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Paid Care Workers in India:

Domestic Workers and Anganwadi Workers

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In this report we look more closely at two categories of non-familial care workers and thereby explicate the care diamond further. Market-based care is studied through the situation of hired domestic workers and the nexus of state and community through Anganwadi Workers in the Integrated Child Development Scheme, initiated by the government in 1975 and expanded over the last decade or so. The growth in the numbers of such workers, their working conditions and pay, social dimensions and relations between the care workers and their employers/clients, care practices for their own children, features of unionisation and organisation are examined. In the process, the social and economic recognition and valuation of care in the market, in social discourse, and by the state are drawn out.

1. Paid care providers: Size and Growth

The number of non-household, paid or market based care providers is difficult to estimate as many are not captured by macro-data sources² or are spread across categories which are not well defined. The macro data on employment and unemployment gives a rough picture of the size of the sector as well as growth patterns. The industrial category *Community, social and personal services*³ encompasses care providers such as teachers, health workers and domestic workers. As discussed in earlier chapters, the broad sectoral wise distribution of women workers shows the predominance of agriculture in total female employment.

Table 1: Distribution of female workers across various industrial categories (UPSS Total 000)

| Industrial Category | 1993-94 | | | 1999-00 | | | 2004-05 | | |
|--|---------|------|------|---------|------|------|---------|------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| <i>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</i> | 94,536 | 77.4 | 39.5 | 91,202 | 74.9 | 38.7 | 107,965 | 72.4 | 41.6 |
| <i>Mining and quarrying</i> | 522 | 0.4 | 19.5 | 384 | 0.3 | 17.1 | 422 | 0.3 | 16.5 |
| <i>Mfrg & repair services</i> | 12,099 | 9.9 | 29.1 | 12,336 | 10.1 | 28.2 | 17,404 | 11.7 | 31.1 |
| <i>Electricity, gas and water</i> | 52 | 0 | 3.7 | 36 | 0 | 3.6 | 49 | 0 | 4.1 |
| <i>Construction</i> | 1,648 | 1.4 | 13.6 | 2,034 | 1.7 | 11.7 | 2,802 | 1.9 | 10.8 |
| <i>Trade, hotels and restaurants</i> | 3,938 | 3.2 | 12.8 | 5,233 | 4.3 | 12.8 | 6,121 | 4.1 | 12.3 |
| <i>Transport, storage and communication</i> | 329 | 0.3 | 3.1 | 441 | 0.4 | 3 | 594 | 0.4 | 3.2 |
| <i>Finance, insurance, real estate and business services</i> | 449 | 0.4 | 12.1 | 469 | 0.4 | 9.6 | 915 | 0.6 | 11.7 |
| <i>Community, social and personal services</i> | 8,499 | 7 | 26.4 | 9,659 | 7.9 | 28.9 | 12,803 | 8.6 | 33.9 |
| Estimated Workers ⁴ | 122,072 | 100 | 32.6 | 121,794 | 100 | 30.9 | 149,075 | 100 | 32.5 |

Source: NSSO Employment and Unemployment Data, Various Rounds

Note: 1- Absolute number of workers (000s); 2 - Percentage of total female employment in the sector; 3 – Women workers as a percentage of total employment in the sector

In the non-agricultural sector, community, social and personal services is the second largest sector (after manufacturing) of female employment - 8.6 per cent. There has been an increase

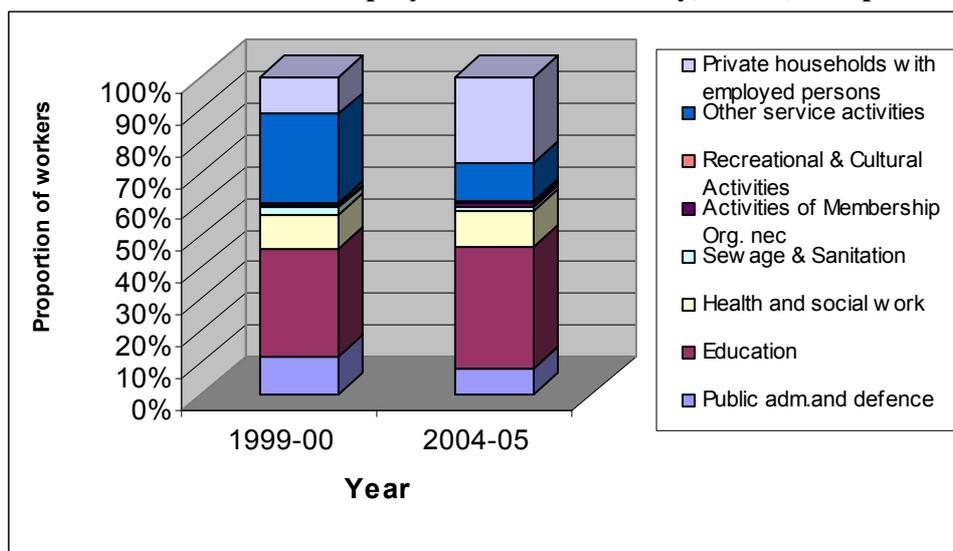
² The location of their sphere of work within the four walls of a house can make domestic workers invisible, just as domestic work has tended to be.

³ This category includes occupations that do not come under care work as defined in the study.

⁴ Total workforce estimates may vary slightly across tables as they are derived by totalling sectoral estimates calculated from the proportions across industrial categories as given in the published data.

within this category both in absolute numbers and in the proportion of women from 26.4 percent in 1993-94 to 34 per cent in 2004-05. This is one category of services, with the highest percentage of women among the non-agricultural categories, in which one sees a process of feminisation. Thus, care work occupies a central place in the new employment opportunities for women. The sub-categories of this segment are elaborated in Figure 1 and Table 2. Due to definitional difference in the disaggregate classification in 1993-94 and the later rounds, the analysis is limited to the latter.

Figure 1. Distribution of female employment in community, social, and personal services



Education, health and private households with employed persons could be classified as workers involved in paid, direct care work, the concern of the present study. The category of 'other service activities' comprises of laundry workers, beauticians and other such workers who do not fall under any of the other defined categories .

Table 2: Composition of Community, social and personal service workers (000)

| Categories | 1999-00 | | 2004-05 | |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| | No. of female workers | Share of total female employment | No of female workers | Share of total female employment |
| Public administration and defence; compulsory social security | 1,144 | 0.9 | 1,067 | 0.7 |
| Education | 3,221 | 2.6 | 4,912 | 3.3 |
| Health and social work | 1,031 | 0.9 | 1,408 | 0.9 |
| Sewage and Refuse Disposal, Sanitation and Similar Activities | 215 | 0.2 | 181 | 0.1 |
| Activities of Membership Organisations N.E.C. | 72 | 0.1 | 145 | 0.1 |
| Recreational, Cultural and Sporting Activities | 68 | 0.1 | 106 | 0.1 |
| Other service activities | 2,676 | 2.2 | 1,508 | 1.0 |
| Private households with employed persons | 1,125 | 0.9 | 3,474 | 2.3 |
| Total | 9,556 | 7.9 | 12,803 | 8.6 |

Source: NSSO Employment and Unemployment Data, Various Rounds

Though education accounts for the largest segment in terms of growth and proportion in this category, private households with employed persons, which is second in terms of the proportion of workers, is of special significance. The share of workers in this category, predominantly domestic service, has increased from 11.8 per cent to 27.1 per cent of the total service sector employment. The number of women in the category has also grown phenomenally, about 2.3 million in a short span of 5 years, such that the female share in the category is striking. However, a substantial proportion of the increase (around 50 per cent) may have been due to more careful categorisation and enumeration as is evident in the drastic decline in the number of workers included in “other service” activities in the same period. All workers who do not come strictly under any other listed classification are included in this last category.

In the following sections, domestic workers and *anganwadi* are discussed separately. There is some macro data on domestic workers to examine their growth and broad characteristics. Such data on *anganwadi* workers are not available as they are clubbed into the category of social service providers and are spoken of as ‘social workers’ or ‘honorary’ workers or ‘volunteers’ in various official documents. However, we do know the total number of *anganwadi* workers and helpers and the increase over the last few years. Apart from this, there are a few micro studies which throw some light on the characteristics of these workers, the nature of their work and their lives.

2. Domestic Workers

2.1 Size and Growth

Partly because of the informal nature of domestic service and partly owing to its small size in terms of total employment, the information available for the early years of the growth of paid domestic work is scanty. In 1974, the Committee on the Status of Women documented the plight of domestic workers and recommended measures to ameliorate their conditions, but nothing came of this. Various studies in the 1980s found that women were between 65-90% of domestic workers.⁵ NSSO Employment and Unemployment data⁶ indicate a trend of steady and high growth in the total numbers and share of female workers in the categories that would fall into household-based and institutional paid domestic work. With this growth, their demographic characteristics underwent changes. During the 1970s and 1980s, most female domestic workers were found to be household heads, in particular widowed, deserted, and older women (Banerjee, 1982). As family and single women migration has increased, younger women have become a larger proportion of domestic workers (Banerjee, 1992). A survey (Indian Social Institute 1993) indicated that employers show a preference for young women as they are perceived to be more reliable, obedient, and efficient in domestic work, especially in taking care of babies and the elderly.

The growing recognition of the significance of paid domestic work in female employment, by both scholars and activists led to the sub-category ‘private households with employed persons’ being included in the last two NSS rounds on employment and unemployment

⁵ These include one commissioned by the Catholic Bishops Conference in 1980 covering 12 cities and the Shramshakti report 1988.

⁶ Based on the National Classification of Occupations, 1968.

(1999-2000 and 2004-05). It included the sub-sections of Housemaid/servant, Cook, Gardener, Gate-keeper/chowkidar/watchman, Governess/babysitter, and Others, of which Housemaid/servant, Cook, and Governess/babysitter are direct care domestic workers and their distribution is given below. A major limitation of this data is that it is restricted to two points in time very close to each other, 1999-00 and 2004-05, and does not allow for a long-term trend study.

Table 3: Distribution of domestic workers across selected sub-categories

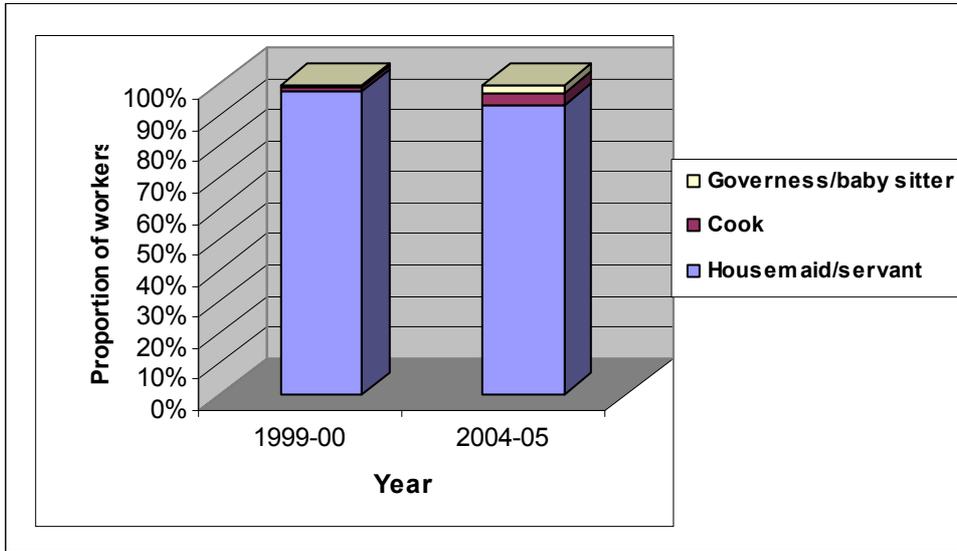
| | 1999-00 | | | 2004-05 | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| | Number of workers (000) | Percentage to total female employment | Female share | Number of workers (000) | Percentage to total female employment | Female share |
| Housemaid/servant | 438,200 | 0.4 | 80.4 | 2,381,100 | 1.6 | 87.4 |
| Cook | 6,400 | 0.0 | 72.6 | 96,600 | 0.1 | 73.9 |
| Governess/baby sitter | 2,600 | 0.0 | 76.4 | 69,600 | 0.0 | 74.2 |
| Total domestic workers | 447,100 | 0.4 | 63.4 | 2,547,400 | 1.8 | 71.6 |

Source: Unit level Employment and Unemployment Data

The table again shows the phenomenal increase in the number of domestic workers and of women in these sub-categories, which the figures for the category as a whole also suggested. As mentioned, part of this increase may have been due to the greater recognition of this category of workers and more careful enumeration,⁷ but this does not explain the phenomenal growth in recent years recorded by many micro studies (Moghe 2005). The sub-categories we have included under domestic workers is formed almost entirely of housemaid/servants - about 94 percent in 2004-05 (Figure 2) - which also shows a distinct increase of 7 per cent over the period. While survey workers may not have been sufficiently careful in their enumeration across sub-sections, there is reason to believe that the low proportion of governess/baby sitter indicates that domestic workers were rarely hired exclusively for child-minding and/or education and did not see themselves as child minders. Paid child carers would have the responsibility of the many indirect childcare tasks as well as other domestic work. Understandings of natural ability and safety of children incline employers to hire women where children are involved. However, it may also be pointed out that childcare was absent or a minor part of the duties of the domestic workers we observed and/or interviewed in our fieldwork (Section 3).

⁷ The increased awareness on the growing importance of this category and thus some conscious effort to capture these workers could be one factor in the growth in numbers.

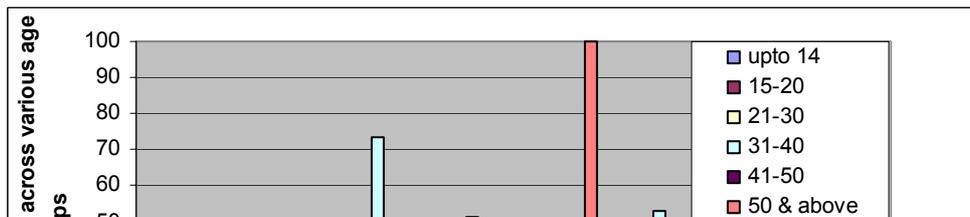
Figure 2: Categories of Domestic Workers



2.2 Social and demographic characteristics

Paid domestic workers have been largely an urban phenomenon. In 1999-00, 83.4% domestic workers were urban-based with the slight decline in 2004-05 indicating the growth of paid domestic work in rural areas. This had as much to do with the replacement of family labour in housework among the better off sections in rural areas as with the increasing fragmentation of work and pay (separation of housework, animal husbandry, and agricultural work) among hired workers by farming families.

Figure 3: Distribution of various categories of Domestic Workers by age groups



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