

**IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION OF TEXTILE
INDUSTRY ON POSITION OF RURAL
WOMEN IN HANDLOOM SECTOR IN ORISSA**

SPONSORED BY

**DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN AND CHILD
DEVELOPMENT
MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
GOVT. OF INDIA**

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Background:

The present study is based on sample survey conducted among 200 working women of weaver communities in Sambalpur and Bolangir districts in Orissa. These study districts represent relatively higher concentration of handloom weaver communities. The study covered 120 women respondents (15 each) in 8 co-operative societies/handloom production centres and 80 (20 per each block) respondents from non-co-operative sector in the 4 identified blocks of 2 districts-Sambalpur and Bolangir of Orissa. Further, sample weaver community leaders/knowledgeable persons and NGOs were covered for in-depth primary data collection.

With liberalization of Indian economy, the modern textile industry has posed serious threat to the traditional handloom industry. Rapid technological upgradation and automation in modern textile industry has made high volume of production of a variety of quality synthetic and cotton textile items, enjoying competitive advantage over the handloom products. The handloom industry, both in co-operative and private sector, with its vast rural work force especially of weaver communities is confronted with challenge of competitive economic environment. The weakening position of handloom sector in the wake of global competition of textile industry has posed a serious threat to the socio-economic life of the traditional weaver communities, in general and to the socio-economic status of rural women of these weaver communities in particular.

The study has critically examined the change in status and pattern of employment of rural women of weaver communities engaged in handloom enterprises in Orissa. Besides, the extent of their productive utilisation, nature, seasonality and remunerativeness their jobs, their role and contribution in production of handloom items, social and economic constraints, work participation, change in their social and economic status in the family and community, change in employment and working condition, new problems and risks/threats perceived by them in their occupation and work environment have also been studied. The study suggests effective strategies to enhance their socio-economic status

and quality of life through necessary provision of better facilities, welfare support and improved means of livelihood. The study has reviewed the prevailing employment status and working condition of the women workers particularly working in handloom co-operative, production centres and private handloom enterprises in context of their social and economic benefits and security.

8.2 Profile of women engaged in handloom enterprises:

The primary survey was conducted among 200 rural women of weaver community engaged in traditional handloom enterprises, both in co-operative and non-co-operative sector. Among the total number of surveyed women engaged in handloom sector, 63.5% of them belongs to other backward communities. About 21.5% and 8% at the surveyed women in both the districts together belong to scheduled caste and scheduled tribe communities. The proportion of surveyed women belonging to joint families constitutes only 36.5% of the total women surveyed. Nearly 63.5% of the weaver families of the surveyed women live in nuclear families. Nearly 60% of the weaver families surveyed belong to medium sized families with 4-7 members. Nearly 46.5% of adult members of the surveyed families engaged in weaving activities are women. Around 68% of the adult women members of the surveyed weaver families are married. It is noticed that majority (31.6%) of the women members of the weaver families surveyed falls within age group of 26-40 years. The adult women members falling in the age group of 41-50 years constitute nearly 18.4% of the total women members. As a whole, weaving activities have been able to cover relatively higher number of young and middle-aged women of the weaver families engaged partly or fully in handloom activities.

Among the women members of the weaver families, nearly 42% of them are reported literate. Among the literate women members, nearly 41% of them are reported just literate who can read and write only. It is heartening to note that majority (51.1%) of the adult women members of the weaver families surveyed in both the districts do possess some relevant skill relating to weaving and yarn processing. Only 18.9% of the women members reported being unskilled. Weaving has been a traditional occupation of these households and women members of the weaver households have acquired such skills

from their childhood. Among the women members surveyed under co-operative and non-co-operative sector, nearly 20.3% and 14.5% of them have undergone relevant vocational training respectively. The vocational training undergone by them mostly pertain to weaving, dying, fabrics design etc. As regards landholding status, marginal farmers constitute nearly 83.5% of the weaver families surveyed under two districts together.

Nearly 85.2% of the adult women members of the weaver families reported exclusively depending on weaving as their sole occupation. About 14.8% of the adult women members reported being engaged in weaving as well as other occupations. It is found that about 75.2% of the women members engaged in weaving activities are employed for about 271 days in a year. Further, it was revealed that 48% of the women engaged in weaving remain engaged for 11-15 hours a day and 37.8% of them work for period of 7-8 hours per day. It is noticed that nearly 75.4% of the total members of the weaver families are fully engaged in weaving activities, while 24.6% of the members are partially engaged in weaving activities. The average hours of work per day per worker in co-operative and non co-operative sectors worked out 11 hours.

Nearly 64% of the weaver households have their houses electrified for domestic purpose, leaving the remaining houses having no electricity connection. About all the households surveyed have houses with asbestos and tin roof. About 84.5% of the households reported having 2 to 4 rooms in their houses. As regards environmental sanitation, it is noticed that non-of the surveyed weaver households do possess any toilet of their houses. Open field defecation is widely prevalent among the weaver community in rural areas. Among the 200 surveyed families, nearly 7.5% of them reported having their own dug-well supplying them water for drinking and other domestic purposes. Public dug-well provides drinking water to about 42% of the weaver households. Majority (67.5%) of the surveyed households reported experiencing scarcity in water particularly in summer season.

8.3 Impact of globalisation of textile industry on traditional weaving operations:

It is significant to note that in spite of growing competitions and pressure caused by a modern textile sector and shortage/irregular availability of raw materials, almost all the weaver families surveyed have still been continuing their weaving operations to a limited scale. Nearly 26.5% of the surveyed women reported that the weaving activities of the family has seriously been affected due to competitive pressure of modern textile industry. About 58% of the women reported that their weaving operation has moderately been affected. The effect has been more severe for those women working under the co-operative societies and production centres. Majority (98%) of the women reported that modern textile items are available at relatively cheaper prices affecting market for handloom products. Nearly 87% of women respondents reported that growing consumer preference and test, in recent times, towards variety of modern fabrics has severely affected the demand for handloom items. Textile products being manufactured by organized spinning mills offer variety of design and fabrics and attract more number of consumers, squeezing the market size for traditional handloom products, as reported by 58% of the women respondents. The growing consumer preference for modern textile products is directly attributed to increasing investment made by the organized sector on advertisement and promotion. The opinion of the surveyed women respondents call for modernization and technological upgradation of the traditional handloom industry in order to retain its unique position and to achieve economy in competitive environment. Provision of sustainable supply of good quality of raw materials can greatly aid in smoothening the operational crisis in handloom sector.

There has been steady decline of the functional performance of the weaver co-operative societies and production centres as a result of growing competition caused by the organised modern textile industries. Nearly 66.7% and 17.5% of the women respondents alleged that the functioning of their societies and production centres have severely and moderately been affected due to the competitive situation caused by the modern textile industry. The competitive situation caused by the modern textile industry has resulted in complete stoppage and stagnation of the societies, decreased sales volume, low and irregular supply of raw materials, irregularity of wage payment, reduction of members, weakening of the financial status, stoppage of bank credit loan etc. Nearly 52.5% of the

respondents under co-operative sector reported that the function of the co-operative societies and production centres has drastically reduced to very low level. Even several societies and production centres have stopped working. The strength of membership has gradually been reduced in several societies and centres, as reported by 15.8% of the surveyed women. Sales volume of several societies has considerably been reduced. In spite of stiff competition and resulting weakening of their traditional business, almost all the surveyed weaver families are still continuing their traditional business, with much hardship.

At present, nearly 69.4% of the surveyed families reported having one working loom with them. Hardly 2.9% of them reported the status of their loom as non-functioning condition. Nearly 27.7% of the surveyed weaver families reported possessing two working looms.

It is noticed that maximum proportion (72.5%) of the weaver families is operating their looms 46-75 hours in week. The actual hours of utilisation of looms by surveyed families fall far behind the actual available hours per week. The low level of utilisation of loom is directly attributed to inadequate and irregular supply of raw materials, low demand/sales of the handloom products and associated financial problems faced by weavers and co-operative societies as well. The reasons for low utilisation looms mainly relate to stagnation of demand, shortage of raw materials, shortage of loom accessories etc. Excessive delay in receiving the raw materials through co-operative societies and production centres has greatly reduced the level of utilisation of their weaving assets as reported by 12.3% of the surveyed families. Only 26% of the surveyed weaver families reported that there is no scope of further increasing the level of operation, but remaining 74% of them expressed their hope for further increasing the level of operation. Nearly half of the surveyed families expressed their need for modernizing their loom either by replacement or by repairing their old looms. Most of the weaver families are conversant with their existing types of looms and hence needed replacement of similar type. About 40% of the weaver families, who expressed their need for modernisation, felt the need for repairing their old looms to make it more productive and functional. Around 43% of

weaver families expressed the need for adding few more number of looms to their existing set up. All the weaver families opting for modernisation reported that such modernisation could result in increase in the processing of yarns and improving their level of operation. Nearly 17.5% of the weaver families who opted for modernisation reported that such modernisation would contribute to improving the quality of their handloom products.

It is noticed that the average quantity of yarns being processed per weaver family per month, in the co-operative sector, in the past was 4.9 kg. per month which has marginally come down to 3.9 kg. per month per household, in the current period, due to decline in sales of handloom products. In case of families under non-co-operative sector, the average consumption of yarn per family per month has marginally declined from 4.9 kg. (past) to 4.1 kg. in the current period. The average monthly consumption of dyes per household has marginally declined from 583 gm. (past) to 517 gm. in the current period, showing a decline of 11.3%. In keeping with this stagnating market for handloom products in the face of increasing competition posed by modern textile sector, demand for yarns per month per household shows decline from 5.1 kg. (past) to 4.7 kg. in the current period. As a whole, the monthly requirement of yarn in the current period varies in the range of 2 kg. to 12 kg. per household. The wide variation of requirement as well as consumption of yarns and dyes by different households reflects the great deal of variation of time and efforts needed for different type of handloom products, quality design and highly crafted fabrics needing relatively more time and processing efforts. As a whole, the actual monthly requirement of yarns per households is nearly 17.5% higher over what they receive and process, in the current period. The average monthly demand of dyes per household show a decline from 591 gm. to 520 gm. (a decline of 12 %) in the current period.

Among the beneficiaries procuring yarns, the extent of dependance on co-operative societies as sources of supply has greatly decreased and most of the beneficiaries are now depending on local market for procuring yarns. While 54% of the weaver families were depending on co-operative societies as the source of supply of yarn. Currently only 9% of

them are depending on the societies for this purpose. It is important to note that majority (89%) of the weaver families reported depending upon local market for procuring yarns for their weaving operation, while only 46% of them were depending on the local source of supply in the past years. The co-operative societies, which are earlier playing an important role for supplying raw material for traditional weaving, have been relegated to a very miserable position in this context. The scarcity of funds and operational weakness of most of the co-operative societies has been responsible for decreased dependence of the weaver communities on them for procuring raw materials. About 53% of the weaver families reported facing shortage of yarns and dyes required for processing their handloom products, at present. However, 47% of the surveyed families reported that they did not face any shortage of yarns and dyes. The percentage of weaver families reporting shortage of yarns and dyes relatively belongs more to the co-operative sector as compared to those not supported by co-operative sector. Nearly 40.5% of weaver families, who reported shortage of yarns and dyes to meet their production requirement, stated that their weaving operation has moderately been affected due to such shortage, at present. The weaver co-operative societies have failed to ensure steady supply of yarns and dyes to its members to maintain continuity in handloom operation. Nearly 50.5% of the surveyed families expressed their dissatisfaction on the role and performance of the co-operative societies in the context of arranging and supplying required quantity of yarns and dyes to its weaver members, at present. The major reasons of dissatisfaction of the weaver families on the services of co-operative societies mainly pertain to irregularity in supply, inadequate of quantity of supply and poor quality goods delivered. About 56.1% of the weaver families, who expressed dissatisfaction on the services of the societies, reported that supply of yarns and dyes by the societies is frequently irregular.

Among the various kinds of woven goods, it is interesting to note that almost all the households engaged in weaving produces sarees. Only small number of families produces other items like dhotty, bedsheets, cloth pices, towels etc. The average number of pieces of sarees produced in a month per weaver household is nearly 8. The average number pieces of sarees produced per weaver households have come down form 10 (past) to 8, at present. Similarly, there has been reduction in monthly production of different category

of woven products, as reported by surveyed weaver families. The average value of production of saree per household per month shows a decline from Rs.4,300/- (past) to Rs. 4,000/- at present.

The handloom products having its own superb and distinct position in textile sector enjoy a wide spread market in both rural and urban areas. The competitive pressure exerted by modern textile products has not created any perceptible change in the acceptance and the choice of customer segment for handloom products. Due to growing deterioration of functional performance of the weaver co-operative societies and production centres, majority of the weaver community has switched over to direct marketing. The average monthly sale per household of handloom products in terms of pieces through co-operative societies has declined from 15 (past) to 3, at present. On the other hand, the average monthly sales of different handloom goods per month per household have increased from 7 (past) to 13 (current), through open market. In terms of change in value of woven products sold through co-operative societies, it is found that the average value of monthly sale per household has decreased from Rs. 5,000/- (past) to Rs. 1500/- at present.

8.4. Impact of globalisation of textile of industry on economic status of women in handloom sector:

With growing competition posed by the modern textile industry, spinning mills and power looms, the handloom industry has steadily deteriorated over the last decade, rendering thousands of weavers especially the women unemployed and under employed, resulting in large scale closure of several societies and production centres, which used to provide support weaving activities in rural area. Many weaver co-operative societies and production centres are passing through operational and financial crisis

In scenario where power loom and modern textile industry have adversely affected the traditional handloom sector, the weaver communities have been pushed down to the lower strata of the economic ladder. As a whole, the average annual household income has decreased from Rs.19,229/- to Rs.18,678/-, showing a marginal decrease of 3%. It shows that the poor weaver community has been able to cope with negative effect of the

competitive environment to some extent. Though there has been shift of higher income segment of weaver communities to the lower income layer, the change of income level has remained marginal, showing some degree of adjustment made by the affected communities to cope with the problems. As regards the weaver families falling in the income range of Rs.11,000/- to Rs.24,000/, the proportion of households in this group has marginally changed from 78.5% (in the past period) to 76% at present. In a relatively higher annual family income segment (Rs.24,000/- to Rs.50,000/-), the proportion of the household shows a decrease from 12% (in the past period) to 10.5% of in current period. The proportion of income derived from handloom activity alone to the total family income of the weaver families is more than 90%, showing their extremely high dependence on weaving occupation. Nearly 8.5% of the surveyed weaver families reported having switched over the other sources of income in addition to weaving activities. However, majority (91.5%) of the surveyed weaver family is still pursuing their traditional weaving activities without entering into any new avenue of income. Among the weaver household in co-operative sector, nearly 10.8% of them reported entering into other additional sources of income in addition to their existing handloom activities.

Nearly 32.5% of the weaver families reported that the extent of their engagement in terms of working hour in handloom activities has declined. However, about 67.5% of the surveyed families reported no change in extent of their engagement in handloom operations as a result of competitive environment in textile sector. Among the weaver households who reported decrease in the extent of their engagement, nearly 77% of them reported that the extent of decrease in their working hours in weaving is marginal.

8.5 Impact of globalisation on socio-cultural life of the women engaged in handloom sector:

The impact on living style and social status of the weaver families especially the women engaged in weaving activities have been analysed with regard to their food intake, children's education, health and sanitation, participation in the community activities, domestic energy used, accessibility to means of entertainment.

Nearly 73.5% of the weaver families reported that the quality and quantity food intake have deteriorated due slackening of their weaving operation and dwindling position of co-operative societies and production centres. About 26.5% of the weaver families reported having experienced no change in quality and quantity of food intake. Among the weaver families who reported deterioration in their food intake, nearly 17.6% of them reported it significant. As reported by almost all the surveyed weaver families, the health status of the family members of has declined due to deterioration of their livelihood condition. Their capacity to provide better health care facilities have decreased due to their falling standard of living as a result of deterioration of their traditional weaving activities. The effect was considered marginal for majority of the surveyed weaver families. Almost all the surveyed weaver families reported facing financial difficulties in giving primary schooling facilities to their children due to decline in their family based weaving activities. Nearly 76% of the weaver families have suffered a great deal and have reduced their participation in various community activities (e.g. village club, community festivals and programmes). About 23.5% of the weaver families have experienced no effect. As regards their participation in their community activities, as a result of decline in their weaving activities. Nearly 68% of the weaver families have suffered in availing recreational facilities due their financial problems caused by declining handloom business. Since most of the weaver families in rural areas commonly used fuel wood, dung cake, kerosene etc. as their cooking fuel, there has been limited effect of their handloom business on use of cooking fuel used by weaver families. However, nearly 29.5% of the weaver families reported facing difficulty in meting their expenditure towards cooking fuel. While 60.5% of the weaver families were using kerosene as the cooking fuel in the past period, currently only 25.5% of these families reported using kerosene.

8.6 Attitude and opinion of the targeted women and community leaders about the impact of globalisation of textile industry.

Majority of the women engaged in weaving activities reported that the overall functional performance and service delivery system of the co-operative societies and production

centre have significantly declined. As regards technical guidance, training, supervision and monitoring, almost all the surveyed women rated the societies and production centres as “very poor”. The reasons of dissatisfaction of the women on the functioning of the co-operative societies mostly pertain to inadequate and irregular supply of raw materials, higher price charged for yarns and dyes, low off-take and poor marketing support for handloom products. Nearly 56.1% of the women attribute inadequate supply of raw materials as the important reason for their poor rating of services of societies.

8.7 Suggestions of the surveyed women to protect the handloom sector from the competitive pressure of modern textile industry:

With increasing prices of yarns and dyes and poor marketing support of the co-operative societies and production centres, handloom products find a difficult time to maintain its position. As weavers are mostly from the rural areas with poor background, credit facility is crucial for getting materials and tools in time.

Almost all the surveyed working women of the weaver communities demanded that the yarns and dyes should be available at reasonably subsidized price to make handloom products competitive and affordable. The handloom cooperative societies and production centres should be strengthened to help the weaver community to adopt new design and technology and diversify their products to capture much wider market. Necessary support should be provided to weaver communities for technological innovation of their production process and product design. Almost all the surveyed women demanded reduction of price of yarns and dyes and allied materials. Nearly 76% of the women reported that effective market support can improve the performance of the handloom sector. Nearly 50% of the surveyed women held that assistance of technological innovation and better design can enhance the performance of the handloom sector in Orissa.

The weaver community leaders and local NGOs for improvement of traditional weaving business have offered a number of suggestions. Their suggestions mainly pertain to (i) regularity and adequacy of raw materials at subsidized prices, (ii) provision of assured

market for handloom products, (iii) special drive for technological upgradation of weaving facilities and design, (iv) training of weavers to acquire improved skill in weaving, dying, designing etc., (v) liberal credit and other incentive for alternate income generating avocation, (vi) strengthening financial position and organizational capacity of weaver co-operative societies and production centres.

8.8 Suggestions and recommendations:

Considering the relevant factors, issues and problems linked to the globalisation of textile industry and its consequential impact on the socio-economic condition of women engaged in handloom activities, as analysed by the present study, following suggestions and recommendations have been made. The suggestions and recommendations made in this section are based mainly on the findings of field survey and the opinion of the targeted women (both in co-operative and private sector), community leaders, local NGOs and some important field level officers.

8.8.1 The handloom co-operative societies and production centres, which have played pivotal role in the development and growth of handloom industries in, the state are currently passing through operational, administrative and financial crisis. In the light of growing composition caused by the modern textile industries and spinning mills, it is imperative to suitably restructure and rehabilitate the ailing societies and production centres through provision of liberal package of measures, aids and facilities.

8.8.2 The services of the co-operative societies and production centres have not been effective in delivery of necessary training and guidance, facilitating modernisation and upgradation of technology and providing marketing support to the weaver beneficiaries. The major weakness of these societies and centres mainly pertain to their irregularity in supplying raw materials, inefficient administration, irregular and low wage payment, lack of professional approach in marketing and operational management. It is, therefore, essential to remove these impediments so as to enable these organizations to function efficiently and smoothly.

- 8.8.3 Modernisation of the looms and allied accessories is the most important step in increasing the productivity of weaving of operation and ensuring high quality handloom products. It is highly essential to expand the modernisation activities in view its direct impact on efficiency production, productivity and quality.
- 8.8.4 In the light of growing competition in textile sector, it is important to take appropriate measures (i) to suitably upgrade the modern skill and technical capacity of the traditional weavers especially the women regarding weaving, dying and design, (ii) to guide the weavers community to adopt profitable product-mix, improved design and methods, (iii) to extend necessary modernisation services, (iv) to guide/train the weavers especially the women to upgrade their skill and upgrade the technology of weaving activities.
- 8.8.5 Publicity is one of the essential factors, which influence the sale of consumer products. Since the weavers co-operative societies/production centres are unable to bear the expenses of publicity, the state Govt. should launch special publicity drive to promote handloom products.
- 8.8.6 Most handloom products especially the “Sambalpuri” sarees have an excellent foreign market. In fact, many weavers and even the co-operative societies/production centres are ignorant of the international market. The state government need to encourage export of handloom products by providing needed financial assistance and proper guidance, facility and channel for foreign trade.
- 8.8.7 In the wake of increasing competitive pressure of modern textile industries, posing threat to the traditional handloom sector, it is essential that the Development commissioner for handloom need to take all possible promotional steps to preserve the unique role of handloom and enable the weavers to realize their full potential as also to ensure earnings for the handloom weavers.
- 8.8.8 The average productivity of handlooms is much lower than that of power looms. Hence, the survival of the poor handloom weavers lies either in increased production of higher value items or in increase in overall productivity.

Handlooms remain idle for some period on account of non-availability/inadequate and irregular availability of yarns, leading to loss of earning of weavers. Appropriate measures need to be taken to ensure steady and adequate supply of yarns and dyes.

- 8.8.9 The handloom weavers suffer from shortage and high prices of yarns. Adequate price reduction should be allowed for yarns used by handloom weavers. Handloom weavers in remote areas also do not receive chemicals and dyes needed by them in time. Steady availability of adequate yarns and dyes, at reasonable price can contribute to enhance better utilisation of looms, and to higher earning of the weavers.
- 8.8.10 In consideration of large-scale poverty among the handloom weaver communities in the state, there is an imperative need to improve the lot of handloom weaver by according high priority to support the poor weavers under various ongoing poverty alleviation and income-generating programme.
- 8.8.11 The supports needed by weaver communities basically pertain to modernisation and technological upgradation, infrastructural improvement and welfare measures. The different types of weavers are to be supported with different mix of the above-stated types of support as required by them. The basic approach needs to be promotional rather than protective.