasam district is selected for the study due to the fact that the district has higher proportion of rural population. Pamuru mandal were selected from the Prakasam district purposively to examine the socio-economic conditions of the women agricultural labour. Also this mandal were selected for the study because it is the rural mandal that is having a high proportion of rural population. Two villages are randomly selected from Pamuru mandal depending upon the higher concentration of rural population. In this mandal 220 agriculture women worker households are selected. Among them 110 households are selected from Chintalapalem village and another 110 households are selected from Mopadu villages. Bothe the villages are selected from the very interior areas of the Pamuru mandal. The total of 220 selected agriculture women worker households from selected mandal. This study was based on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data have been collected through pre designed and structured household schedule in the selected villages during January 2016 to October 2017. The secondary data has been obtained from Annual Reports of the district authorities, District hand book of statistics of different years published by the Chief Planning Officer, Prakasam. Census data are used to collect population data. In analyzing the data apart from tabular analysis with averages and percentages are used at appropriate places. Tabular analysis with percentages is used to explain the general profile and their different economics patterns.

#### 4.1 A Brief Profile of Pamuru Mandal

The Present Study is based on the field work conducted in two villages belonging to Pamuru Mandals of Prakasam District of Andhra Pradesh. Pamuru is a Mandal in Prakasam District of Andhra Pradesh State, India. Pamuru Mandal Head Quarters is Pamuru town. It belongs to Andhra region. It is located 96 KM towards west from District head quarters Ongole. Pamuru Mandal is bounded by Varikuntapadu Mandal towards South, Chandra Sekhara Puram Mandal towards west, Udayagiri Mandal towards South, and Duttalur Mandal towards South. Kandukur City, Kavali City, Markapur City, Ongole City are the nearby Cities to Pamuru.

Pamuru consist of 79 Villages and 25 Panchayats. Anumalakonda is the smallest Village and Botla Gudur is the biggest Village. It is in the 231 m elevation (altitude). This Place is in the border of the Prakasam District and Spsr Nellore District. Telugu is the Local Language here. Total population of Pamuru Mandal is 55,957 living in 11,977 Houses, Spread across total 79 villages and 25 panchayats. Males are 28,187 and Females are 27,770. Total 15,245 person's lives in town and 40,712 lives in Rural. It is Hot in summer. Pamuru summer highest day temperature is in between 30 ° C to 44° C. Average temperatures of January is 25 ° C , February is 26 ° C , March is 28° C , April is 31 ° C , May is 34 ° C .

#### 4.2 Chitalapalem

Chitalapalem is a Village in Pamuru Mandal in Prakasam District of Andhra Pradesh State, India. It belongs to Andhra region. It is located 96 KM towards west from District head quarters Ongole. Chitalapalem is surrounded by Chandra Sekhara Puram Mandal towards west, Varikuntapadu Mandal towards South, Veligandla Mandal towards North, Pedacherlo Palle Mandal towards East. Kandukur, Kavali, Markapur, Ongole are the nearby Cities to Chitalapalem. This Place is in the border of the Prakasam District and Spsr Nellore District. Spsr Nellore District Varikuntapadu is South towards this place. Telugu is the Local Language here. Total population of Chitalapalem is 1215 .Males are 616 and Females are 599 living in 248 Houses. Total area of Chitalapalem is 543 hectares.

#### 4.3 Mopadu

Mopadu is a Village in Pamuru Mandal in Prakasam District of Andhra Pradesh State, India. It belongs to Andhra region. It is located 88 KM towards west from District head quarters Ongole and 10 KM from Pamuru. This Place is in the border of the Prakasam District and Spsr Nellore District. Varikuntapadu is South towards this place. Telugu is the Local Language here. Total population of Mopadu is 3970. Males are 2014 and Females are 1,956 living in 823 Houses. Total area of Mopadu is 2104 hectares.

### 5. Socio-Economic Conditions of Agricultural Women Workers in Pamuru Mandal

#### 5.1 Demographic indicators relating to the selected sample

One important characteristic that bind people together is age. Age of women is expected to have bearing on the understanding of social issues like the size of the family, disability and health related problems and poverty related economic issues. Hence, the analysis of the age wise distribution of agriculture women workers is presented in Table-4.

**Table-4**

Distribution of Agriculture Women Workers by Age Composition in Pamuru Mandal

SI.No.	Age Composition	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Below 25	20	9.00
2.	25-35	87	39.50
3.	35-45	84	38.00
4.	45-55	27	12.50
5.	Above 55	2	1.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Data collected through Field Survey

The above Table-4 presents the distribution of agriculture women workers basing on age in selected mandal. On the whole, it is clear that women in 25 to 45 years age group are in majority in the mandal. In fact in the age group of 25 to 45 years, the individual capabilities are in full vigor and their performance is efficient. Agriculture women workers households in the age group of 35 to 45 are also in large numbers. The percentage of the agriculture women workers households above 55 years of age is very minimal, while that of those below 25 years of age is negligible. The large concentration of women workers in age group of 25 to 45 years helps them to have clear understanding of different social, economic, family welfare issues concerning all the agriculture women workers households.

#### 5.2 Distribution of agriculture women workers households on the basis of literacy

The literacy levels of agriculture women workers households, to a great extent help to improve their skills and earnings. Data on literacy levels of agriculture women workers is ascertained and presented in Table-5.

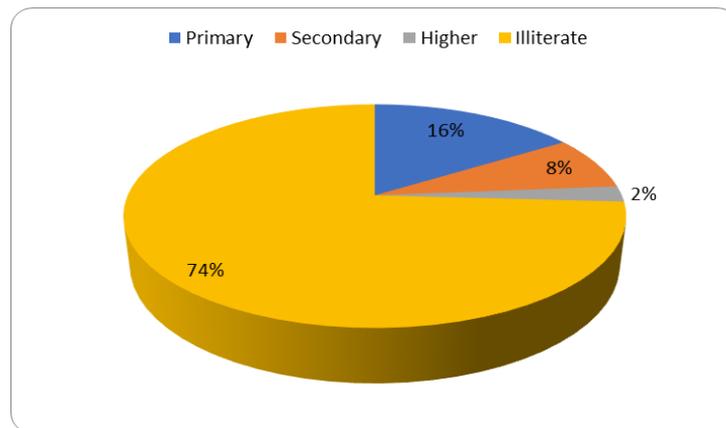
**Table-5**

Distribution of Selected Agriculture women workers of Literacy Levels in Pamuru Mandal

SI.No.	Literacy Level	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Primary	35	16.00
2.	Secondary	17	7.50
3.	Higher	5	2.50
4.	Illiterate	163	74.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Data collected through Field Survey

**Figure-1** Literacy Level of the Sample Respondents



The above table reveals that only 16.00 per cent of total sample are completed primary education, 7.50 per cent completed secondary education and 2.50 per cent completed higher education and 74 per cent are illiterates. The literacy level of the selected sample households partially reflects the literacy status of the sample.

**5.3 Occupational Patterns**

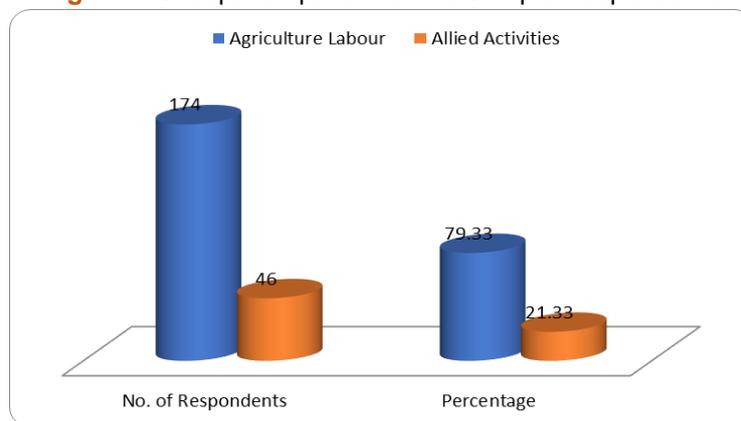
The information relating to the occupational patterns of the selected sample agriculture women workers are presented in the following Table-6.

**Table-6**  
Occupation pattern of the sample households in Pamuru Mandal

Sl.No.	Occupation	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Agriculture Labour	174	79.33
2.	Allied Activities	46	21.33
<b>Total</b>		<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Study

**Figure-2** Occupation pattern of the Sample Respondents



The above table reveals the occupational particulars of respondents. In Pamuru mandal women majority respondent's main occupation is agriculture works. 79.33 percent stated that their main occupation is agriculture works and only 21.33 percent are allied activities.

**Table-7**

Subsidiary occupation pattern of the sample households

SI.No.	Occupation	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Non- Agricultural Labourers	23	40.35
2.	Traders	09	15.79
3.	Artisans	11	19.30
4.	Services	11	19.30
5.	Other	03	5.26
<b>Total</b>		<b>57</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Study

The employment in agriculture is largely seasonal in character. Therefore, majority of the households stated that they are also depending on subsidiary occupations. As per the above Table-7 in Pamuru mandal women 57 members are working as non-agricultural labourers, shop owners, artisans, and other services.

The statistical information relating to the working days of the sample agriculture women workers are presented in the following Table-8.

**Table-8**

Working Days Particulars of the Sample agriculture women workers in Pamuru Mandal

Selected Mandal	Particulars	Days	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Pamuru	Weekly in Days	1-3	148	67.33
		4-7	72	32.67
	<b>Total</b>		<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>
	Monthly in Days	1-15	169	76.67
		16-30	51	23.33
	<b>Total</b>		<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>
	Yearly in Days	1-100	208	94.67
		101-200	12	5.33
	<b>Total</b>		<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Data collected through Field Survey

From the above Table it can be noticed that out of 220 sample agriculture women workers 94.67 percent are able to get the work about 100 man days in a year and 5.33 percent from 100-200 man days. If we look into the monthly availability of working days, the selected agriculture women workers from this mandal women still in forefront in getting more number of working days in a month. 23.33 percent of them are able to get 16-30 days working day and 76.67 percent of their income is confined with working days of 15 days only. Further it is classified that the working days are on weekly basis. 32.67 percent selected Agriculture women workers are getting work assignment between 4-7 man days and 67.33 percent are in the range of 1-3 working days. The working days which are available on weekly, month and annual basis are not sufficient.

#### 5.4 Income levels of the selected households

The income particulars earned by the selected sample from different sources are presented in the following Table-9.

**Table-9**

Income particulars of the sample household in Pamuru Mandal

Sl.No.	Income Levels	No. of Respondents	
		Agricultural Income (%)	Non-Agricultural Income (%)
1.	> 5000	12 (5.33)	23 (40.35)
2.	5000-10000	62 (28.00)	24 (42.11)
3.	10000-20000	86 (39.33)	07 (12.28)
4.	20000-30000	31 (14.00)	03 (5.26)
5.	30000-40000	16 (7.33)	--
6.	40000 above	13 (6.00)	--
	Total	220 (100.00)	57 (100.00)

Source: Field survey

Figures in brackets are percentages to total

The above table explains the particulars of the income of the respondents, in selected mandal women out of 220 respondents, majority of the respondents, i.e. (39.33 percent) are earning Rs 10,000 to 20,000 from agriculture. 6.00 percent are earning above Rs 40,000 from agriculture. In this mandal the following majority of the respondents 28.00 percent are earning Rs 5000 to 10000 from agriculture. Very less percentage of respondents only 5.33 percent are earning below Rs 5000.

The particulars relating to the improvements in the saving levels of the sample agriculture women workers are presented in the following Table-10.

**Table-10**

Particulars of Savings of the Sample agriculture women workers in Pamuru Mandal

Sl.No.	Particulars	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yes	63	28.67
2.	No	157	71.33
<b>Total</b>		<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Data collected through Field Survey

The above table depicts the particulars of improvement in savings levels of the sample agriculture women workers. Whatever the additional income which is gained may be spent on consumption and remaining amount will be saved for further needs of the family members. Out of 220 sample agriculture women workers, 28.67 percent opined that there is an improvement in saving level due to the government programmes, 71.33 percent of the sample agriculture women workers opined that there is no improvement in their saving in spite of gaining additional employment through government programmes in recent times.

### 5.5 Assets Structure Of The Agriculture Women Workers

The details about profits, buying assets and durable goods by the selected Agriculture women workers from the selected mandal are presented in the following Table-11.

**Table-11**

Distribution of sample agriculture women workers who owned assets in Pamuru Mandal

Sl. No.	Items	Pamuru		
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
1	Bought assets	75 (34.00)	145 (66.00)	220 (100)
2	Durable goods	125 (56.67)	95 (43.33)	220 (100)
3	Not Applicable	-	-	220 (100)

Source: Data collected through Field Survey

Figures in brackets are percentages to total

From the above Table it can be noticed that among women selected from Pamuru mandal 90.90 percent of sample households reported that they have assets. 34.00 percent of sample agriculture women workers bought small asset like field or ground for various purposes, and 56.67 percent bought durable goods.

## 6. Conclusion

The recent trends explain that the work participation rate of women in India steadily rose from 14.22 percent in 1981 to 22.27 in 2001 and to 25.7 in 2011. It is much lower than that of the male work participation rates in both urban and rural areas. The raise in work participation rates of rural women has been steeper from 15.92 in 1981 to 30.79 in 2011. While it is from 7.18 to 11.89 during the same period for urban women. In Andhra Pradesh, female work participation rates are relatively low when compared to male work participation rates in rural as well as in urban areas. However, female work participation rates in rural areas are relatively higher when compared to urban area in the period of 1981 to 2011. Work participation rates for men and women in Andhra Pradesh are relatively higher when compared to all India rates.

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