

**SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF
FEMALE AGRICULTURAL WORKERS
A STUDY AT PALAKKAD AND
KUTTANAD**

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Female agricultural workers are one of the poorest section of casual workers engaged in agricultural work in rural areas. They are unorganized or informal workers who are not protected by any labour laws or regulations. They receive either daily or piece wage rate and not entitled for any non-wage benefits. As agricultural work is a seasonal work, the worker will get employment only in cultivation or harvesting seasons. This is a manual category of work one has to do in fields in unhealthy and hostile weather conditions. Among the various types of work, paddy cultivation and harvesting is one of the difficult and dirty work to be done in paddy fields during hot sun or rainy seasons. Though the female agricultural workers in Kerala face acute social, economic and labour problems and live in poverty, not much attempts have been made to study their socio-economic conditions. This is the context in which the study is attempted. Palakkad and Kuttanad are the two regions where there is a concentration of female agricultural workers engaged in paddy cultivation.

Palakkad district is a backward rural economy characterized by agricultural and rural activities and 86 percent of the people live in rural areas. Of the total employment in the district, agriculture and allied activities accounts for 42 percent. Paddy is the principal crop of the district and accounts for 38 percent of the total area of cultivation. Palakkad district is the largest producer of paddy, producing more than 40 percent of the total production of the state. Paddy is cultivated thrice in a year viz., Autumn, Winter and Summer. Paddy cultivation provides the major share of agricultural employment in the district. A notable aspect is that 63 percent of the female workers are engaged in agricultural work as cultivators and agricultural labourers. The agricultural labourers who are categorized as casual wage labourers account for 56 percent of the total workers in the district.

Kuttanad is the second major rice cultivating region in Kerala and comprises of Alappuzha, Kottayam and Pathanamthitta districts. The major part of it is in Alappuzha district. The district is a backward district where there has been a steady decline in agricultural activities especially paddy cultivation. The share of primary sector accounts only 12.41 percent of the district income. Paddy is the principal crop cultivated in the district and accounts for 1 percent of the area and 12 percent of the production of the state. Of the total workers in the district, the agricultural workers comprising cultivators and agricultural labourers account for 18 percent. Nearly 19 percent of the female workers are agricultural workers. As this category of female workers are extremely impoverished and vulnerable group, we attempt a study of their socio-economic conditions.

Unorganised or Informal Workers: Conceptual Issues

In India the enterprise concept (i.e. to define the unorganized sector) and the employment concept (i.e. to define unorganized employment) lack in conceptual clarity and uniformity across the sub-sectors of the economy. In this context the National Commission on the Unorganised sector has given the following definition for unorganized sector.

“The unorganized sector consists of all unincorporated private enterprises owned by individuals or households engaged in the sale and production of goods and services operated on a proprietary or partnership basis and with less than ten total workers”

The Commission considers all agricultural activities undertaken on agricultural holdings, either individually or in partnership, as being in the unorganized sector. According to this definition, it excludes only the plantation sector and other types of organized agriculture (e.g. corporate or co-operative farming) and covers a very large part of agriculture.

The Commission defined the unorganized or informal employment as follows:

“Unorganised workers consist of those working in the unorganized enterprises or households, excluding regular workers with social security benefits, and the workers in the formal sector without any employment/ social security benefits provided by the employers”.

The employees with informal jobs generally do not enjoy employment security (no protection against arbitrary dismissal) work security (no protection against accidents and illness at the work place) and social security (maternity and health care benefits, pension, etc.) and therefore any one or more of these characteristics can be used for identifying informal employment.

As per the Commission, the categories of workers who comprises unorganized/informal employment are (1) wage workers in the unorganized sector, (2) self employed in the unorganized sector. (3) Unprotected wage workers in the organized sector and (4) regular unorganized workers.

Agricultural workers

Agricultural workers i.e., farmers and agricultural labourers, are largely in the unorganized sector and are an extremely impoverished and a vulnerable group. Within this group, agricultural labourers are worse off compared to the farmers/ cultivators. Agricultural labourers are characterized by extreme poverty levels. With no physical and human capital assets, they take up wage work in manual agricultural activities. The socially backwards like the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes agricultural workers are the most vulnerable within the group. Farmers are slightly better off than the agricultural labourers as they have some capital base in land on which they undertake agricultural activities. Farmers are also characterized by high poverty levels because of the predominance of marginal and small farmers among them. Marginal and small cultivators have very little resources and also have to supplement their incomes through wage labour.

Despite the fact that agricultural labourers as a group form the bottom layer of the working class, the differentiation arising out of social identity is indeed striking. The historical weight of social exclusion coupled with the absence of any fall back mechanism of social security or protection is indeed a powerful initial condition debilitating this section of the working poor. Size of land does help reduce poverty but there are other factors that have to do with one's social position to translate the asset position in to one of well being. Social networking and education could be among them. Those belonging to SCs and STs are especially vulnerable even among the group of farmers. Agricultural labourers have high rates of unemployment and underemployment due to irregularity of and non-availability of

employment. This makes the group even more vulnerable and creates insecurity in regular flow of income.

The National Commission on Unorganised sector is of the view that agricultural labourers are unable to secure even the minimally acceptable standard of living for himself and his family. This is mainly due to the seasonal nature of agricultural work where they do not receive full days of employment during the year. Further, the wage rates for agricultural operations are very low so that the income needs of the labourers are not met adequately. The consequence is the high levels of poverty among the agricultural labourers. Further in the absence of any provisions for social security for the informal sector in general and particularly for agricultural workers, their condition is still worse.

Objectives

1. to study the socio-economic background of the female agricultural workers.
2. to find out nature of employment, wages and working conditions.
3. to examine the benefits enjoyed by them from the State Government, Grama Panchayats and other public agencies.
4. to examine the living conditions and the personal problems they face .
5. to suggest policy measures for improving their economic conditions.

Data Source

Secondary and primary data are used for the study. The major item of secondary data used in the study are the statistics published by the Department of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Kerala. Two sample surveys were conducted in Mankara, Palakkad district and Kainakary, Alappuzha district.

The sampling procedure followed is as follows. In Palakkad, we have selected the Palakkad Block Panchayat on the basis of the number of main female agricultural workers (having more than 8000 workers). The Grama Panchayat in Palakkad Block was again stratified based on the number of main female agricultural labourers (more than 800 workers) and selected Mankara Grama Panchayat based on a simple random sampling procedure from the 8 Grama Panchayats. From Mankara Grama Panchayat four wards were selected at random basis from the 10 wards. Then from each ward 15 agricultural workers households were selected on simple random sampling procedure. And the total number of sample agricultural workers household covered in the survey is 60.

In Alappuzha district, we have identified the Champakulam Block Panchayat having the largest number of main female agricultural workers (3587). Among the six Grama Panchayats in the Block Panchayat, Kainakary has the largest number of main female agricultural labourers (1574) and hence the Grama Panchayat was selected for the sample survey. From Kainakary Grama Panchayat four wards were selected at random basis from 14 wards and from each ward 15 agricultural workers household were selected on simple random sampling procedure. And the total number of sample agricultural workers household covered in the survey is 60.

Sampling Procedure

(a) Mankara Grama Panchayat in Palakkad District

Palakkad Block Panchayat
(Block Panchayat having 8000 main female agricultural workers)

|
Number of Grama Panchayats in Palakkad Block having more than 800 main female agricultural workers (6)

|
Mankara Grama Panchayat

|
Four wards (Total wards 10)

|
60 Agricultural Labour Households (15 from each ward)

(b) Kainakary Grama Panchayat in Alappuzha District

Champakulam Block Panchayat
(Having the largest number of main female agricultural workers (3587))

|
Kainakary Grama Panchayat
(Having the largest number of main female agricultural workers (1574) among Grama Panchayats)

|
Four Wards (Total 14)

|
Four wards (Total wards 10)

|
60 Agricultural Labour Households (15 from each ward)

Period of the Survey

The survey was conducted in Mankara Grama Panchayat and Kainakary Grama Panchayat during the months of December 2008 and January 2009.

Chapter 2

Agriculture and Employment in Palakkad District

In this chapter we present the profile of the Palakkad district as the field study on female agricultural workers was conducted in Mankara Panchayat. Here we discuss the profile of the district population, district income, land utilization, rainfall, area of individual holdings, area of cultivation of major crops, area and production of important crops. The chapter also gives the available data on employment such as cultivators, agricultural labourers, household industry workers and other category of workers in the district.

1. Profile of the District

Palakkad or Palghat is the land of Palmyrahs and Paddy fields. Palakkad was formerly part of the erstwhile Malabar district of Madras Presidency. At present the district accounts for about 11.5 percent of the total land area of the state of Kerala, with the share of population of 8.22 percent. The district is bounded on the North by Malappuram district, in the East by Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu, in the South by Thrissur district and the West by Thrissur and Malappuram districts. The district headquarters is located at Palakkad, which is about 160 kms. away from Kochi and 370 kms. from Thiruvananthapuram.

For administrative purposes the district is divided into five Taluks viz., Alathur, Chittur, Palakkad, Ottappalam and Mannarkkad and 156 revenue villages. The district has 13 Block Panchayats and 91 Grama Panchayats. The Municipal towns are Palakkad, Ottappalam, Shornur and Chittur Thathamangalam. Palakkad Municipality is one of the oldest Municipalities of the state having a history of 130 years. The details about the area and the administrative setup of the district is given in Table 2.1

Table 2.1
Area and Administrative Setup

Items	Palakkad	State
I Area		
1. Total Area (sq.km)	4480	38863
	(11.5)	(100.0)
Wet area (Hectare)	7599	462797
	(1.6)	(100.0)
Dry area (Hectare)	243378	2273603
	(10.7)	(100.0)
2. Forest Area	136257	1081509
	(12.6)	(100.0)
II Administrative Setup		
1. Number of Revenue Division	2	21
2. Number of Taluks	5	63
3. Number of Revenue Villages	156	1452
4. Number of Municipalities	4	53
5. Number of Block Panchayats	13	152
6. Number of Grama Panchayats	91	999
7. Number of Assembly Constituencies	11	140

Source: DES 2006, Panchayat Level Statistics 2006, Palakkad District

Topographically the district can be divided into two regions, the low land comprising the midland and the high land formed by the hilly portion. The soil is laterite in the hill and mid regions. Coconut, Arecanut, Cashew, Pepper, Rubber and Paddy are cultivated in midland.

2. Population

According to 2001 census the district had a population of 2617482 comprising 1266985 males and 1350497 females (Table 2.2). In spite of the development of the district during the last half a century the growth in urban population was small. The percentage of urban population and urban households was only 14 percent in 2001. The district is a backward rural economy and 86 percent of the population lives in rural areas. The SC/ST population accounted for 18 percent of the total population of the district. The density of the population in the district is lower compared to the state average. The demographic features of the district is given in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2
Demographic Features of Palakkad District (2001 Census)

Items	Palakkad	State
1. Total Population (Number)	2617482	31841374
	(100.0)	(100.0)
Male	1266985	15468614
	(48.4)	(48.6)
Female	1350497	16372760
	(51.6)	(51.4)
2. Rural Population	2260907	2357449
	(86.4)	(74.0)
3. Urban Population	356575	8266925
	(13.6)	(26.0)
4. S.C Population	432578	3123941
	(16.5)	(9.8)
5. S.T Population	39665	364189
	(1.5)	(1.1)
6. Total Number of Households	530216	6726356
	(100.0)	(100.0)
7. Urban Households	74305	1716097
	(14.0)	(25.5)
8. Rural Households	455911	5010259
	(86.0)	(74.5)
9. Other Aspects		
Density of population	584	819
Growth Rate (1991 to 2001)	9.88	9.43
Sex ratio	1068	1058
Literacy rate (Percent)	84.35	90.86
Male	89.52	94.24
Female	79.56	87.72

Source: Same as Table 2.1

3. The District Income

The Net State Domestic Product of the district at current prices was estimated as Rs. 6255.34 crores in 2004-05. Of the total income, the share of agriculture and allied activities were 16.5 percent. The sector has been witnessing a decline. Industry and construction are the major activities in the secondary sector and accounted for 19.6 percent of total district income. The tertiary sector is the major sector of the district economy and accounted for 63.8 percent of the district income (Table 2.3). The major activities of the sector are trade, hotels and restaurants, services, transport and storage, real estate business and legal services.

Table 2.3
Net State Domestic Product of Palakkad District for 2004-05

Sectors	Current Prices Rs. in lakhs	Percent
1. Total Primary	103685	16.5
2. Total Secondary	122444	19.6
3. Total Tertiary	399405	63.8
Net Domestic Product	625534	100.0

Source: Same as Table 2.1

4. Agriculture

a. Land Utilisation Pattern

Palakkad district account for 11.3 percent of the total geographical area of the state. The net area sown in the district was estimated as 1.98 lakhs hectares accounting for 9.2 percent of the net area sown of the state. The total cropped area of the district was estimated as 3.24 lakh hectares. Land utilization pattern of the district and of the state are given in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4
Land Utilisation Pattern of Palakkad District 2004-05 (Area in Hectare)

Category	Palakkad	State	Share of Palakkad (Percent)
1. Total geographical area	438980	3885497	11.3
2. Forest area	136257	1081509	12.6
3. Current fallow	12617	68634	18.4
4. Net area sown	198474	2154885	9.2
5. Total cropped area	324480	2996293	10.8

Source: Same as Table 2.1

b. Rainfall and Irrigation

In the district, the main rainy season is South West monsoon lasting from June to September and about 75 percent of the annual rain is received during the period. Lack of availability of normal rainfall untimely rains and drought conditions have adversely affected the agriculture in the district (Table 2.5). Between 1997 and 2006, the actual rainfall received in the district was lower for six years. The percentage departure from normal rainfall varied between 8 percent to 30 percent. The severe drought in 2003 had resulted in widespread destruction of paddy crop during 2003 and 2004.

Table 2.5
Actual and Normal Rainfall with Percentage Departure (in Millimeter)

Year	Palakkad		
	Actual Rainfall	Normal Rainfall	Percentage Departure
1. 1997	2405	2363	(+)1.8
2. 1998	2407	2363	(+)1.8
3. 1999	2173	2363	(-)8.0
4. 2000	1862	2228	(-)16.4
5. 2001	1970	2363	(-)16.6
6. 2002	1833	2363	(-)22.4
7. 2003	1728	2472	(-)30.1
8. 2004	2227	2473	(-)10.0
9. 2005	2301	2133	(+)7.8
10. 2006	2104	2134	(-)1.4

Source: Department of Agriculture 2005, Facts and Figures of Agriculture in Kerala and SPB, Economic Review 2005 and 2008

Palakkad is one of the districts which achieved progress with regard to irrigational development. In the case of paddy, Palakkad account for one fourth of the gross area under irrigation in the state (Table 2.6). The gross area under irrigation of paddy crop was 46,831 hectares in 2004-05. The water brought through canals from Malampuzha dam is the major source of irrigation. The other crops to which irrigation are provided are vegetables, coconut, arecanut, spices and condiments, banana etc.

Table 2.6
Gross Area (in Hectare) under Irrigation: Cropwise, 2004-05

Crops	Palakkad	Kerala	Share of Palakkad (Percent)
1. Paddy	46831	183601	25.5
2. Tubers	23	2253	1.0
3. Vegetables	1351	14274	9.5
4. Coconut	19874	157768	12.6
5. Arecanut	2432	36858	6.6
6. Cloves	9	540	1.7
7. Nutmeg	30	5745	0.5
8. Other speices & condiments	704	3403	20.7
9. Banana	4343	30265	14.3
10. Other Crops	3214	18163	17.7

Source: Same as Table 2.1

c. Size of Operational Holdings

The agricultural census of 2000-01 gave the size of operational holdings of the farmers in Palakkad district. The total number of individual operational holdings in the district was estimated as 5.15 lakhs (Table 2.7). Of the total holdings 85 percent of them had a size below 0.5 hectare. Another 7 percent of the operational holdings had a size of 0.5 to one hectare. Thus, 92 percent of the holdings come under the category of marginal holdings having an area less than one hectare. These marginal holdings can be classified as uneconomic holdings as the farmers cannot earn a reasonable income form the holdings.

Table 2.7
Number of individual operational holding 2000-01

Area in hectare	Number	Percent
1. 0 – 0.5	436179	84.6
2. 0.5 – 1.0	37774	7.3
3. 1.0 – 2.0	26008	5.0
4. 2.0 – 4.0	12334	2.4
5. Above 4	3011	0.6
Total	515306	100.0

Source: Same as Table 2.1

Table 2.8
Area of individual holdings (2000-01)

Area in hectare	Number	Percent
1. 0 – 0.5	42305	28.0
2. 0.5 – 1.0	26927	17.8
3. 1.0 – 2.0	35231	23.3
4. 2.0 – 4.0	31862	21.1
5. Above 4	14639	9.7
Total	150964	100.0

Source: Same as Table 2.1

A feature of the size of operational holdings was that 92 percent of the number of marginal holdings accounted for 46 percent of the total area of cultivation (Table 2.7 and Table 2.8). Another 5 percent of the holdings was small holdings and accounted for 23 percent of the total area of cultivation. The structure of agricultural holdings in the district indicate that a small percentage of farmers (3 percent) possess nearly 31 percent of the total area of holdings.

d. Area and Crops cultivated

The major crops cultivated in the district are paddy, coconut, rubber, banana, plantains, mango, arecanut, pepper and tamarind (Table 2.9). The other important crops are jack, pulses, sugarcane, cashew, tapioca, coffee and vegetables. Paddy is the most important crop having the largest area of cultivation and accounted for 38 percent of the total area of cultivation of the state during 2004-05. Paddy is cultivated thrice in a year viz., Autumn, Winter and Summer. Irrigation is also provided for the cultivation of paddy.

Table 2.9
Area of cultivation (in Hectares) 2004-05

Crops	Palakkad	Kerala	Share of Palakkad (Percent)
1. Paddy	111029	289974	38.3
2. Pulses including Tur	4701	8428	55.8
3. Sugar crops	4633	9480	48.8
4. Pepper	7305	237669	3.1
5. Arecanut	6464	107572	6.0
6. Jack	6003	97536	6.1
7. Mango	9999	90631	11.0
8. Banana	10705	58866	18.2
9. Other plantain	6871	54612	12.6
10. Cashew	4814	81547	6.0
11. Tapioca	4186	88486	4.7
12. Other Vegetables	4404	26837	16.4
13. Coconut	55533	899267	6.2
14. Coffee	4650	84644	5.5
15. Rubber	29900	480661	6.2
16. Tamarind	7170	19564	36.6

Source: Same as Table 2.1

e. Production and Productivity

Palakkad district is the largest producer of paddy in Kerala. More than 40 percent of the total paddy in the state is produced in the district at present. Mango, banana and other plantains are the other important agricultural products produced in the district. Rubber production in the district account for 6.3 and arecanut 5.7 percent of the total production in the state in 2004-05. Sugarcane, pulses and tamarind are the other important agricultural products produced in the district. The crop wise production in the district and its share to total production of the state for 2004-05 is given in Table 2.10

Table 2.10
Production of Important Crops 204-05

Crops	Palakkad	Kerala	Share of Palakkad (Percent)
1. Rice (in tones)	260118	667105	39.0
2. Sugar cane (in tonnes)	6723	15430	43.6
3. Pulses (in tonnes)	3533	8390	42.1
4. Black Pepper (in tonnes)	991	74980	1.3
5. Arecanut betel nuts (in tonnes)	6248	110340	5.7
6. Jack(No. in million nuts)	23	348	6.6
7. Mango(in tonnes)	95205	525326	18.1
8. Banana (in tonnes)	86083	475371	18.1
9. Other plantain (in tonnes)	55419	416115	13.3
10. Raw cashew nuts (in tonnes)	2436	60584	4.0
11. Tapioca (in tonnes)	101867	2400043	4.2
12. Coconut (million nuts)	344	6001	5.7
13. Coffee (in tonnes)	2050	54300	3.8
14. Rubber (in tonnes)	43353	690778	6.3
15. Tamarind (in tonnes)	8819	29945	29.4

Source: Same as Table 2.1

f. Livestock Population

Livestock rearing is an important subsidiary activity in the district. The district had 263763 cattle, 9269 buffaloes, 125890 goats, 1507 pigs, 1885 sheeps during the year 2004-05. There has been a decline in livestock rearing due to the withdrawal of youth from agriculture and related activities. Table 2.1 gives the livestock population of the district and the total of the state.

Table 2.11
Livestock population in 2004-05 (Number)

Item	Palakkad	State	Share of Palakkad (Percent)
1. Cattle	263763	2122453	12.4
2. Buffaloes	9269	64618	14.3
3. Goats	125890	1213173	10.4
4. Pigs	1507	76452	2.0
5. Sheeps	1885	3631	52.0

Source: Same as Table 2.1

5. Employment

The census has classified the workers in two categories viz., main workers and marginal workers. Of the total workers in the district 81 percent were main workers and 19 percent were marginal workers (Table 2.12). Among the marginal workers female workers accounted a larger share compared to male workers. Of the total female workers the percentage of marginal workers was 28 percent.

Table 2.12
Total workers in Palakkad district (2001 Census)

Category	Total	Male	Female	Total (Percent)	Male (Percent)	Female (Percent)
Main workers	768620	562952	205668	81.3	85.4	71.8
Marginal workers	176432	95813	80619	18.7	14.5	28.2
Total workers	945052	658765	286287	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Same as Table 2.1

According to 2001 census the total workers in the district was 9.45 lakhs comprising 6.58 lakh males and 2.86 lakh females (Table 2.13). The structure of employment in Palakkad district showed that 42 percent of the employment was in agriculture as cultivators and agricultural labourers (Table 2.14). Of the total workers in the district 33 percent were agricultural labourers mainly engaged in casual employment. Among the total female workers, the major share is engaged as agricultural labourers. As paddy is the major crop in the district, the agricultural employment is mostly seasonal in nature.

Table 2.13
Total, main and marginal workers (number) in Palakkad district (as per 2001 census)

Category	Main workers			Marginal workers			Total workers		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Cultivators	73945	58638	15307	11693	6488	5205	85638	65126	20512
Agricultural labourers	22320	11539	10780	93989	4089	53097	31719	15629	16090
Household industry labourers	3	8	5		2		2	0	2
Other workers	44430	36958	74720	65085	4570	19377	50939	41529	94097
	5	5			8		0	3	
Total	76862	56295	20566	17643	9581	80619	94505	65876	28628
	0	2	8	2	3		2	5	7

Source: Same as Table 2.1

Table 2.14
Total, main and marginal workers in Palakkad district (Percentage)

Category	Main workers			Marginal workers			Total workers		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Cultivators	9.6	10.4	7.4	6.6	6.8	6.4	9.0	9.9	7.2
Agricultural labourers	29.0	20.5	52.4	53.3	42.7	65.8	33.5	23.7	56.2
Household industry labourers	3.5	3.4	3.8	3.2	2.8	3.6	3.5	3.3	3.7
Other workers	57.8	65.6	36.3	36.9	47.7	24.0	54.0	63.0	32.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Same as Table 2.1

6. Migration

During the last three decades migration to foreign countries especially to the Gulf and the consequent flow of remittances had been a basic factor which accelerated the process of development in all districts in Kerala except Wayanad and Idukki. Palakkad district has a moderately high rate of emigration i.e., 33 emigrants per 10 households (Table 2.15). This emigration and consequent flow of remittances have also acted as disincentive for cultivation. We have noticed that the district has been witnessing a rapid withdrawal of young labour force from agriculture especially from paddy cultivation.

Table 2.15
Number of emigrants from Kerala, 2004

Districts	Emigrants	Emigrants per 100 households
1. Thiruvananthapuram	168046	21.5
2. kollam	148457	24.4
3. pathanamthitta	133720	44.3
4. Alappuzha	75036	15.2
5. Kottayam	106569	24.0
6. Idukki	7880	2.9
7. Ernakulam	121237	16.9
8. Thrissur	178867	27.2
9. Palakkad	177876	32.6
10. Malappuram	271787	45.0
11. Kozhikode	167436	28.6
12. Wayanad	7704	4.4
13. Kannur	202414	43.2
14. Kasargode	71449	30.6
Kerala	1838478	26.7

Source: K.C. Zachariah and S. Irudaya Rajan, 204, Gulf Revisited, Working paper 363, C.D.S.

Conclusion

The analysis on the profile of Palakkad district can be concluded as follows. The district is a backward rural economy where 86 percent of the people live in rural areas. Though agriculture and allied activities account for 17 percent of the district income, 42 percent of the employment is in this sector. The district has a moderately high rate of emigration and it has contributed to the withdrawal of youth from agriculture. The district is also facing acute shortage of agricultural workers. Paddy is the most important crop in the district. The other major crops cultivated in the district are coconut, rubber, banana, other plantains, mango, arecanut, pepper and tamarind.

Chapter 3

Socio –economic conditions of female Agricultural workers in Mankara, Palakkad District.

The chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part we present the profile of sample Grama Panchayat based on secondary data. In the second part we present the findings of the sample survey conducted in Mankara Grama Panchayat in Palakkad district. The findings are presented in the following sections viz. socio-economic background, employment, wages and working conditions, debts of the households, benefits received from the state government and other agencies, living conditions and health status of the households, current problems and policy suggestions to improve the Socio-economic conditions.

I. Profile of Mankara Grama Panchayat.

Mankara Grama Panchayat come under the Palakkad Block Panchayat, has an area of 20.53 square kilometers. The Grama Panchayat has 13 wards and the total number of households in 3598. The total population in the Panchayat is 17712. The scheduled cast and scheduled tribe population in the Panchayat is 4392. The literacy rate of the people in the Panchayat is 84.50 percent (Table 3.1)

Table 3.1
Demographic Particulars of Mankara Grama Panchayat

Items	Number	Percent
1. Area in Sq. km	20.53	
2. Number of wards	13	
3. Number of households	3598	
4. Population		
Males	8590	48.49
Females	9122	51.50
Total	17712	100.0
5. Number of SC and ST population		
Males	2215	50.43
Females	2177	49.56
Total	4392	100.0
6. Literacy rate	84.50	

Livestock

Livestock rearing is an important subsidiary occupation of the people in Mankara Grama Panchayat. The major items of livestock are cattle, Buffaloes and Goats. The farmers possess cross breed as well as indigenous cattle. Besides this the farmers also have fowls. The Grama Panchayat has one veterinary hospital. The data on livestock population is given in Table 3.2

Table 3.2
Livestock Population in Mankara Grama Panchayat

	Number
1. Number of Cattle	
a. Cross breed	1837
b. Indigenous breed	469
Total	2306
2. Buffaloes	113
3. Goats	506
4. fowls	10194
5. Ducks	22
6. Number of Veterinary institutions	1

Employment

According to 2001 census, the Mankara Grama Panchayat has 6280 workers comprising 4365 male and 1915 female workers. Of the total workers the main workers account for 82 percent and marginal workers 18 percent. A male female break up shows that a larger proportion of the female workers are marginal workers. (Table 3.3). This indicates the lack of rural adequate employment opportunities in the Grama Panchayat. Of the total workers agricultural workers account 37 percent.

Table 3.3
Total Workers in Mankara Grama Panchayat (2001 Census)

Category	Number			Total (Percent)	Male (Percent)	Female (Percent)
	Total	Male	Female			
Main workers	5126	3707	1419	81.62	84.92	74.09
Marginal workers	1154	658	496	18.37	15.07	25.90
Total workers	6280	4365	1915	100.0	100.0	100.0

The agricultural workers in the Mankara Grama Panchayat is estimated as 2306. Of this 29 percent of them are marginal workers. A male female break up of the agricultural

workers show that the females are in large number compared to males. This is because paddy cultivation requires more female workers in the various phases of cultivation and harvesting. Among the female workers more than one fourth is marginal workers.

(Table 3.4)

Table 3.4
Agricultural Labourers in Mankara Grama Panchayat

Category	Number			Total (Percent)	Male (Percent)	Female (Percent)
	Total	Male	Female			
Main Agricultural labourers	1635	725	910	70.90	69.71	71.87
Marginal Agricultural labourers	671	315	356	29.09	30.28	28.12
Total labourers	2306	1040	1266	100.0	100.0	100.0

Housing Conditions

The Grama Panchayat has 4232 residential houses (Table 3.5). Of the total houses, 52 percent has concrete roof, 47 percent has tiles or asbestoes roof. Only few houses has thatched roof. Majority of the houses were electrified (59 percent). On the other hand the houses that do not have electric connection is 40 percent. The high incidence of non-electrification is taken as an indicator of the backwardness of the Grama Panchayat.

From the above review of the profile of the Mankara Grama Panchayat it is clear that this is a backward Grama Panchayat where agriculture is an important economic activity of the people. Livestock rearing is a subsidiary occupation. Of the total workers agricultural labourers account for 37 percent. Among agricultural labourers, female workers account for the major share.

Table 3.5
Residential Houses in Mankara Grama Panchayat

Types	Number of houses	Percent
1. Concrete	2201	52.00
Tiles / asbestoes	2012	47.54
Tatched and others	19	0.44
Total	4232	100.0
2. Electrified	2520	59.54
Not electrified	1712	40.45
Total	4232	100.0

Socio-economic conditions of female Agricultural workers in Mankara Grama Panchayat

a) Demographic characteristics and socio-economic background Population

We have conducted a sample survey in sixty agricultural workers household in Mankara Grama Panchayat. In this section we present the demographic characteristics of the sample households. The total population in the sixty sample household is 289 comprising 15 males and 138 females (Table 3.6). The average number of persons per household is 4.81. A social classification of the households revealed that three fourth of them are scheduled caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) households and one fourth other Backward community households (Table 3.7). This indicates that all the agricultural households belonged to the category of socially backward section of the population. Of the total population in the households 75 percent belonged to SC and ST population (Table 3.8)

Table 3.6
Population in the Sample Agricultural Labour Households (60)

Category	Male	Female	Total
Total Population	151	138	289
Number of sample households	60	60	60
Average number of persons	2.51	2.3	4.81

Source: Field survey data of Mankara

Table 3.7
Number of Sample Agricultural labour Households (caste wise)

Category	Number of households	Percent
Other Backward Community (OBC)	14	23.33
Scheduled Caste (S C)	35	58.33
Scheduled Tribe (S T)	11	18.33
Total	60	100.0

Table 3.8
Population in the Sample Agricultural Labour Households (Caste wise)

Category	Number of persons			Percent		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
OBC	44	28	72	29.13	20.28	24.91
S C	78	82	160	51.65	59.42	55.36
S T	29	28	57	19.20	20.28	19.72
Total	151	138	289	100.0	100.0	100.0

The population of the household is classified on the basis of the economic status. Of the total population in the sample household 52 percent are workers, 22 percent students, 6 percent old people and 15 percent housewives and other categories (Table 3.9) A notable aspect is that a large proportion of females in the working age group are workers. Most of the children below this age of 15 are attending the educational institution as fulltime students. The proportion of the population outside the labour force such as old people, housewives and others were only 20 percent of the population. This show that due to the poor economic condition, all able bodied people are engaged in economic activities as workers.

Table 3.9
Population in the Sample Agricultural Labour Households (population category)

Category	Number			Percent		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1. Workers	85	64	149	56.29	46.3	51.55
2. Unemployed	2	12	14	1.32	8.69	4.84
3. Old people	9	10	19	5.96	7.24	6.57
4. Students	31	32	63	20.52	23.18	21.79
5. Children	2	4	6	1.32	2.89	2.07
6. Housewife and others	22	16	38	14.56	11.59	13.14
Total	151	138	289	100.0	100.0	100.0

The students in the sample households studying in courses ranging from primary to degree (Table 3.10). Both male and female students are attending educational institution. Majority of the students are studying courses on secondary level. Nearly 10 percent of the students are studying in Degree courses.

Table 3.10
Number of Students in Sample Households

Course of study	Number of students			Percent		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Primary	6	5	11	19.35	15.62	17.46
Secondary	18	16	34	58.06	50.00	53.96
Plus two	5	7	12	16.12	21.87	19.04
Degree / Diploma	2	4	6	6.45	12.5	9.52
Total	31	32	63	100.0	100.0	100.0

Land Ownership

In rural areas cultivable land is an important income earning asset of the agricultural workers. Lack of cultivable land is identified one of the basic causes for the low income and poverty in rural areas. The situation is not different in Mankara Grama Panchayat as more than 90 percent of the households do not have land for cultivation (Table 3.11). Forty five percent of the sample agricultural households reported that they have land having an area below 5 cents. Another 35 percent of the households have land ranging between in 6 to 15

cents. Among the total sixty sample households only one household has land more than 50 cents.

Table 3.11
Area of Land owned by the Household

Area of land in cent	No. of households	percent
Below 5	27	45.00
6 – 10	11	18.33
11 – 15	10	16.66
16 – 20	6	10.0
21 – 30	2	3.33
31 – 40	2	3.33
41 – 50	1	1.66
Above 50	1	1.66
Total	60	100.00

We have enquired about the title of the ownership of the land. According to the traditional value system of our society, the land is generally owned in the name of the head of the household, the male member of the family. The situation is not different in Mankara Panchayat. The ownership of the land is vested with the husbands of the female agricultural workers. Of the total sample households female agricultural workers owned land only 15 percent (Table 3.12)

We have enquired about the impact of Land Reform Act 1971 in the transfer of land to the poor people in the sample households. It is reported that only in three households having an area of 3 cents, they have received the land as per “Kudikiddappu” right.

The practice of taking land on lease for cultivation is not prevalent much. Only two sample households cultivating land taken on lease. One household has taken 7 cents and another 90 cents on lease.

Table 3.12
Ownership of the land

Area of land (in cent)	Ownership of the land				Total
	Female worker	Husband	Mother/ Father	Others	
Below – 5	5	21	1	-	27
6 – 10	1	7	1	2	11
11 – 15	1	9	-	-	10
16 – 20	-	5	-	1	6
21 – 30	-	1	1	-	2
31 – 40	1	1	-	-	2
41 – 50	1	-	-	-	1
Above 50	-	1	-	-	1
Total	9	45	3	3	60
Percent	15.00	75.00	5.00	5.00	100.00

Possession of Livestock

Livestock rearing is an important subsidiary activity which helps the agricultural labour households to earn a supplementary income. Households having a better income can purchase and rear cattle. Feeding cattle in the off season when there is no yield of milk is also another problem. The study reveals that only 15 households possessed livestock and among them only eight are selling milk and earning an income (Table 3.13)

Table 3.13
Number of household possess livestock

Category of livestock	Number of household Possessed	Number Selling milk
Milch cow and calves	6	6
Milch cow and calf	2	2
Milch goat	2	-
Milch cow	1	-
Milch cow and buffalo	1	-
Milch buffalo	1	-
Calf	1	-
Buffalo	1	-
Total	15	8

Of the eight households selling milk six are selling milk having a value between Rs 750 to 1000 per month (Table 3.14). After meeting the cost of feed and other expenses, the households get a small income from the livestock rearing. This shows that most of the households do not have livestock and a few having livestock earn only a small income from the livestock rearing.

Non- Agricultural Activities

Non – Agricultural activities such as cottage industries and services like giving tuition to the students etc provide supplementary income to the households. Our study found that only in two households having tailoring activity earn a monthly income of Rs 700 per month. In one household a member earns Rs. 300 by giving tuition to the students. Thus these sample households do not earn much from non-agricultural activities.

Table 3.14
Number of households selling livestock

Amount (Rs) Per month	No of households	Percent
750	1	12.50
900	2	25.00
1000	3	37.50
1500	1	12.50
2000	1	12.50
Total	8	100.00

Employment, Wages and Working condition of the Female Agricultural Workers

Profile of the worker

Majority of the sample female agricultural workers in our sample belonged to SC and ST category of the population. Not a single person from the forward community is working as agricultural worker. Of the total 60 sample female workers, 3 are unmarried and 3 are widows (Table 3.15)

Table 3.15
Marital Status of the female Agricultural workers

Category	Number of persons			
	Married	Unmarried	Widow	Total
OBC	14	-	-	14
SC	29	3	3	35
ST	11	-	-	11
Total	54	3	3	60
Percent	90.00	5.00	5.00	100.00

The educational status of the female workers show that more than one third is illiterate (Table 3.16). Seventeen percent of them have an educational level of primary and 45 percent have studied up to secondary level.

Table 3.16
Educational Status of the Female Workers

Category	Illiterate	Primary	Secondary	Higher	Total
OBC	4	6	4	-	14
SC	15	2	18	-	35
ST	3	2	5	1	11
Total	22	10	27	1	60

The main occupation of the female agricultural workers is jobs associated with various phases of paddy cultivation and harvesting. The sample female workers reported that during the last Virippu season, covering a period of five months, the majority got employment for days ranging between 26 and 40 (Table 3.17). 18 percent got jobs ranging from 41 to 50 days and another 13 percent for jobs ranging from 51 to 60 days. On the other hand 10 percent of the workers reported that they got jobs only for days ranging from 10 to 20 days. The daily wage received for the initial work relating to preparation of land for cultivation, planting, weeding etc, was between Rs 70 to 80. (Table 3.18)

Table 3.17
Agricultural Employment during Virippu season

Number of Days	No. of female workers	Percentage
10 – 15	3	5.00
16 – 20	3	5.00
21 – 25	5	8.33
26 – 30	14	23.33
31 – 35	8	13.33
36 – 40	8	13.33
41 – 45	6	10.00
46 – 50	5	8.33
51 – 55	1	1.66
56 – 60	7	11.66
Total	60	100.00

Note: Virippu crop, period of cultivation April, may to September, October.

Table 3.18
Daily wage Received for Agricultural work (Rs)

Daily wage Amount	No. of female Workers	Percentage
70	28	48.27
75	13	22.41
80	17	29.31
Total	58	100.00

The wages of the harvesting work is usually paid in kind, in paddy. The daily wage of harvesting ranged from 15 to 20 Kg of paddy. Here majority of them got a daily wage of 18 kg and the value in money terms in Rs 180 (the price of paddy per kg was Rs 10). Compared to the work connected with cultivation the female workers are getting a better wage for harvesting (Table 3.19). The shortage of workers for harvesting and the general reluctances of the young workers for doing harvesting are the major reasons for it.

Table 3.19
Daily wage for harvesting work

Wage in kind (paddy)	No. of workers	Percentage
15 kg	3	5.55
17 kg	2	3.70
18 kg	35	64.81
20 kg	14	25.92
Total	54	100.00

The female workers got only few days of work in a year in non – farming activities like construction of fence using bamboo and other casual rural employment. The number of days of jobs received ranged between 20 to 30 days for the last one year. The daily wage received ranged from Rs 70 and 95 (Table 3.20). On the other hand one female worker engaged in construction work got Rs. 150 per day.

Table 3.20
Non farming employment of the female worker

Category of employment	Number of Persons	Average Daily wage
1) Construction of fence using bamboo and thorn.	7	95
2) Casual work.	4	70
3) Construction.	1	150
Total	12	

Employment in National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGs)

The female workers are working in NREGS scheme during the year 2008 (Since April 2008). Of the 60 sample workers, 31 reported that they got job under NREGS scheme ranging from 3 to 40 days (Table 3.21). Ten persons reported that they got jobs between 26 to 30 days. Another ten persons got jobs ranging from 31 to 40 days. As per the NREGS Scheme, the Grama Panchayat, the implementing Agency will have to provide 100 days employment during an year starting from March. But till December the Panchayats was not able to provide jobs more than 40 days. Poor implementation is one of the reasons for this.

The female workers reported that they were engaged in cleaning of ponds, canals, drainage, road maintenance and cleaning the public places. They used to work about 7 hours per day under the NREGS and daily wage received was Rs. 125. The agricultural activities provide only few days seasonal employment in paddy farming and other activities. In the context the employment under NREGS was a great help to them.

Table 3.21
Number of days employed in NREG scheme in the year 2008

No. of days employed in the year (2008)	Number of workers	Percent
10 – 15	3	9.67
16 – 20	2	6.45
21 – 25	5	16.12
26 – 30	10	32.25
31 – 35	3	9.67
36 – 40	7	22.58
Above 40	1	3.22
Total	31	100

Occupation of husbands

Of the total sample female workers, three are unmarried and three are widows. The educational level of the husbands of the female workers show that 26 percent are illiterate, 20 percent primary level and 54 percent secondary level education (Table 3.22)

Table 3.22
Educational Status of the Husbands

Category	Illiterate	Primary	Secondary	Total
OBC	2	4	8	14
SC	10	5	14	29
ST	2	2	7	11
Total	14	11	29	54
Percent	25.92	20.37	53.70	100.00

The husbands are working as agricultural workers, construction workers, Casual workers, Wood cutter, Painter, Others (Table 3.23). They are getting employment ranging from 5 days to 25 days a month. While the agricultural workers got employment form 5 to 15 days, the construction workers, painters, wood cutter got more than 15 days employment a month. This suggest that non agricultural employment provides more days of work in the study area.

Table 3.23
Number of Days employed by Husbands during a month

Category of job	Number of days					Total No. of persons	Percent
	5 days	6 -10	11 -15	16 -20	21- 25		
Agricultural work	12	2	5	2	-	21	50.00
Construction work	4	-	-	4	-	8	19.04
Casual work	-	2	1	-	1	4	9.52
Wood cutter	-	-	1	1	-	2	4.76
Painter	-	-	-	2	-	2	4.76
Others	2	1	1	1	-	5	11.90
Total	18	5	8	10	1	42	100.00
Percent	42.85	11.90	19.04	23.80	2.38	100.00	

Migration

Only four persons of the households migrated to other place for employment. The four persons migrated included three sons and one son in law. They migrated to places such as Coimbatore, Thirupur, Bangalore and Hyderabad. This shows that the households do not have skilled persons who can migrate to other places for work.

Withdrawal of youth from agriculture.

We have enquired the reasons for the withdrawal of the youth from agriculture. Majority of the sample female agricultural labourers told us that youth are withdrawing because it is a difficult manual labour, low wages, few days of employment, seasonal work are the reasons cited by others (Table 3.24). We have also enquired the willingness of the household to send their children for agricultural work. Majority of the female workers told us that they are not willing to send their children for agricultural work (Table 3.25). The following are the reasons mentioned by parents for not sending their children to agricultural work. We have ranked the reasons mentioned by the parents and found that the difficult manual work occupies the first rank. Low employment opportunity, low wage, aspiration for education, low status job were found to be the other reasons. (Table 3.26). Currently one of the major reasons for decline in the paddy cultivation in the study area is the shortage of agricultural labourers.

Table 3.24
Reasons of withdrawal of Youth from Agriculture.

Reasons	No. of Households	Percent
Difficult Manual Labour	18	30.0
Low wage	16	26.66
Few days of employment	9	15.00
Seasonal work	10	16.66
No Prospects	2	3.33
No Response	5	8.33
Total	60	100.00

Table 3.25
Willingness to send children for Agricultural work.

Views	No. of households	Percent
Willing to send	21	35.00
Not willing to send	33	55.00
No Response	6	10.00
Total	60	100.00

Table 3.26
Ranking the Reasons for not sending their children for agricultural work

Reasons	Rank
1. Difficult manual work	1
2. Low employment opportunity (few days work)	2
3. Low wage	3
4. Aspiration for education	4
5. Low status job	5

Debt of the Households

We have collected data about the sources and utilization of loans and the debt of the households. Due to the low income, small level of asset holdings, lack of ownership of land, lack of income from non agricultural activities and migration the sample households were forced to borrow money from all available sources for meeting their needs. Of the 60 sample households, 47 borrowed money. The amount borrowed ranged from below Rs. 10,000 to more than one lakh (Table 3.27) forty five percent of the households borrowed money up to Rs10,000. Another 36 percent borrowed money ranging from Rs 10,000 to 9 Rs 30,000. And only eight households borrowed an amount ranging between Rs 40,000 to more than one lakh.

Table 3.27
Number of sample households availed loans

Amount Borrowed	No. of Households	Percent
Below 10,000	21	44.68
10,001 – 15,000	2	4.25
15,001 – 20,000	5	10.63
20,001 – 25,000	6	12.76
25,001 – 30,000	4	8.51
30,001 – 40,000	1	2.12
40,001 – 50,000	5	10.63
70,000 – 80,000	1	2.12
80,001 – 90,000	1	2.12
Above one lakh	1	2.12
Total	47	100.00

The money was borrowed for meeting domestic expenditure , construction of house, medical treatment of family members marriage repayment of loan purchase of live stock etc. (Table 3.28) One fourth of the households borrowed money for meeting their domestic consumption expenditure . Due to lack of employment and low income these households are forced to purchase money for meeting the domestic expenditure. Nineteen percent of the households borrowed money for meeting the expenses for constructing houses. Medical treatment and marriage expresses are the other items of expenditure.

Table 3.28
Purpose of Borrowings

Purpose	Number of Households	Percent
1. Meeting Domestic expenditure	12	25.53
2. Construction of home	9	19.14
3. Medical treatment	8	17.02
4. Marriage	6	12.76
5. Repayment of loan.	3	6.38
6. Purchase of livestock	3	6.38
7. Self employment	2	4.25
8. Purchase of Television	2	4.25
9. Repair of home	1	2.12
10. Purchase of two wheeler	1	2.12
Total	47	100.00

More than are fourth of the households borrowed money form banks (Table 3.29) Another major source is co- operative credit societies and banks. Money tenders is third major sources of credit. The household also purchased goods from shops on credit basis. Friends and relatives are also a small source of credit. A notable aspect is that the households borrowed money from more than one source. It seems that the households have availed from all available sources for meeting their credit needs.

Table 3.29
Source of Loans

Source	Number of Households	Percent
1. Banks	13	27.65
2. Banks and Money lenders	2	4.25
3. Co – Operatives	14	29.78
4. Co – Operatives and Money lenders	2	4.25
5. Money Lenders	9	19.14
6. Co – Operatives and Banks	2	4.25
7. Co – Operatives and Credit from shops	1	2.12
8. Credit from shops and Banks.	1	2.12
9. Friends	2	4.25
10. Relatives	1	2.12
Total	47	100.00

Below the poverty line (BPL) Households and the Benefits Received

We have collected data relating to the benefits received by the sample households (Table 3.30) as per poverty alleviation schemes. Of the total sample households 56 were BPL households. Among the BPL households, 35 have BPL ration cards eligible for getting rice, wheat, sugar at subsidized rate. Twenty seven households reported that they are purchasing the entire quantity of rice and other subscribed food grain from the ration shops using the BPL ration cards. Fourteen old persons belonging to the sample householders are getting agricultural workers pension at the rate of Rs 200 per month. The pension were received by the father, mother, father in laws, mother in laws of the female agricultural workers. Two person are getting old age pension. Thirty six households received financial assistance from government or local bodies for constructing house, 20 households for construction of toilets and 5 for repair of homes, from the above survey data it is clear that most of the female agricultural labourers belonged to the category of BPL or poor households. The various poverty alleviation schemes and pension schemes have direct impact or the households .It provides direct help in purchasing food grain at very low prices to the households. Sixteen old people in the home holds are getting agricultural workers pension or old age pension. These measures have helped the households considerably in improving their welfare. More than half of the home holds received financial assistance from the government and local bodies for construction and repair of the houses.

Table 3.30
Below the Poverty Line (BPL) Households

Category	Number of Households
1. Total Sample Households	60
2. Number of BPL households	56
3. Number having BPL ration card	35
4. BPL Households purchasing the entire item from ration shop	27
5. Households getting agricultural workers pension	14
6. Households getting old age pension	2
7. Number of persons getting unemployment allowance	4
8. Households received financial assistance from Govt. and local bodies for construction of home	36
9. Households received help for construction of toilet	20
10. Households getting financial help for repairing home	5

Housing conditions.

We have collected information from the sample households about the ownership of their houses and the nature of the houses such as number of rooms, nature of roof, nature of floor etc. (Table 3.31) All the sample households owned their own houses. Majority of the houses have tiled roof. Only few have thatched roof. Except one house all the houses have cement floor. Of the 60 houses, 51 are electrified. It seems that all the households have made serious attempts to construct and maintain good houses. A notable aspect is the role played by the government and local bodies in providing grants for constructing the houses. Out of the 60 households 36 received financial help from the government and local bodies for construction of houses.

Table 3.31
Housing conditions of sample households

Category	Number of houses
1. Total number of sample households	60
2. Total number of owned houses.	60
3. Rooms of the houses	
a) two rooms	16
b) three rooms	29
c) four rooms	15
4. Nature of the roof	
a) Tile	38
b) Thatched	3
c) Concrete roof	10
d) Not available	9
5. Nature of the floor	
a) Cement	59
b) Mud	1
6. Electrification	
a) Houses electrified	51
b) Not electrified	9

Data on toilet facilities available houses shows that 75 percent of the sample households have pucca toilet. (Table 3.32) Another seven percent of the households are using shed / plastic sheets etc for the toilet shed. A notable aspects is their 12 percent of the sample home holds do not have no separate toilet and are using open space The data on the nature of the toilet facilities suggest the need for improving the toilet facilities of one fourth of the home holds.

Table 3.32
Nature of Toilet facilities

Category	No. of Households	Percent
Households having pucca toilet	45	75.00
Households having shed / plastic sheet etc		
No separate toilet	4	6.66
Not available	7	11.66
	4	6.66
Total	60	100.00

Drinking water and fuel used

The source of drinking water of the sample households are well and pipe (Table 3.33) . More than 60 percent of the sample households use either own well or public well for drawing drinking water. The households which use public pipe for drinking water is one fourth of the sample households. Nearly half of the households reported that they face serious shortage of drinking water in the summer season. In this context the local bodies will have to devise measures for providing drinking water in summer season.

Fire wood is the fuel used for cooking in 59 sample households. In one house electricity is used as fuel for cooking. Due to very low income these agricultural labour house holds cannot afford to use cooking gas for as fuel.

Table 3.33
Sources of Drinking Water

Sources	No. of Households	Percent
Own well	17	28.33
Public well	20	33.33
Neighbour's well	6	10.00
Public Pipe	15	25.00
Others	2	3.33
Total	60	100.00

Possession of consumer Durables

Though the sample house holds are poor households they possess Television sets, Radio etc. (Table 3.34). Of the sample house holds 55 percent possess TV sets, ten percent of the sample households have Radio sets. One of the other hand one fourth of the house holds do not have any item of the consumer durables like TV, Radio, Tape recorder etc.

Table 3.34
Possession of Consumer Durables

Category of items Possessed	No. of households	Percent
1. Having TV	33	55.00
2. Having radio	6	10.00
3. Having both T.V and radio	2	3.33
4. Having tape recorder	4	6.66
5. Not having any items	15	25.00
Total	60	100.00

Consumption level of the Households

We have collected data from the sample households about the items of food consumed daily, the expenditure on food which member of the house hold is spending for consumption expenditure, consumption of alcoholic drinks etc. The house holds reported that rice gruel and rice meals are major items of the food consumed by them daily. Out of the 60 sample house holds 56 reported their rice gruel is the food the households consume in the morning For (Table 3.35) lunch and dinner the households consume both rice gruel and rice meals .All the sample reported that they are taking food three times a day. A classification of the households on the basis of weekly expenditure on food shows that 20 percent of the house holds spend an amount ranging from Rs 200 to Rs 400. (Table 3.36).

Table 3.35
Items of food Consumed by House holds daily

Category	Items consumed (Number of House holds)			Total Number of House holds
	Rice Gruel	Rice Meals	Other items	
Breakfast	56	-	4	60
Lunch	19	39	2	60
Dinner	26	32	2	60

Table 3.36
Weekly Expenditure for food

Amount (Rs)	Number of Home holds	Percent
Below 200	1	1.66
201-300	6	10.00
301-400	5	8.33
401-500	13	21.66
501-600	20	33.33
601-700	7	11.66
701-800	4	6.66
801-900	1	1.66
901-1000	1	1.66
Non Available	2	3.32
Total	60	100.00

Another 54 percent spent an amount ranging between Rs 401 to 600. Only 6 percent of the households spent an amount above Rs 800 per month. This indicate a very low level of consumption expenditure on food Lack of regular employment and low income are the factors contributing to this.

We have enquired about the person who is contributing to the major share of daily consumption expenditure. It is found that husbands or senior male member of the house holds spends major share of expenditure in the case of two thirds of the house holds (Table 3.37)

Table 3.37
Family member who spends the major share of daily consumption expenditure

Family member	Number of house holds	Percent
Husband	40	66.66
Son	7	11.66
Husband and son	3	5.0
Female agricultural worker	6	10.0
Other members	4	6.66
Total	60	100.00

Another 12 percent of the contributors are sons of the female agricultural workers. Only 10 per cent of the female workers are spending the major share of the expenditure in the sample house holds

Regarding the mid day meals scheme in the school it is found that children belonging to 20 sample home hold are taking food from the scheme. Another 19 sample home holds reported their children are not taking mid day meals from t5he schools. This also indicates the poverty of the home holds.

Consumption of alcoholic drinks

We have tried to collect data from the households about the consumption of alcoholic drink by the male members of the households. Generally the female agricultural worker is not interested to give the real situations about the consumption of alcoholic drinks. But it is revealed that of the 60 house holds male members of the 24 house holds are consuming alcoholic drink (Table 3.38). The male members of the house hold who consume alcoholic drink are husbands of the female agricultural workers son brothers and other members. Through the female workers told that their husbands and son consume only few days in a week, it seems that a good number are regularly consuming alcoholic drinks. One of the important causes for the low levels of food consumption and poverty is due to the spending of a good part of the earnings for drinks. In this contest sound policies and programmes may be formulated to discourage the consumption of alcoholic drinks.

Table 3.38
Consumption of alcoholic drinks

Items	Number of house holds
Total households	
a) Sample house holds	60
b) House holds consuming alcoholic drinks	24
Persons consuming	
a) Husbands	18
b) Sons	2
c) Brothers	3
d) Others	1
Duration of consumption	
a) Daily	3
b) Few days is a week	16
c) Only in festivals	5

Acute problems faced by the female workers

The sample female workers told us that the most serious problem they face are poverty and low income (Table 3.39). Lack of jobs and unemployment is the seemed major problems they face. Due to the seasonal nature of paddy crop, they will get only few days of jobs. Lack of non agricultural employment is another factor contributing to this sickness of husbands and other members is another serious problem. The other major problems identified by them are high cost of living, lack of money for constructing house and consumption of alcohol by their husbands.

Table 3.39
Acute problems of the female agricultural workers

Problems	Number of persons reported	Rank of the problem
1 Poverty, low wages and low income	15	1
2 Lack of jobs, regular jobs and unemployment	11	2
3 Sickness of husbands and other members	5	3
4 High cost of living	4	4
5 House construction not completed	2	5
6 Consumption of alcoholic drinks by husbands	2	5

Conclusion

Based on the above analysis we may draw the following conclusion. The female agricultural labour house holds belonging to the socially and economically backward categories such as scheduled cast/ tribes and other backwards communities. The wage income is the main source of income and the income from non-agricultural activities is small. Majority of female workers and their husbands are illiterate or having an educational level up to primary. Due to low income the house holds are forced to borrow money from all available sources and are in debt. Almost all the house holds are poor or BPL house holds and enjoying the benefits under BPL categories. The subsidized distribution of food grains through ration shops, agricultural workers pension, old age pension, financial support given for construction of the houses have considerably helped the house holds to maintain a better level of living. The study found that the consumption of food items are poor and not sufficient to provide the required calories. Consumption of alcoholic drinks by the member of the family is a serious problem faced by them. It is found that poverty due to low wages and income, lack of jobs and unemployment, lack of non-agricultural employment, high cost of living are the other major problems faced by the female workers.

Chapter 4

Agriculture and Employment in Alappuzha District

In this chapter we present the profile of the Kuttanad region followed by a profile of Alappuzha district. Our field study on female agricultural workers was conducted in Kainakari Panchayat, belonged to Alappuzha district. Here we discuss the profile of the district population, district income, land utilization, rainfall, area of individual holdings, area of cultivation of major crops, area and production of important crops. The chapter also gives the available data on employment such as cultivators, agricultural labourers, household industry workers and other category of workers in the district.

Profile of Kuttanad

Kuttanad, the granary of Kerala spans an area of 1,642.2 Sq.km, spreading across Alappuzha, Kottayam and Pathanamthitta districts. The major part of it is in Alappuzha district. A narrow coastal strip of land on the western side of Kuttanad separates most of the region from the Arabian Sea. The National High way 47 runs along this coastal strip. The main central road runs on the eastern side and Alappuzha – Changanachery road passes through the heart of Kuttanad. Alappuzha and Kottayam are the two important towns located on western and eastern border of Kuttanad respectively.

Kuttanad is only a flat land and 75 percent of the area is covered by water. About 80 Square kilometers of Kuttanad are covered by the watery surface of the Vembanad lake, rivers and canals. The Vembanad Kayal, which starts as a narrow strip from the Arabian Sea at Cochin, widens in area as it extends south and spreads into the northern half of Kuttanad. The soil in Kuttanad is a mixture of alluvial, clay and fine organic matters and the annual floods of the rivers renew the fertility of the soil. Four important rivers of Kerala – the Pamba, Manimala, Meenachil and Achankovil – enrich Kuttanad's fields by depositing their silt as they criss-cross into a large number of branches in the Kuttanad basin before discharging their water into the Vembanad lake. These rivers, together with the numerous man-made canals and the lake, make up a vast network of water ways throughout the entire region and provide the basis for its famed water transport system.

Geographically, Kuttanad is broadly divided into six areas – Upper Kuttanad, Kayal areas, Vaikkam, Lower Kuttanad, Northern Kuttanad and Purakkad Kari. The Karappadams (Upper and Lower Kuttanad) – the largest area – were the result of reclamation done in ancient times. 'Kayal lands' are infact part of backwaters which were reclaimed in recent times by capitalist farmers. The 'Karilands' are those situated in Ambalappuzha, Cherthala and Vaikkam taluk. They are swampy areas with black peaty soil and high acidity. Although, there is substantial homogeneity in the physical features of Kuttanad, there is considerable heterogeneity within the region with regard to aro-climatic conditions. Yet the entire region has common features and common problems.

Paddy Cultivation in Kuttanad.

In this water-logged region, the principal economic activity is paddy cultivation, which brings farmers and labourers together in Kuttanad. In this area, two-thirds of the total area is taken up by rice lands, and Kuttanad contributes about 25 percent of the total paddy production of Kerala.

Paddy cultivation is done in two types of land – Padasekharams (shallow fields) and Kayals (reclaimed back-waters), both lie 0.5 to 2.5 meters below the sea level. History of Kuttanad cultivation is a testimony of human efforts triumphing over limitations imposed by nature, unlike the traditional paddy cultivation system anywhere in the country or in the whole world.

All paddy cultivation in Kuttanad requires bunding and draining operations, which are greater problems in Kayal areas. This system of cultivation is known as ‘Punja’ cultivation. Punja cultivation falls during the months of October to March. Annually, following the onset of the South-West monsoon, the Padasekharams would first be dewatered and replenishing the ring bunds around them, fields are prepared. Fresh water is then let in and spouted seeds are sown. Transplanting and a second round of weeding are done after a few weeks. Then the lean period in employment starts. Some get work in manuring and spraying of insecticides. Sowing and harvesting are the busiest operations in rice cultivation, when farmers have to apply large doses of labour. The involvement of women in farm activities is very task specific because of the fact that women are generally capable in certain operations such as transplanting, weeding and harvesting. Hence, mostly female labourers are engaged in these operations.

Profile of the Alappuzha District

Alappuzha is a district with backwater and a land of lush paddy fields referred as ‘Rice Bowl of Kerala’. The district was formed on 17th August 1957. At present the district accounts for 3.64 percent of the total land area of the state of Kerala, with the share of population of 6.62 percent. The district is bounded by Ernakulam district on the north, in the east by Kottayam and Pathanamthitta districts and South by Kollam and the West by the Arabian Sea.

For administrative purposes the district is divided into 6 taluks and 91 revenue villages. The district has 12 Block Panchayats and 73 Grama Panchayats. The municipal towns are Cherthala, Alappuzha, Kayamkulam, Chngannur and Mavelikkara. The details about the area and the administrative set up of the district is given in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1
Area and Administrative setup of Alappuzha District

Items	Alappuzha	State
I Area		
1. Total area (sq. km)	1414 (3.64)	38863 (100.0)
Wet area (hectare)	63391 (13.69)	462797 (100.0)
Dry area (hectare)	78362 (3.45)	2273603 (100.0)
II Administrative set up		
1. Number of Revenue divisions	2	21
2. Number of Taluks	6	63
3. Number of Rvenue Vllages	91	1452
4. Number of Mnicipalities	5	54
5. Number of Bock Pnchayats	12	152
6. Number of Gama Pnchayats	73	999
7. Number of Assembly Constituencies	11	140

Source: DES 2006, Panchayat Level Statistics. Alappuzha District.

Population

According to 2001 Census the district had a population of 2109160 persons comprising 1014529 males and 1094631 females (Table 4.2). The district has 29 percent urban population. The SC and ST population accounts for 9.58 percent of the total population of the district. The district has a density of population of 1492 persons per sq. km. The demographic features of Alappuzha district is given in the Table 4.2.

Table 4.2
Demographic Features of Alappuzha District (2001 Census)

Items	Alappuzha	State
1. Total Population (Number)	2109160	31841374
	(100.0)	(100.0)
Male	1014529	15468614
	(48.10)	(48.58)
Female	1094631	16372760
	(51.89)	(51.41)
2. Rural Population	1487703	23574449
	(70.53)	(74.03)
3. Urban Population	621457	8266925
	(29.46)	(25.96)
4. S.C Population	199231	3123941
	(9.44)	(9.81)
5. S.T Population	3131	364189
	(0.14)	(1.14)
6. Total number of households	483960	6726356
	(100.0)	(100.0)
7. Urban households	138032	1716097
	(28.52)	(25.51)
8. Rural households	345928	5010259
	(71.47)	(74.48)
9. Other Aspects		
Density of population (per sq. km)	1492	819
Growth Rate (1991 to 2001)	-	9.43
Sex Ratio	1079	1058

The District Income

The Gross State Domestic Product of the district at current prices was estimated as Rs. 676482 Crores in 2004 – 2005. Of the total income the share of primary sector comprising agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining and quarrying was 12.41 percent. On the other hand the share of tertiary sector was 66.38 percent. This indicates that there has been a continuous decline in the agriculture and allied activities. On the other hand the non agricultural sector namely secondary and tertiary has been witnessing rapid growth (Table 4.3)

Table 4.3
Net State Domestic Product of Alappuzha District (2004-2005)

Industry of origin	Current prices (Rs. In lakhs)	Percent
1. Primary	83994	12.41
2. Secondary	143389	21.19
3. Tertiary	449099	66.38
GSDP	676482	100.0

Land Utilization Pattern

Alappuzha district accounts for 3.5 percent of the total geographical area of the state. The net area sown in the district was estimated as 93983 hectares accounting for 4.36 percent of the net area sown of the state. The total cropped area of the district was estimated as 12.6 lakh hectares (Table 4.4)

Table 4.4

Land Utilisation Pattern of Alappuzha District 2004-05 (Area in hectare)

Land utilization pattern	Alappuzha	State	Share of Alappuzha (Percent)
Total Geographical area	136058	3885497	3.50
Current fallow	4184	68634	6.09
Net area sown	93983	2154885	4.36
Total cropped area	126872	2996293	4.23

Size of Operational Holdings

According to the Agricultural Census 2000 – 2001, the total number of individual operational holdings in the district was estimated as 4.69 lakhs. Of the total holdings 94 percent of them had a size below 0.5 hectare. Another 4 percent had an operational holdings ranging from 0.5 to 1 hectare. This indicates that 98 percent operational holding belonged to the category of marginal farms. From these marginal farms, the farmers cannot earn a reasonable income (Table 4.5)

Table 4.5

Number of individual operational holdings 2000-01

Area in hectare	Number	Percent
0 – 0.5	441618	93.99
0.5 – 1.0	18139	3.86
1.0 – 2.0	7311	1.55
2.0 – 4.0	2217	0.47
Above 4	565	0.12
Total	469850	100.0

A notable feature of the size of operational holdings was that 98 percent of the number of marginal holdings accounts for 73 percent of the area of cultivation. This shows that small percentage of holdings are larger in size having an average size ranging from 2 to 4 and above 4 hectares (Table 4.6)

Table 4.6
Area of individual holding (2000-01)

Area in hectare	Number	Percent
0 – 0.5	39539	55.29
0.5 – 1.0	12519	17.50
1.0 – 2.0	9619	13.45
2.0 – 4.0	5699	7.96
Above 4	4135	5.78
Total	71511	100.0

Area and Crops cultivated

Paddy is the principal crop cultivated in the district. The area under paddy crop is estimated as 11 percent of the area of the state. Paddy is cultivated in two seasons. The other important crops cultivated in the district are coconut, rubber, cashew, tapioca and jack (Table 4.7)

Table 4.7
Area of cultivation in Alappuzha District (in hectares 2004-05)

Crops	Alappuzha	State	Share of Alappuzha (percent)
1. Paddy	32158	289974	11.08
2. Jack	3094	97536	3.17
3. Mango	5681	90631	6.26
4. Other Plantain	2863	54612	5.24
5. Cashew	3749	81547	4.59
6. Tapioca	3462	88486	3.91
7. Other Vegetables	751	26837	2.79
8. Coconut	56325	899267	6.26
9. Rubber	3860	480661	0.80

The important agricultural products produced in the district are rice, mango, other plantains, coconut and tapioca. Paddy accounts for 12 percent of the total production of the state (Table 4.8)

Table 4.8
Production of important crops in Alappuzha District (2004-05)

Crops	Alappuzha	State	Share of Alappuzha (percent)
1. Paddy	78491	667105	11.76
2. Sugar cane	1035	15430	6.70
3. Jack	8	348	2.29
4. Mango	27656	525326	5.26
5. Other plantain	20271	416115	4.87
6. Raw cashew	1016	60584	1.67
7. Tapioca	82144	2400043	3.42
8. Coconut (million nuts)	328	6001	5.46
	5577	690778	0.80
9. Rubber	1011	29945	3.37
10. Tamarind			

Livestock Population.

Livestock rearing is not an important activity in the district. The district has 102130 cattle, 2865 buffaloes and 51451 goats. The lack of adequate land for livestock rearing is the principal reason for this. On the other hand duck rearing is an important activity in the district. The total number of ducks in the district is estimated as 2.50 lakhs in 2004 – 2005 (Table 4.9)

Table 4.9
Livestock population in Alappuzha District

Items	Alappuzha	State	Share of Alappuzha (percent)
1. Cattle	102130	2122453	4.81
2. Buffaloes	2865	64618	4.43
3. Goats	51451	1213173	4.24
4. Ducks	250164	-	-

Employment

The Census has classified the workers into two categories namely main workers and marginal workers. Of the total workers in the district, 80 percent were main workers and 20 percent were marginal workers. A notable aspect is that compared to male workers a higher proportion of female workers are marginal workers (Table 4.10).

Table 4.10
Total workers in Alappuzha District (2001 Census)

	Total	Male	Female	Total (percent)	Male (percent)	Female (percent)
Main workers	723354	501240	222115	80.40	83.23	74.67
Marginal workers	176305	100990	75315	19.59	16.76	25.32
Total workers	899659	602229	297430	100.0	100.0	100.0

According to 2001 Census the total workers in the district was 7.23 lakh comprising 5.01 lakh males and 2.22 lakh females (Table 4.11). The structure of employment in Alappuzha district show that 82 percent employment was in non agricultural activities as household industry workers and other non agricultural workers. Agricultural labourers accounts only a small portion of the total workers, i.e., 13.69 percent. The share of cultivators was only 3.8 percent. The data on structure of employment in the district suggest that there has been a continuous decline in agricultural employment due to a number of economic and

social factors. A notable aspect is that a higher proportion of agricultural labourers were female workers (Table 4.12). It may be noted that paddy farming requires a higher proportion of female workers in paddy cultivation and harvesting.

Table 4.11

Total, main and marginal workers (number) in Alappuzha district (2001 census)

Category	Main workers			Marginal workers			Total workers		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Cultivators	19281	17435	1847	8254	6299	1955	27535	23734	3802
Agricultural labourers	48878	32520	16358	50216	29398	20818	99094	61918	37176
Household industry labourers	36797	17278	19519	15315	3990	11325	52112	21268	30844
Other workers	44209	33301	10907	10252	61303	41217	54461	39432	15029
	3	7	6	0			3	0	3
Total	54704	40024	14680	17630	10099	75315	72335	50124	22211
	9	9	0	5	0		4	0	5

Table 4.12

Total, main and marginal workers in Alappuzha district (Percentage)

Category	Main workers			Marginal workers			Total workers		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Cultivators	3.5	4.35	1.25	4.68	6.23	2.59	3.80	4.73	1.71
Agricultural labourers	8.93	8.12	11.41	28.48	29.10	27.64	13.69	12.35	16.73
Household industry labourers	6.72	4.37	13.29	8.68	3.95	15.03	7.20	4.24	13.88
Other workers	80.81	83.20	74.30	58.14	60.70	54.72	75.28	78.66	67.66
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Migration

During the last three decades migration to foreign countries especially to the Gulf and the consequent flow of remittances had been a basic factor which accelerated the process of development in all districts in Kerala except wayanad and Idukki. Alappuzha is one of the districts which has a lower rate of emigration among the districts having emigration. The emigration rate which denotes the emigrants per 100 households was 15 percent in 2004. Compared to neighbouring districts such as Pathanamthitta and Kottayam the emigration rate was much lower in Alappuzha district (Table 4.13). Due to this, migration has not helped much for the economic development of the district.

Table 4.13
Number of emigrants from Kerala, 2004

Districts	Emigrants	Emigrants per 100 households
15. Thiruvananthapuram	168046	21.5
16. kollam	148457	24.4
17. pathanamthitta	133720	44.3
18. Alappuzha	75036	15.2
19. Kottayam	106569	24.0
20. Idukki	7880	2.9
21. Ernakulam	121237	16.9
22. Thrissur	178867	27.2
23. Palakkad	177876	32.6
24. Malappuram	271787	45.0
25. Kozhikode	167436	28.6
26. Wayanad	7704	4.4
27. Kannur	202414	43.2
28. Kasargode	71449	30.6
Kerala	1838478	26.7

Conclusion

The analysis of the profile of the Alappuzha district can be concluded as follows. The district is a backward rural economy where 70 percent of the people live in rural areas. The district has been witnessing a decline in agricultural activities and the share of primary sector accounts only 12 percent of the district income. The employment opportunities in the district also witness a continuous decline. Paddy is the principal crop of the district and major share of agricultural employment is related to different process of the paddy cultivation. Among the female agricultural workers the major share are employed in paddy cultivation and harvesting activities.

Chapter 5

Socio-economic conditions of female Agricultural workers in Kainakary, Alappuzha District

This chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part we present the profile of the sample Grama Panchayat based on secondary data. In the second part we present the findings of the sample survey conducted in Kainakary Grama Panchayat in Alappuzha district. The findings are presented in the following sections viz. socio-economic background, employment, wages and working conditions, debt of the households, benefits received from the state government and other agencies, living conditions and health status of the households, current problems and policy suggestions to improve the socio-economic conditions.

I Profile of Kainakary Grama Panchayat

Kainakary Grama Panchayat comes under the Ambalapuzha Block Panchayat, has an area of 38.82 square kilometers. The Grama Panchayat has 13 wards and the total number of households is 4577. The total population of the Panchayat is 20879 (Table 5.1). The literacy rate in the panchayat is 99.32 percent.

Table 5.1
Demographic Particulars of Kainakary Grama Panchayat

Items	Number	Percent
1. Area in Sq. km	38.82	
2. Number of wards	14	
3. Number of households	4577	
4. Population		
Males	10250	49.09
Females	10629	50.90
Total	20879	100.0
5. Literacy rate		99.32

Livestock

Livestock rearing is not a major subsidiary occupation of the people in Kainakary Grama Panchayat. The items of livestock are cattle, buffaloes and goats (Table 5.2). The farmers possess cross breed as well as indigenous cattle, but the total number of cattle in Kainakary was few due to the special geographic characteristic of the Panchayat. Lack of adequate space especially dry land is one of the constraints for cattle rearing. Besides cattle the farmers possess fowls and ducks.

Table 5.2
Livestock Population in Kainakary Grama Panchayat

	Number
1. Number of Cattle	
a. Cross breed	906
b. Indigenous breed	158
Total	1064
2. Buffaloes	94
3. Goats	695
4. fowls	21183
5. Ducks	3638
6. Number of Veterinary institutions	1

Employment

According to 2001 census the Kainakary Grama Panchayat has 8518 workers comprising 5261 male and 3257 female workers. Of the total workers the main workers account for 69 percent and marginal workers 31 percent. A male female break up shows that a larger portion of the female workers are marginal workers (Table 5.3)

A higher proportion of the marginal workers indicates the lack of rural non-agricultural employment in the area. Of the total workers in the Grama Panchayat 62 percent are agricultural workers.

Table 5.3
Total Workers in Kainakary Grama Panchayat (2001 Census)

Category	Number			Total (Percent)	Male (Percent)	Female (Percent)
	Total	Male	Female			
Main workers	5919	3911	2008	69.48	74.33	61.65
Marginal workers	2599	1350	1249	30.51	25.66	38.34
Total workers	8518	5261	3257	100.00	100.00	100.00

The agricultural workers in Kainakary Grama Panchayat is estimated as 5242. Of these 61 percent are main workers and 39 percent are marginal workers (Table 5.4). The marginal workers belonged to the category of workers whose main occupation is in the non agricultural sector. During agricultural season they also do some work in agricultural related activities as a subsidiary occupation. A male female breakup of the agricultural workers show that a higher proportion of marginal workers are female workers. Nearly 42 percent of the female workers are marginal workers. Lack of employment opportunities outside agriculture sector is a basic problem faced by the male as well as female workers in the area.

Table 5.4
Agricultural Labourers in Kainakary Grama Panchayat

Category	Total	Male	Female	Total (Percent)	Male (Percent)	Female (Percent)
Main Agricultural labourers	3208	1634	1574	61.19	64.63	57.99
Marginal Agricultural labourers	2034	894	1140	38.80	35.36	42.00
Total labourers	5242	2528	2714	100.0	100.00	100.00

Housing Condition

The Grama Panchayat has 5114 residential houses (Table 5.5). Of the total houses 72 percent has tiles or asbestoes roof, 14 percent concrete roof and 14 percent thatched roof. The type of roof of the houses indicate the poor housing condition of the houses. But a notable aspect is 85 percent of the houses were electrified.

From the above review of the profile of Kainakary Grma Panchayat it is clear that the Grama Panchayat is a backward Panchayat were 62 percent of the employment is in agriculture and related activities. Though agriculture is a major economic activity cattle rearing is not a very important subsidiary activity. Compared to male workers a higher proportion of female workers are marginal workers. The general housing conditions of the people were also not satisfactory.

Table 5.5
Residential Houses in Kainakary Grama Panchayat

Types	Number of houses	Percent
3. Concrete	721	14.09
Tiles / asbestoes	3681	71.97
Tatched and others	712	13.92
Total	5114	100.00
4. Electrified	4362	85.29
Not electrified	752	14.70
Total	5114	100.00

II Socio-economic conditions of Female Agricultural workers in Kainakary Grama Panchayat

Demographic Characteristics and Socio-economic Backgrounds

We have conducted a sample survey in sixty agricultural workers household in Kainakary Grama Panchayat. In this selection we present the demographic characteristics of the sample households. The total population in the households is 283 comprising 140 males and 143

females (Table 5.6). The average number of persons per household is 4.81. A social classification of the households revealed that 72 percent of them or Other Backward Community (OBC) 25 percent are Scheduled Caste / Tribes (SC / ST) and 3 percent are Christians (Table 5.7). This indicates that except two households, all of them belonged to the category of socially backward sections of the population. Of the total population in the households, 74 percent belonged to OBC, 23 percent belonged to SC and ST and 3 percent forward community (Table 5.8)

Table 5.6
Population in the Sample Agricultural Labour Households (60)

Category	Male	Female	Total
Total Population	140	143	283
Number of sample households	60	60	60
Average number of persons	2.33	2.38	4.71

Table 5.7
Number of Sample Agricultural labour Households (caste wise)

Category	Number of households	Percent
Other Backward Community (OBC)	43	71.66
Scheduled Caste (S C)/ Scheduled Tribe (S T)	15	25.00
Christian	2	3.33
Total	60	100.0

Table 5.8
Population in the Sample Agricultural Labour Households (Caste wise)

Category	Number of persons			Percent		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
OBC	106	103	209	75.71	72.02	73.85
S C	26	29	55	18.57	20.27	19.43
S T	3	8	11	2.14	5.59	3.88
Christian	5	3	8	3.57	2.09	2.82
Total	140	143	283	100.00	100.00	100.00

The Population of the households is classified on the basis of activity status. Of the total population in the sample households, 55 percent are workers, 9 percent unemployed, 7 percent old people, and 20 percent students (Table 5.9). A notable aspect in that a large proportion of females in the working age group are workers. Most of the children below the age of 15 are attending the educational institutions as full time students. The proportion of the population outside the labour force such as old people, house wives and other were small.

This shows that due to poor economic conditions all able bodied people are engaged in economic activities as workers.

Table 5.9
Population in the Sample Agricultural Labour Households (population category)

Category	Number			Percent		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1. Workers	83	72	155	59.28	50.34	54.77
2. Unemployed	5	20	25	3.57	13.98	8.83
3. Old people	10	9	19	7.14	6.29	6.71
4. Students	30	28	58	21.42	19.58	20.49
5. Children(below 5 years)	7	6	13	5.00	4.19	4.59
6. Migrated	4	1	5	2.85	0.69	1.76
7. others	1	1	2	0.71	0.69	0.70
8. data Not Available	-	6	6	-	4.19	2.12
Total	140	143	283	100.00	100.00	100.00

The students in the sample households are studying courses ranging from pre primary to degree (Table 5.10). Both male and female children are attending the educational institutions. While 29 percent of the students are at primary levels another 38 percent are at secondary level. Twelve percent of the students are studying at plus two level.

Table 5.10
Number of Students in the Sample Households

category	Number			Percent		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Pre-primary	3	2	5	10.00	7.14	8.62
Primary	9	8	17	30.00	28.57	29.31
Secondary	9	13	22	30.00	46.42	37.93
Plus two	4	3	7	13.33	10.71	12.06
Degree / Diploma	1	1	2	3.33	3.57	3.44
Vocational course	4	1	5	13.33	17.85	8.62
Total	30	28	58	100.00	100.00	100.00

Land ownership

In rural areas cultivable land is an important income earning asset of the agricultural workers. Lack of cultivable land is identified as one of the basic causes for the low income

and poverty in rural areas. The situations is not different in Kainakary Grama Panchayat. Nearly one third of the house holds reported that they own land up to 5 cents. (Table 5.11).

Table 5.11
Area of Land owned by the Households

Area of land in cent	No. of households	percent
Below 5	19	31.6
6 – 10	22	36.66
11 – 15	13	21.66
16 – 20	1	1.66
40-100	2	3.33
Above 1 acre	3	5.00
Total	60	100.00

Another 37 percent of the households possess an area of land ranging from 6 to 10 cents. Among the sample households only three households owned land above one acre. We have enquired about the title of the ownership of the land. According to the traditional value system of our society, the land is owned in the name of the head of the household, the male member of the family. The situation is not different in Kainakary Panchayat. Only in 8 percent of the households the land is owned in the name of the female workers (Table 5.12).

Table 5.12
Ownership of the land

Area of land (in cent)	Ownership of the land					Total
	Female worker	Husband	Mother/ Father	Others	Data Not available	
Below – 5	2	9	4	4		19
6 – 10	1	9	2	8	2	20
11 – 15	1	3	3	5	1	12
16 – 20					1	1
40-100		1	1			2
Above 1 acre	1	2				3
Total	5	24	10	17	4	60
Percent	8.33	40.00	16.66	28.33	6.66	100.00

In all other cases, the land is owned either in the name of husband, father, mother or other elder members of the household.

We have enquired about the impact of Land Reforms Act 1971 in the transfer of land to the poor people. It is found that out of the 60 sample households 31 got land as per the

Land Reforms Act 1971 (Table 5.13). They got small piece of land as per “Kudididappu” rights. It may be noted that they have not got agricultural land for cultivation.

Table 5.13

Number of households got land as per Land Reforms Act

Category	Number	Percent
5.0-8	11	35.48
8.1-10	2	6.45
10.1-15	9	29.03
Total	31	100.00

The practice of taking land on lease for cultivation is prevalent in the area. Sixteen households have taken land on lease for cultivating paddy (Table 5.14). They have taken land ranging below one acre to 5 acres. Besides the wage labour, this self cultivation has provided opportunities to earn additional income. But there is the risk of untimely rains or floods, leading to destruction of the crops.

Table 5.14

Number of households taken land on lease (leased in)

Area of land leased in	Number of House holds
Below 1 acre	2
1 acre	3
1 ½ acre	2
2 acre	3
2 ½ acre	1
3 acre	2
4 acre	1
5 acre	2
Total	16

Possession of Livestock

Livestock rearing is not an important activity in the Grama Panchayat. The lack of space is one of the important constraints for livestock rearing. Mobility of livestock is also difficult due to the peculiar geographic features of the area. Out of the 60 sample households only 3 households have cows.

Non-Agricultural activities

The house holds are not earning much from non-agricultural actives. The non-agricultural activities reported is tailoring and giving tution to the students. In three house

holds, they earn a small income from giving tuitions to children. In another 3 households, they engage in tailoring and earn a small income.

Only three persons were migrated for jobs to other places like Bangalore, Bombay and Gujarat. One person migrated to a Gulf country. So the study revealed that the households are not getting much income from non-agricultural activities and migration

Employment, wages and working conditions of the female Agricultural workers

Profile of the female worker

Of the total female workers 43 are OBC, 15 SC / ST and 2 Christian. All the female workers were married. The educational status of the female workers show that 3 percent is illiterate, 17 percent have primary education and 80 percent have secondary education.

The main occupation of the female agricultural workers is jobs connected with various phases of paddy cultivation and harvesting. The sample female workers reported that during the last agricultural season covering a period of five months, 40 percent of the workers got employment up to 20 days and another 38 percent got employment for 21 to 30 days (Table 5.15). And the rest of them got employment for more than 36 days. The daily wage received by majority of female workers was around Rs 90. A few got a daily wages of Rs 125 per day.

Table 5.15
Agricultural employment during the last season.

Number of days	Number of Female worker	Percent
Up to 12	3	5.00
13-15	13	21.66
16-20	9	15.00
21-25	3	5.00
26-30	20	33.33
31-35	-	-
36-40	5	8.33
41-45	2	3.33
46-50	1	1.66
Above 50	4	6.66
Total	60	100.00

The only other non-farming employment was the work done under National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. Of the total 60 sample female workers, 22 workers worked in the scheme. Of them 68 percent got employment for 5 to 10 days in the year 2008. (Table 5.16) Another 32 percent got employment for 11 to 15 days. In some of the wards of the Kainakary Panchayat the NREG scheme for 2008-2009 was not started till December 2008. Due to the poor implementation of the NREG scheme told us the workers got only few days employment. The workers told us that they used to work for 8 hours per day. The work in

which they were engaged are cleaning ponds, canals, drainage, road repair and cleaning of the public places.

Table 5.16
Number of days employed in NREG scheme during 2008.

Number of days employed	Number of workers	percent
5-10	15	68.18
11-15	7	31.81
Total	22	100.00

Occupation of the husbands

Of the total sample female workers, all are married and live with their husbands. The educational level of the husbands show that 10 percent are illiterate or having an educational level up to primary. But 82 percent of them have studied up to the secondary level (Table 5.17), The husbands are working as agricultural workers, casual labourers, fishermen, (Table 5.18). Majority of them has been working 16 to 20 days per month. On the other hand 22 percent work for 21 – 25 days a month. This suggests that non-agricultural and other service category employment available in the area for male workers. Among the five persons in the other category are working as welders, tailor, coir worker, company worker and salesman in a shop. One person was reported as unemployed.

Table 5.17
Educational Status of the Husbands

Category	No. of Households	Percent
Illiterate	1	1.66
Primary	5	8.33
Secondary	49	81.66
Higher secondary	1	1.66
Not available	4	6.66
Total	60	100.00

Table 5.18
Number of Days employed by husbands during last month

Category of job	Number of days			Data not available	Total
	12 -15	16 -20	21- 25		
Agriculture worker		4	2	4	10
Casual workers	8	19	2	3	32
Fisher man	1	2	4	1	8
Unemployed				1	1
Others			5	1	6
Not available				3	3
Total	9	25	13	13	60
Percent	15.00	41.66	21.66	21.66	10.0

Withdrawal of youth from Agriculture

We have enquired the reasons for the withdrawal of youth from agriculture. The views expressed by the sample agricultural households are as follows. One fourth of the household is of the view that young people are interested in jobs in house boats and tourism as Kainakary Panchayat is an important tourist centre in Alappzha district. Nearly one fourth of the households said that, the youth are withdrawing because it is difficult manual labour (Table 5.19). Educated youth are not interested to become an agricultural worker. Thus the economic change, development of tourism and other service activities are major factors contributing to the withdrawal of youth from manual agricultural work. Educational development is another reason for this type of development.

Table 5.19

Reasons of withdrawal of Youth from Agriculture

Reasons	No. of Households	Percent
Educated youth not interested	13	21.66
Youth prefer jobs in house boats and tourism	15	25.00
Difficult Manual Labour	14	23.33
No Response	18	30.00
Total	60	100.00

Debt of the households

We have collected data about the sources and utilization of loans and debt of the households. Due to low income, small level of asset holdings, the sample households borrowed money from all available sources for meeting their needs. The households also borrowed money for meeting the cost of cultivation of the leased in land. Of the 60 sample households, 51 borrowed money ranging between Rs 5000 to above Rs 2 lakh (Table 5.20)

Table 5.20

Amount borrowed by the households

Amount Borrowed	No. of Households	Percent
Upto 5000	17	33.33
5,001 – 10,000	7	13.72
10,001 – 15,000	10	19.60
15,001 – 20,000	4	7.84
20,001 – 30,000	3	5.88
30,001 – 50,000	3	5.88
50,001 – 75,000	3	5.88
100,001 – 200000	2	3.92
Two lakhs and above	2	3.92
Total	51	100.00

Forty seven percent of the households borrowed money up to Rs 10,000. Another one third of the households borrowed an amount ranged between Rs 10,000 and Rs 30,000. A notable aspect is that 8 percent of the households borrowed money ranging between one lakh to two lakh and above.

An analysis of the borrowing showed that meeting domestic expenses is the important reason for the borrowing money. The other major reasons are cultivation, marriage, construction of house, education, loan repayment, entertainment, medical treatment etc. (Table 5.21)

Table 5.21
Purpose of Borrowings

Purpose	Number of Loans Availed	Percent
Cultivation	14	18.18
Construction of home	7	9.09
Education	6	7.79
Domestic expenditure	18	23.27
Marriage	9	11.68
Repayment of loan	5	6.49
Medical treatment	3	3.89
Entertainment	7	9.09
Others	2	2.59
Not Available	6	7.79
Total	77	100.00

Among the total number of loans, one third was borrowed from Kudumbasree (Table 5.22). The other important sources from which money was borrowed are money lenders, SNDP micro finance, Co-operative banks and banks. A notable aspect is that the smaller amount of loan up to Rs 10,000 was borrowed mostly from co-operative banks, Kudumbasree, SNDP Micro finance and money lenders. On the other hand, loans above Rs 75,000 were borrowed from banks and money lenders. The households borrowed money from all available sources for meeting their credit needs.

Table 5.22
Source of Loans

Source	Number of Loans	Percent
Banks	7	6.42
Co – Operatives Banks	16	14.67
Kudumbasree	36	33.02
Ayalkootam	5	4.58
SNDP micro finance	17	15.59
Money Lender	19	17.43
Others	9	8.25
Total	109	100.00

Below the Poverty Line (BPL) households and the benefits received

We have collected data relating to the benefits received by the sample households as per the poverty alleviation schemes (Table 5.23). Of the total sample households, 34 were BPL households. All the BPL households are purchasing the entire quantity of rice and other subsidized rate from the ration shops. All the BPL households are purchasing the entire quantity of rice and other subsidised food grains from the ration shops using BPL ration cards. Thirteen old persons are getting Agricultural workers pension. It is reported that twelve persons are getting unemployment allowance eligible for unemployed persons. Seventeen households received financial assistance from government or local bodies for construction of house and 11 households for construction of toilets. From the above survey data it is clear that the various poverty alleviation schemes and pension schemes have a direct impact on the poor households. Financial assistance for construction of houses and toilet have greatly helped the households to have better housing and toilet facilities.

Table 5.23
Below the Poverty Line (BPL) Households

Category	Number of Households
Total Sample Households	60
Number of BPL households	34
Number having BPL ration card	34
Number of households getting agricultural workers pension	
Number of households getting old age pension	13
Number of households getting unemployment allowance	1
Households received financial assistance for construction of house	12
Number of households received help for construction of toilet	17
	11

Housing Conditions

In order to study the housing conditions of the female workers, we have collected data on housing conditions such as number of rooms, nature of roof, nature of floor etc (Table 5.24). All the sample households owned their own houses. Majority of the houses have three rooms or more. Sheet and tile are the roof materials used for roofing in majority of the houses. Twelve houses have concrete roof. All the houses have cement floor. Out of the 60 sample households, 57 were electrified. Of the total sample households, 17 percent financial help from the government and local bodies for construction of houses.

Table 5.24
Housing conditions of sample households

Category	Number of houses
1. Total number of sample households	60
2. Total number of owned houses.	60
3. Rooms of the houses	
a) two rooms	17
b) three rooms	33
c) four rooms	7
d) five rooms	3
4. Nature of the roof	
a. Sheet	18
b. Tile	18
c. Concrete	12
d. Thatched	2
e. Others	10
5. Nature of the floor	
a. Cement	60
6. Electrification	
a. Houses electrified	57
b. Not electrified	3
7. Fuel used for cooking	
a. Fire wood	39
b. Gas	18
c. Gas and fire wood	2

We have collected data about the toilet facilities. Due to the water logged nature of land, construction and maintenance of toilet is difficult. Data on toilet facilities show that 52 percent have pucca toilets (Table 5.25). On the other hand 27 percent of the households do not have pucca toilets. They use shed / plastic sheet etc for the toilet shed. In the case of 21 percent households they do not have no separate toilet and are using open space. Due to the peculiar water logged nature of land, it will create serious sanitation problems and spread of diseases. This is one issue which needs urgent attention from the part of local bodies.

Table 5.25
Nature of Toilet facilities

Category	No. of Households	Percent
Households having pucca toilet	31	51.66
Households having shed / plastic sheet etc	16	26.66
No separate toilet	13	21.66
Total	60	100.00

Drinking water

Kainakary Panchayat, is a water logged area and people face acute shortage of drinking water. The backwater is highly polluted and cannot be used for drinking purposes. Pipe water distribution and public wells are the major sources. If the pipe water supply fails, people will have to travel long distances in small boats to fetch drinking water. Of the total sample households, half of them depends on the public pipe water system (Table 2.6). During our survey it is reported that in two wards the households face acute problems due to the failure of the pipe water distribution. Of the 60 sample households, 55 reported that they face acute shortage of drinking water.

Table 5.26
Sources of Drinking Water

Sources	No. of Households	Percent
Own well	1	1.66
Public well	29	48.33
Public Pipe	30	50.0
Total	60	100.00

Possession of Consumer Durables

Though the sample households are poor households, they possess Television sets, Radio, Fridge, Telephone, C D Player (Table 5.27). Seventy percent of the sample households have television sets. At the same time only a few households have radio, fridge, telephone and other consumer durables. Twelve households do not possess any of the above items of consumer durables.

Table 5.27
Possession of Consumer Durables

Item	No. of households Possessed	Total number of households	Percent
1. TV	42	60	70.00
2. Radio	3	60	5.00
3. Fridge	3	60	5.00
3. Telephone	5	60	8.3
4. C.D player	6	60	10.00
5. No items	12	60	20.00

Consumption level of the households

We have collected data from the sample households about the items of food consumed daily, the expenditure on food, which members of the household is spending for consumption expenditure, consumption of alcoholic drinks etc. The households reported that baked items are taken as food item in the break fast (Table 5.28). For lunch and dinner the main items of food is rice meals. The households reported that they take food three times a day.

Table 5.28
Items of food Consumed by Households daily

Category	Number of House holds		
	Break fast	Lunch	Dinner
Rice Gruel	1	-	2
Baked items	58	-	-
Rice meals	-	59	57
Not available	1	1	1
Total	60	60	60

A classification of the households on the basis of weekly expenditure on food shows that majority of the households have a weekly expenditure up to Rs 500 or Rs 71 daily expenditure per household (Table 5.29). Only four households have a daily consumption expenditure of Rs 100 per day. This indicates a very low level of consumption expenditure on food. Lack of regular employment, absence of income from other sources are the factors contributing to this.

Table 5.29
Weekly Expenditure for food

Amount (Rs)	Number of House holds	Daily expenditure per households (Rs)
250	2	35.7
300	4	42.8
400	7	57.1
500	28	71.4
560	2	80.0
600	4	85.7
640	1	91.4
700	4	100.0

We have enquired about the person who is contributing to the major share of daily consumption expenditure. Except 8 percent of the households, the person who spends the major share of daily consumption expenditure are husbands and sons of the female worker. In eight percent, the major share is spend by the female worker.

Regarding the mid day meals scheme in the schools it is found that children belonging to 18 sample households are taking food from the scheme. This also indicates the poverty of households.

Consumption of alcoholic drinks

We have tried to collect data from the households about the consumption of alcoholic drinks by the male members of the households. Generally, the female worker is not interested to give the real situation about consumption of alcoholic drinks by their husbands and sons. But it is revealed that of the 60 households, male members of 34 households are consuming alcoholic drinks (Table 5.30). The persons who are consuming drinks are husbands and sons. Though the female workers told that their husbands and sons consume only few days in a week, it seems that a good number of them are regularly consuming alcoholic drinks. One of the important cause for the low levels of food consumption and poverty is due to the diversion of a good part of the household earnings for drinks.

Table 5.30
Consumption of alcoholic drinks

Items	Number of house holds
1. Total house holds	
a) Sample house holds	60
b) House holds consuming alcoholic drinks	34
2. Persons consuming	
a) Husbands	26
b) Sons	6
c) Both husband and son	1
3. Duration of consumptions	
a) Daily	2
b) Few days is a week	30
c) Once in a week	2

Acute problems faced by the female workers

The sample female workers told us that the most serious problem they face is scarcity of drinking water (Table 5.31). Sick ness of the members of the household is the second acute problem faced by the households. Poverty and low income is the third major problem in the area. A notable point is the lack of toilet facilities and lack of proper sanitation. This is cited as the fifth major problem. Lack of jobs and unemployment, mosquito problem, poor housing, lack of roads or transport link, indifference of Panchayat towards their problems are cited as other problems. From the above it is clear that the problems faced by the poor households in Kainakary are much different from other areas. The Grama Panchayat and the State Government may have to address these problems on a priority basis.

Table 5.31
Acute problems of the female agricultural workers

Problem	Number of persons reported	Rank of the problem
1 Acute scarcity of drinking water	55	1
2 Sickness of persons	34	2
3 Flood	24	3
4 Poverty, low wages and low income	16	4
5 No toilet / No proper sanitation	16	5
6 Lack of jobs, irregular jobs and unemployment	13	6
7 Mosquito	5	7
8 Poor housing	4	8
9 No roads, no transport link	4	9
10 Not getting assistance from the Panchayat	3	10

Sickness of members of the households is a major problem of the area. Due to the peculiar water logged nature of the area, people face serious health problems. Of the 60 sample households, 34 reported sickness of the members of the households (Table 5.32). This indicate a high incidence of sickness. Due to the high incidence of sickness, the households are forced to spend a good part of their income for medical treatment. Besides this, they cannot work and earn income for their living.

Table 5.32
Sickness of the persons

Category	No. of households facing sickness	Total number of households	Percent
Parents	6	60	10.0
Husband	7	60	11.7
Female agricultural worker	7	60	11.7
Husband	6	60	10.0
Children	5	60	8.3
Others	3	60	5.0
Total	34	60	56.7

Conclusion

Based on the above analysis we may draw the following conclusions. The female agricultural labour households belonged to the socially and economically backward

categories such as Other Backward Communities and Scheduled Castes and Tribes. The wage and the income from the land cultivated on lease are the major source of income of the households. Majority of the households got land as per Land Reforms Act 1971. Livestock rearing is not an important activity in the study area. Majority of the female workers and their husbands have studied up to secondary classes. The female workers employment is mainly connected with paddy cultivation and harvesting. They also got few days employment in NREG scheme. Due to low income, households are forced to borrow money from all available sources and are in debt. Majority of the households are BPL households. The subsidised distribution of food grains through ration shops, agricultural worker pension, old age pension, financial support given for construction of houses have considerably helped the households to maintain a better level of living. The study found that the consumption of food items are poor and not sufficient to provide the required calories. Consumption of alcoholic drinks by the members of the family is a serious problem faced by them. It is found that acute scarcity of drinking water, sickness, flood, poverty and low income, lack of toilet facilities, lack of jobs and unemployment etc are the major problems faced by the female workers.

Chapter 6

Summary of Findings

I Findings of Survey in Mankara Grama Panchayat, Palakkad District.

Demographic features

- The total population in the 60 sample households is 289 and the average number of persons per household is 4.81.
- Of the total 60 sample households, 14 are other Backward Community, 35 Scheduled Caste and 11 Scheduled Tribe.
- All the sample agricultural labour households belonged to the category of social and economically backward communities.
- Except few all the adult male and female persons in the labour force are working as workers.
- All the children in the households are studying in educational institutions.

Ownership of Land and Livestock

- Forty five percent of the sample households owned land up to 5 cents. Another 18 percent owned land between 6 and 10 cents.
- Only one household owned land above 50 cents.
- The households do not have land for cultivation.
- Eighty five percent of the households owned land in the name of husbands, sons and parents of the female worker. In 15 percent of the households land is owned in the name of female worker.
- One fourth of the household possessed livestock items like milch cow, goat and buffalo. Only 8 households are selling milk and earning an income.
- The impact of Land Reforms Act 1971 is small. Only 3 households got land of 3 cents each as per the Act.
- The practice of taking land on lease for cultivation is not prevalent in the area.
- The income from non-agricultural activities like cottage industries, tailoring, tuitions etc is very meagre.

Profile of the Female Agricultural worker

- Of the total 60 sample workers, 3 are unmarried and 3 are widows.
- The main occupation of the female workers is agricultural work connected with paddy cultivation and harvesting.
- Majority of the female workers got employment for 26 to 40 days during one paddy season covering five months.
- The daily wage received for paddy cultivation related work was Rs 70 to Rs 80 per day.
- For harvesting work majority of the workers got a daily wage of Rs 180.
- Female workers got only few days work in a year in non-farming activities like construction of fence using bamboo and other casual work.

- Nearly half of the sample female workers worked in NREG scheme and got work ranging from 3 to 40 days. Majority got jobs between 21 to 30 days. They worked for 7 hours per day and got a wage of Rs 125.
- Due to poor implementation of the NREG scheme, the workers are not getting 100 days employment a year.

Occupation of the husbands of the female workers

- The male workers are working as agricultural workers, construction workers, casual labourers, wood cutters, painters and others. Majority of them are getting 10-25 days work a month.
- Four persons from the households migrated to Coimbatore, Thriupur, Bangalore and Hyderabad for employment

Withdrawal of Youth from Agriculture

- Youth are withdrawing from agricultural work because it is a difficult manual job.
- Other reasons are, low wages, few of days employment, seasonal nature of work, no prospects etc.
- Majority of the female workers are not willing to send their children for agricultural work.
- Shortage of agricultural workers is pointed out as one of the major problems of cultivation of paddy in the study area.

Debt of the households

- Of the 60 sample households, 47 borrowed money.
- The amount of money borrowed ranged from Rs 10,000 to above one lakh.
- One fourth of the households borrowed money to meet daily domestic expenditure like food.
- Construction of house, medical treatment, marriage are the other major reasons.
- Money was borrowed from banks, Co-operatives, money lenders and others. People also obtain credit from shops.
- Due to low income, small level of asset holding, lack of land, the households are forced to borrow money from all available sources.

Below the Poverty Line (BPL) Benefits

- Of the 60 sample households, 56 are BPL households
- 35 households have BPL ration cards eligible to get rice and other items at subsidised price.
- 27 households are purchasing the entire allocated items from Ration Shops.
- Fourteen old persons are getting agricultural workers pension at Rs 200 per month.
- Two persons are getting old age pension.
- Thirty six households got financial assistance for construction of house.
- Twenty households got financial assistance for construction of toilets.
- Assistance received as per BPL category considerably helped the households to get a better level of life.

Housing Conditions

- All houses are owned by the members of the household
- Majority of the houses have three rooms or more.

- Majority of the houses have tiled roof.
- Except one house all houses have cement floor.
- 75 percent of the households do not have pucca toilets.
- 12 percent of the households do not have no separate toilets.

Drinking water and fuel used

- 60 percent of the households use own well or public well.
- 25 percent use public tape.
- Half of the households are facing shortage of water in the summer season.
- Out of 60 households 59 are using fire wood as fuel
- Out of the 60 houses, 51 are electrified.

Consumption level

- 55percent of the households possess Television set.
- 10 percent possess Radio.
- 15 percent do not possess any of the durables like TV, Radio etc.
- Rice gruel and rice meals are the major items of food consumed daily.
- All the households have food three times viz. Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner.
- Majority of the households spends Rs 400 to Rs 600 per week for expenditure on food items.
- The expenditure on food item is low and the households are not getting nutritious food with this amount.
- The husbands and sons are spending the major share of food expenditure in the households (90 percent)
- In 10 percent of the households the female worker is contributing the major share of food expenditure.
- In 20 households, the students are taking food under the schools mid day meals programme.

Consumption of alcoholic drinks

- In 24 households, male members are consuming alcoholic drinks (out of 60 households)
- Alcoholic drinks are consumed by husband, sons and brothers of the female agricultural worker.
- 16 households reported that the male members consume alcohol few days in a week.
- This is one of the major economic and social problem of the households.

Acute problems faced by the female worker

- Poverty, low wages and low income
- Lack of jobs, lack of regular jobs and unemployment.
- Sickness of husbands and other members of the family.
- High cost of living.
- House construction not completed.
- Consumption of alcoholic drinks by husbands.

II. Findings of Survey in Kainakary Grama Panchayat, Alappuzha District

Demographic Features

- The total population in the 60 sample households is 283 and the average number of persons per household is 4.71.
- Of the total 60 sample households, 43 are other backward community, 15 scheduled caste and tribe and 2 are forward community.
- Except two, all the sample agricultural labour households belonged to the category of social and economically backward communities.
- Nine percent of the population is reported as unemployed. More women are unemployed compared to men.
- Students accounted for one fifth of the total population in the sample household

Ownership of Land and Livestock

- Thirty two percent of the sample households owned land up to 5 cents. Another 37 percent owned land between 6 and 10 cents.
- Only three households owned land above one acre.
- Only five households possess land for cultivation (above 40 cents).
- Ninety two percent of the households owned land in the name of husbands, parents and others. In 8 percent of the households land is owned in the name of female worker.
- The practice of taking land on lease for cultivation is prevalent in the area. Half of the sample households got Kudikidappu rights as per Land Reforms Act. 16 households cultivate paddy by taking land on lease

Profile of the Female Agricultural Worker

- All the 60 sample female workers are married. Eighty percent of them studied up to secondary classes.
- The main occupation of the female workers is jobs connected with paddy cultivation and harvesting.
- Majority of the female workers got employment for 26 to 50 days during one paddy season covering five months.
- The daily wage received for paddy cultivation ranged between 90 and 125.
- For harvesting work majority of the workers got a daily wage more than Rs.200.
- The only non-farming work got was the work under NREG Scheme.
- Nearly half of the sample female workers worked in NREG Scheme and got work ranging for 5 to 15 days, a year.
- Due to poor implementation of NREG Scheme, the workers are not getting only few days employment instead of 100 days a year.

Occupation of Husbands

- The male workers are working as agricultural workers, casual labourers, and fishermen. Five persons are working as welder, tailor, coir worker, company worker and salesman in a shop.
- Majority of the male workers are getting 16-25 days a month
- Only four persons from the households migrated to Bangalore, Bombay, Gujarat and Gulf.

Withdrawal of Youth from Agriculture

- Youth are withdrawing from agricultural work because it is a difficult and manual job.
- Other reasons are educational development, preference for jobs in houseboats, tourism and non-agricultural work.
- Majority of the female workers are not willing to send their children for agricultural work.

Debt of the Households

- Of the sixty sample households, 51 borrowed money from various sources.
- The amount of money borrowed ranged from Rs.5,000 to more than 2 lakhs.
- The most important reasons for borrowing is to meet daily domestic expenses and food expenses.
- Cultivation, construction of house, medical treatment, marriage, loan repayment are the other major resources.
- Money was borrowed from banks, co-operatives, money lenders, Kudumbasree, SNDP microfinance etc.
- Due to low income, small level of asset holdings, lack of land, the households are forced to borrow money from all available sources.

Below the Poverty Line (BPL) Benefits

- Of the 60 sample households, 34 are BPL households.
- 34 households have BPL ration cards eligible to get rice and other items at subsidized price.
- All the BPL households are purchasing the entire allotted items of food articles from ration shops.
- Thirteen old persons are getting agricultural workers pension at Rs.200 per month.
- One person is getting oldage pension.
- Seventeen households got financial assistance for construction of house.
- Eleven households got financial assistance for construction of toilets.
- Assistance received as per BPL category helped the households to get a better level of life.

Housing Conditions

- All houses are owned by the members of the household.
- Majority of the houses have three rooms or more.
- Majority of the houses have sheet and tile as roof.
- All the houses have cement floor.
- Fifty two percent of the houses have pucca toilets.
- Twenty two percent of the households do not have separate toilets and are using open space. Lack of proper toilet facilities is one of the major problems.

Drinking Water and Fuel

- Kainakary is a water logged area and people face acute shortage of drinking water.
- Except a few all the households reported that acute shortage of drinking water is the most serious problem.
- Of the sample households, half are using public pipe and rest public well.
- Out of the 60 households, 39 are using fire wood and 18 cooking gas for cooking.
- Out of the 60 households, 57 were electrified.

Consumption level

- 70 percent of the household possess television sets.
- 5 percent possess radio and fridge
- 20 percent do not possess any of the durables like TV, Radio etc
- Baked items are the food items used for breakfast by almost all households.
- Rice meal is the main item of food for lunch and dinner.
- Majority of the households spend an average daily expenditure of Rs.70 to Rs.100 for food items.
- The expenditure on food item is low and the households are not getting the required calories from the foods.
- The husbands and sons of the female workers are spending the major share of food expenditure in the households (92 percent)
- In 8 percent of the households the female worker is contributing the major share of food expenditure.
- In 18 households, the students are taking food under the mid day meals programme.

Consumption of alcoholic drinks

- In 34 households, male members are consuming alcoholic drinks (out of 60 households)
- Alcoholic drinks are consumed by husband, sons of the female agricultural worker.
- 30 households reported that the male members consume alcohol few days in a week.
- This is one of the major economic and social problems of the households.

Acute problems faced by female workers

- Acute scarcity of drinking water.
- Sick of the members of the household.
- Flood
- Poverty, low wages and low income
- No toilet or lack of proper sanitation
- Lack of jobs and unemployment
- Mosquito problem
- Poor housing
- No transport access
- Indifference of Grama Panchayats towards people's problem.

Recommendations for improving the Socio-economic Conditions of the Female agricultural labourers

Major Problems

The major problems faced by the female agricultural labourers are poverty, low income, lack of employment, lack of sufficient number of days of work, lack of land for cultivation, lack of income earning assets or livestock, increasing debt liabilities, poor housing and inability to construct good houses, inadequate toilet facilities or lack of toilets, lack of availability of drinking water, sickness of family members, health problems of old people, low consumption levels and consumption of alcoholic drinks by their husbands and other members of the family. Due to the poor implementation of NREG Scheme, the female workers got only few days of employment through the scheme. The workers also face severe shortage of drinking water due to lack of effective water supply systems of the Grama Panchayat and other local self government institutions. In Kainakari, water logged Panchayat, a major problem is flood. Though the government is giving pensions like agricultural workers pension, old age pension, etc., it is reported that the pension are not distributed regularly. Withdrawal of youth from agricultural operations especially paddy cultivation and harvesting is a serious emerging problem in the rural labour market. In this context the following strategy may be followed to improve the socio-economic conditions of the female agricultural workers.

Strategy for improving the Socio-economic Conditions of the Female agricultural labourers

1. The strategy should give priority for increasing employment opportunities both in agriculture and non agricultural activities and other income earning activities through self employment, livestock development and other household activities.

2. Improving the drinking water supply through public water supply systems, schemes for providing financial assistance for construction and repair of houses, toilet facilities and other infrastructure development such as roads, electricity supply etc.
3. Provision for improving the health status, treatment on sickness and health care of the old people through strengthening the Panchayat and Block level public health institutions.
4. Better implementation of the subsidised distribution of food grains, prompt payment of pensions and effective implementation poverty alleviation schemes and employment generation schemes.
5. Provision for strengthening the availability of credit for the agricultural workers households through Commercial banks, Co-operative banks and other credit institutions, strengthening the network of Kudumbashree and Micro credit networks and formulating special credit schemes meant for the rural labour households.
6. Public campaign and other propaganda measures to prevent the alcohol consumption of the youth and other elder members of the households.

Increase Wage employment and other income earning activities

- ❖ Promotion of non farming activities like livestock rearing, cottage industries and other self employment activities by giving credit at subsidised rates to rural labour households.
- ❖ Vocational training to train female youth to engage in gainful employment or self employment in rural areas and activities in agriculture, industry and service sectors. Grama Panchayats may organize the training programmes with the help of educational institutions/ Universities/ Research institutions.
- ❖ A special credit scheme may be formulated by the government with the cooperation of Banks, Co-operative Banks, KSFE Ltd, etc., to provide credit to unemployed females to engage in self-employment or starting micro production or service units.
- ❖ Promotional measures by the Department of Agriculture and other state agencies to increase the number of paddy crops from two to three in suitable places.
- ❖ Promotion of the mechanisation of paddy cultivation, harvesting and other operations. This makes agriculture a profitable activity and prevents the reduction in the area of paddy cultivation.
- ❖ Promotional measures to start new agro processing industrial units such as rice mills, oil mills, other units processing agricultural products, fruits, vegetables etc.

Development of Rural Infrastructure meant for poor people

- ❖ Start rural drinking water supply schemes with a view to provide drinking water to rural labour households and poor people. Pipe water supply system, public wells, ponds for providing drinking water may be constructed or the existing one may be renovated for the purpose. The Grama Panchayats and other local self government institutions may take necessary steps in this regard.

- ❖ A scheme to electrify rural labour households either at subsidised rate or paying the cost in installments or free of cost in the case of very poor households may be formulated and implemented.
- ❖ Subsidised credit schemes may be formulated to construct houses or repair the houses of agricultural labour households which comes in the BPL category.
- ❖ For providing separate toilet facilities in agricultural labour households, the Grama Panchayats may provide necessary help or financial support. The government of Kerala may formulate a scheme which ensure separate toilet (pucca) facilities to all BPL households.
- ❖ Provision of common infrastructure such as road network, electricity connection, drinking water supply, communication etc., may be provided in areas or colonies where there is a concentration of agricultural labour households.

Improving the Health status

- ❖ Expand the facilities of all public health institutions located at Grama Panchayat, Block Panchayat and Taluks.
- ❖ Public preventive health services may be expanded. The house visit of medical personnel to provide medical help to the people, taking steps to prevent the out break of diseases, improving sanitation, health awareness etc, may be strengthened.
- ❖ The old people who are chronically ill and needs continuous medical treatment and belonged to BPL households may be given financial help by the Grama Panchayat.

Better implementation of BPL Schemes

- ❖ The distribution of food grains and other items meant for BPL households through Ration shops should be improved.
- ❖ Measures should be taken to pay the pensions like agricultural workers pension, old age pension etc promptly (Every month or once in two months). Timely payment of pension is very important in the case of pension payments.
- ❖ Efficient implementation of poverty alleviation schemes and National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme by Grama Panchayats and other implementation agencies. Due to poor implementation of NREGs, the female workers got only few days instead of 100 days of employment.

Expanding Credit facilities

- ❖ BPL households find it difficult to get credit for construction of houses, purchase of livestock, purchase of other income earning assets, starting self employment, education of the children, medical treatment, etc. Banks, Co-operatives and other credit institutions may formulate special credit schemes mainly meant for rural agricultural labour households.

- ❖ Liberal credit and other support should also be given to Kudumbashree and other micro credit networks, which are providing credit to BPL categories.
- ❖ A credit waiver scheme may also be formulated to waive accumulated debt of the agricultural labour households which are in distress due to death or acute sickness or physical disability or accident of the main earner of the household.

Discourage alcohol consumption

- ❖ Consumption of alcoholic drinks is a major cause for the social and economic crisis of a sizeable number of the agricultural labour households.
- ❖ Consumption of alcoholic drinks among youth (males) are fast expanding.
- ❖ This highly disturbing development may be arrested through public awareness programmes. The Grama Panchayat in association with Social Organisations may launch wide awareness programmes for the purpose.

Recommendations for improving the Socio-economic Conditions of the Female agricultural labourers

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