CHAPTER - VI

Summary, Conclusion and Implications

In this chapter a summary of the work done for the present research is presented. The salient findings are followed by the statement of conclusions drawn from the analysis and it is used to test the hypotheses of the study. Finally, the implications and the findings of the study for policy and further research are stated.

Focus:

The focus of the study is on the living condition of women agricultural labourers with special attention on their, poverty and the effectiveness of IRDP in bringing them above the poverty line.

Objectives

Specific objectives of the study are (a) to study the extent and pattern of employment of agricultural women; (b) to identify the factors influencing their labour force participation; (c) to understand the time use pattern of rural female workers with the view to understanding their problems in finding time to work outside; (d) to evaluate the contribution of their earnings to the standard of living of the household, with special emphasis on removal of poverty and (e) to evaluate the effect of IRDP in encouraging labour force participation of rural women and in lifting the family above poverty line.
Area of the study:

Tiruchirappalli District is the Universe for this study. It is an inland district, situated at the centre of Tamilnadu. River Cauvery divides the district into two halves as northern and southern side, characterised by wet and dry regions, with completely different vegetation. It allowed a comparative study of women agricultural workers in the wet and dry regions.

Methodology:

By a four stage stratified random sampling method, a sample of 400 households was selected by distributing them equally among four villages, in four blocks, two from wet region and two from dry region. Primary data were collected from them by personal interview method. In addition secondary data from various sources were also used.

Findings:

Salient findings of the study are briefly stated below for an overview.

Socio-Personal Characteristics:

Socio personal characteristics of the sample women agricultural labourers are briefly discussed first to, provide the back drop for the detailed analysis. It is seen that the active years of employment of women agricultural labourers are 20-50 years and there is no difference in the age distribution of women agricultural labour between wet and dry regions. It is also found that agriculture is largely a profession of backward castes and SC/ST. The social and
economic status of the family have an effect on labour force participation of woman. The improvement in the economic status of the household above certain level will make the women to withdraw and less numbers of women to come for work.

Only 2 percent of women labourers in wet region and 1 percent in dry region are unmarried and rest are married women. Illiteracy is large among the women labourers; 50 percent of the women in wet region and 64 percent in dry region are illiterate. None has crossed the higher secondary level. The level of education is lower and much lower in dry region than in wet region. In dry region poor education and low economic status co-exist. The literacy status of the family is higher than that of the women labourers. Ultimately women with no or little education are left with agricultural jobs only. In villages, the system of joint family is seen, the brothers and sons and their dependents live under one roof, while daughters move to the house of their husbands. The households in wet area possess more asset, those in than dry area. Again a comparison of landless and land holders in both the regions show that the asset position of the landless is very low as compared to land owners. Perhaps the value of the land has contributed more for the former group. But in both the regions the land possessed by the family is in the name of the male members where as the sample women had no control over the means of production. Even on equipments necessary for agricultural operations such as ploughs, and other implements like, sowers
and carts are owned by men. The only tools and implements in
the possession of women are sickles, baskets and winnowing
fans which process the male domination in the study area.

Nature of Work:

The agricultural labourers are either landless or
marginal farmers. Whatever little land they have is quite
insufficient for their subsistence. It is the state of
landlessness which compels women in the rural areas to come
out in the fields and to earn their livelihood. The dry
area labourers should depend more on non agricultural income,
than agricultural income. In agriculture weeding,
transplanting and harvesting operations are performed by most
of the respondents in both wet and dry regions. About 80
percent of women labourers in wet region and 95 percent in
dry region are temporary workers in agriculture. Generally
the agricultural labourers, know no art other than
agriculture and yet have no land of their own. In such a
condition, poverty is unavoidable for them and to mitigate
poverty they have to go in search of jobs.

Of the total respondent households 33 percent in wet
region and 29 percent in dry region have members who migrate
during off seasons. The migrant labourers are mostly land­
less labourers though some cultivators also seek work. This
indicates that their economic necessity forces them to search
for a job elsewhere. However migration of women labourers is
very limited due to tradition and customs. About 70 percent
of women labourers in both wet and dry regions are non-migrants and they manage their earnings within the village itself.

In spite of widespread unemployment of labour, scarcity also prevails in both wet and dry regions at the time of transplanting of paddy and harvesting of crops, which mark the period of peak demand for labour. During these periods, landless agricultural labourers and workers in the marginal farms exchange their labour. It means that the workers make available their spare time to the friends and relatives who need it, they do not receive wages for the work, but agree to get in return the value by reciprocal work in other times of need.

Among 28 workers of wet area, 4 exchange labour with relatives for 5 days in a year and 24 exchange labourer with friends for 11.5 days. In dry region among 18 labourers, 10 exchange labour with relatives for an average number of 17.5 days and 8 exchange labourer for 17.5 days in a year.

**Time Use Pattern:**

The demand for the time of women to the household duties attended by them is one among the important factors that limit their participation in the labour force.

Women spend on an average 1.68 hours and 1.71 hours of a day for cooking, in wet and dry region respectively. For cleaning, washing and fetching water 1.35 hour are spent
in wet region and 1.37 hours in dry region. Fuel gathering is also an important domestic activity and 0.47 hours and 0.49 hours are spent by women in wet and dry region respectively. Women extend 0.32 hours in wet region, 0.25 hours in dry region for marketing of farm products. The women of wet region spend 1.36 hours and those of dry region spend 1.24 hours for child care. The average per day labour spent on cattle tending is 1.17 hours in wet region and 1.21 hours in dry region. Labour time spent on economic activities averages out to 5.36 hours in wet area and 6.28 hours in dry area. If working hours spent for economic activities are added to the hours spent on non-economic activities each women is seen to be working for over 16 hours a day in wet area and over 17 hours a day in dry area. Of course this excludes time spent on domestic chores during their leisure time.

Thus, they work in the field for nearly five to seven hours a day to supplement the families' meager income and then they attend their household or domestic chores. For doing jobs that are hard and underpaid neither the society nor the employee value their working status. Furthermore, they work for the dictates of the men folk. This is seen from the analysis of the role played by them in decision making. This shows that in dry area women work for longer hours than women of wet areas, largely because farms in dry land are relatively than the farms in wet lands.
Women contribute 9 to 15 percent of the family income in wet region; 16 percent in dry region. The family income is larger in wet region than in dry region. The income of the family and the work force participation of women have negative relation. It will explain why the contribution of women in dry area is larger.

**Factors Causing Participation:**

About 71 percent of women in wet area and 83 percent of women in dry area report that they go to work out of necessity for subsistence. This is in agreement with the results of analysis of poverty conditions. The desire to provide better education and other comforts to the children is for 3.5 percent of women in wet region and 13 percent in dry region go to work. Though not necessary for subsistence, the desire to have some additional income is also a cause for the employment of women in 18 percent and 4 percent of households of wet and dry region respectively. A few women in wet area go to work to meet their own expenses. In dry region, employment is mostly on their own decision of the women. Only 11 percent of them go to work due to the compulsion of their husband. This is because very low income from dry land crops leaves them little option, as really poor can hardly afford to remain unemployed. This situation is also seen in wet area, but to a significantly smaller extent and more women of the wet regiona seem to go to work more due to the compulsion of the husband, given the option they may avoid outside work.
Employment of women is mostly out of necessity for mere subsistence. Without their income the families may be pushed down further below the poverty line. Therefore the society can hardly offered to ignore that plight. The response of the policy makers has come in several ways.

Employment

Average number of days for which a woman labourer find work in a year is more in wet villages than in dry villages. In both regions the mandays of employment of a female worker is less than that for a male.

In wet region, there is work for 164.8 days to 174.8 days in a year while it is 147.8 days to 167 days in the dry region. Therefore open unemployment is prevalent in both the regions, but it is relatively more severe in dry region as compared to the wet region. This much of unemployment is not only a wastage of labour (Productive power) but also a cause of low income, and low levels of living - a vicious circle.

The percentage of workers employed in agricultural operations is higher for women than men the villages villages irrespective of the categories. Less than 50 percent of the male members in each categories are in agricultural operation and the rest have diverted to non-agricultural work. Again invariably in all the categories of distribution, it is found that percentage of women with non agricultural occupation is
higher in dry villages than in wet villages which tends to support the fact, that in dry village, agricultural alone is not sufficient for their subsistence.

The mandays of employment in higher for wet village than dry village. Similarly, households without land and IRDP beneficiaries without land find more mandays of work as compared to the group with land which indicates that there is a compulsion and necessity for the former group to depend much on their labour. Further, it is seen that in some village women work for more number of mandays than men.

Wage Rate:

In wet region women are able to earn from transplanting, weeding and harvesting Rs.11, Rs.10, and Rs.22 per day respectively. But there is wage difference for women between two villages. Again, in wet region women earn higher wage rate than in dry region. In both the wet and dry region women earn lesser wage per day than men. It is so for the common work of harvesting also.

The difference between mean wages earned by male workers in wet and dry regions was not statistically significant for any of the operations done by them. In contrast it was statistically significant in every operation done by women.

It is argued that ploughing and sowing are some of the agricultural operations which require more physical
strength, some experience and skill and hence these operations are performed only by men and they receive higher wage rate. But women do not accept this argument and say that bending to their knees while transplanting and weeding is a strenuous work and thus it does not justify the existence of wage wage difference.

Income:

It is important to note that average annual income of women workers is less for the women with land than women without land, in both IRDP beneficiaries and others. This is due to the reason that the women who work in their own farm are paid no wages. If the imputed value of their work is added women with land will have larger income than landless women. Another advantage for landless women is that they are able to migrate to places where there is job and higher wages.

As income increases, expenditure also increases - a Keynesian fact, particularly relevant for low income groups for whom even subsistence requirements remain satisfied only partly. Any additional income will go to increase their consumption expenditure first.

Several comprehensive and recent programmes is the Integrated Rural Development Programme which has combined several earlier programmes such as food for work programme, National Rural
employment scheme and priority sector lending by the nationalised commercial banks. Therefore, the impact of the IRDP on employment and living condition of rural women labourers is expected to significantly reduce poverty.

There are only few beneficiaries of IRDP 19 percent in wet area and 26 percent in dry area: further, among the 30 beneficiaries 14 are landless labourers while 24 are cultivators (women), in wet area. The position is reversed in dry land with 34 landless workers and 20 cultivators in the total of 52 beneficiaries. Thus, the coverage of IRDP is not adequate but the beneficiaries selected belong to the target groups.

**Type of Assistance:**

The beneficiaries of IRDP are more in dry area than in wet area. In both the regions largest member households are beneficiaries of loans for goat, sheep, or milch animals and bullocks. These are simple assets which yield supplemental income making use of time that can be easily spared by the women with locally available resources. In dry lands, fodder crops are raised easily as they are drought resistant and the fodder supports livestock maintenance. In dry area even male workers remain unemployed for mostly 150 days in a year, for them bullock cart provides employment and income. Women avail the loan and help the men.

Women rarely borrow for farm investment even though they after their jewellaries for hypothecation in times of need. Loans are received and paid back by the men. However,
there is priority lending for women under IRDP and it encourage women to borrow for investment in productive assets, usually jointly managed by the all the members of the family. In a few special cases such as milch animals, goats, sheep, sericulture mushroom etc. women have the skill, time and interest in maintaining them.

Thus credit is **sine-qua-non** borrowing and repaying is a regular process. But the problem arises because of the failure of the crop or unexpected expenditures in the family for marriage, medical treatment of family members or animals; it becomes a vicious circle which is passed on from one generation to the next.

**Benefits of IRDP**

The average income of the households of IRDP beneficiary cultivators is higher than that for other groups, as they could get supplementary source of income, and it is real success for the scheme and IRDP had a positive impact on income of the target group.

In dry areas also the average annual household income is largest for IRDP beneficiaries cultivators followed by non-beneficiary cultivators, landless IRDP beneficiaries and landless non-beneficiaries in that order. It is the same ordering seen in wet area. Therefore two inferences are drawn. First, IRDP has helped additional income generation for its beneficiaries in both wet and dry areas. Second, the
income of the worker households in wet area is larger than that for the women worker households of dry area. The effect of both having irrigation and IRDP benefit is cumulative.

The IRDP beneficiaries spend more than the non-beneficiaries among both landless workers and cultivators. This is the same pattern in households of dry area also. Further, households in wet region spend more than their counterparts in dry region in all the four groups viz., landless and cultivators of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

As IRDP has generated additional income and as income increased expenditure per capita also increased, the benefit of IRDP will be a reduction in poverty level, which is measured by expenditure per capita. Taking, Rs.1,800 per annum as the criterion of poverty line, nearly 23 percent of the households in the wet area turnout to be below poverty line and in the dry area 45 percent of the households are below poverty line. The percentage of households is smaller among the IRDP beneficiaries than for non-beneficiaries showing, a positive impact of IRDP in reducing level of poverty.

**Regression Analysis:**

Results of multiple linear regression analysis for the employment of landless agricultural women labour show that, in wet region size of the family, IRDP assistance, and
additions to livestock positively contribute to the employment of landless agricultural women labour, while economic status (as measured by income of the family per year) has a negative effect and migration does not help. In the dry region size of family, IRDP loan, livestock and migration contribute to employment, but the family income, a measure of economic status has no effect.

A comparative study of the results of the wet and dry villages shows that, size of family, IRDP loan, size of livestock help the women agricultural labour with significantly additional number of days of employment ie. both regions.

Women labour in wet area withdraw from work if family income increases, but women labour of the dry area can not afford it. IRDP loan creates jobs through additional of productive assets.

Migration is an important source of employment in dry area, but not a source of employment in wet area. These differences support the hypothesis that in dry farms crop production is not sufficient to generate enough employment to the labour, allied activities and off-farm works are essential for them for their subsistence.

For cultivator women of wet area only size of family contributes to the labour force participation of women cultivators. Others variables have either no effect or
negative effect. Further in dry area it is largely the availability of the job that is the major determinant of labour force participation of cultivator women. The IRDP loan has met this need successfully as the response of the women is seen to be positive and significant.

A comparative study of the results of regression analysis for the two villages of the wet region with those for the two villages of the dry region reveals:

a) Size of farm and size of the family have positive effect on the number of days of employment of cultivator women in a year.

b) IRDP loan and livestock provide the productive assets for the generation of employment for the women definitely in dry area and not so definitely in the wet area.

c) The economic status of the family as measured by the annual family income has a significant negative impact on the employment of cultivator women of the wet area, but this effect is absent in the dry area.

d) IRDP loan has a positive and significant effect on employment of women in dry area the effect is uncertain in wet area. Therefore IRDP has met its goal more in dry area than in wet area. A priority in IRDP to dry area will therefore be desirable.
Regression analysis for the family income of the landless agricultural women labour shows that employment of the workers in general and of the women in particular are the major determinants of the family income. This predominance of the wage income in the family income is quiet expected because the families are all landless agricultural labour households.

In dry area too, the marginal return to the employment of all workers, women and the IRDP loan are all positive and statistically significant. However their numerical values are much smaller than those for the villages of the wet region. It conclusively shows that the return to labour and investment in dry areas are very low and not a source of encouragement. But the labour of this area deserve assistance much more importantly than the labour of wet region.

For the cultivator women of the wet region employment of the workers and area cultivated are the major determinants of the family income, representing wage income and profits respectively. Labour force participation of cultivator women and IRDP land are not important contributors.

Diversification of farm activities to add livestock to crop activities helps women labour get significantly larger employment and income in dry areas. To the extent
IRDP loans have served this diversification, the programme has achieved its goals of removing poverty of the rural households.

Conclusion:

Above summary of the findings are used to verify the hypotheses of the study. First, hypothesis is that the labour force participation of rural women is largely in agriculture and poverty of the household is a cause of it. The study shows that majority of women go to work out of necessity for subsistence more so in dry area. If the economic status of the women improves beyond a threshold level they withdraw from work. This threshold level is not reached in dry area. Therefore women dry area work for more days than this countryparts in wet area. Agriculture provides lesser work days in dry area as compared to wet area but women seek other jobs. Results also show that 38 percent of households of agricultural women labour in wet area and 46 percent of the them in dry area are below poverty line (vide :33). Therefore the hypothesis is empirically verified to be true.

Second hypothesis is that the labour force participation of women, improves the standard of living of the households, atleast by reducing the level of poverty. This hypothesis is found to be true by the results presented in Table:62.
Third hypotheses is that the working women have problems in allocating time between their household duties and employment outside. It is a constraint for their participation in labour force. Analysis of time use pattern shows that the women labour has problem in allocating time, but it is not a serious constraint for their participation in labour force, because their need for additional income to overcome poverty is too compelling to remain unemployed. Thus the hypotheses is rejected.

Low level of income and high variance of it are the characteristics of the women agricultural labour household studied. This is the fourth hypothesis of the study and it is true.

IRDP is seen to have added assets, employment, and income all helping to reduce the incidence of poverty. This has been amply demonstrated by the regression analysis. However, the programme has not removed poverty fully. It has only helped a reduction in the level of poverty. Therefore the hypothesis that IRDP has removed poverty is rejected. But IRDP has reduced poverty level, no doubt.

Policy Implications:

Participation of women in economically gainful activities outside their home is seen to have at least three advantages (a) it helps utilization of productive capacity of women (ie) reduces wastage of the work force significantly; (b) supplements family income; and (c) reduces poverty level.
Therefore women's participation in labour force must be encouraged.

Such an encouragement is important because women are ready to work and they feel the necessity to work. However, employment opportunities are not adequate level and most women remain not fully employed, employment generating programmes are essential.

Women in wet region seem to withdraw from work if their economic status improves, but not such condition exists in dry region. Therefore, in employment generation programme dry region must receive priority.

Employment of women is out of necessity crop production above is insufficient to meet their needs. Therefore agriculture must diversify to include allied activities. Among various non-crop activities livestock, sericulture and mushroom production find preference among women as they fit their time use pattern well and suit their skill. Such activities must be encouraged.

The IRDP has helped the women; it has created productive assets; additional employment and loan facilities. Its impact is significant in employment and income generation. Yet, the success of the programme in reducing rural poverty leaves much desired. The resource crunch, rather than availability of projects seems to be major constraint. It must be relaxed by substantially stepping up
the outlay. It is an effective instrument for removing poverty and income disparity and women adequately respond to it.

Women in dry area work longer hours and do any job agricultural or non-agricultural. They manage to adjust their time use pattern to make time available for labour force participation. Most of them go to work willingly. Longer hours and more number of days of work do not help them receive larger income than their counterparts. They also receive lesser wage than men of the same area. This has escaped the attending due, in IRDP and needs a correction by minimizing gender discrimination in wage rates.