

A high-angle photograph of a woman with dark hair, wearing a yellow shirt and a red and orange patterned sari, mopping a grey floor. She is holding a red-handled mop. A white bucket of yellowish liquid is on the floor to her right. The text 'THE STATE OF DOMESTIC WORKERS IN MANGALURU CITY' is overlaid in yellow, serif, all-caps font.

**THE STATE  
OF  
DOMESTIC WORKERS  
IN  
MANGALURU CITY**

**A STUDY BY  
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# THE STATE OF DOMESTIC WORKERS IN MANGALURU CITY-A STUDY

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Compiled By: Mohanchandra U

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**Study Team:** Ms. Merlin Martis- Head of the Research Team  
Ms. Gulabi Bilimale-Research Leader  
Mr. Tukaram Yakar-Study Coordination  
Mr. Mohanchandra U- Study Consultation

## Data Collection Associates

Ms. Vatsala Nayak  
Ms. Asha Suvarna  
Ms. Asha Bekal  
Ms. Surekha Kinnigoly  
Ms. Nimisha  
Ms. Harini Shetty  
Ms. Chandrakala  
Ms. Zohara  
Ms. Lilly  
Ms. Kamala Gowda  
Ms. Sujatha Shetty  
Ms. Ramya  
Ms. Vinaya

**Address:** DEEDS,  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Anand Apts, Vasanthi Complex,  
Kadri-Mangalore-575 002  
Ph: 0824-2217022  
Web:deedsmangaluru.in  
Email: [deeds82@rediifmail.com](mailto:deeds82@rediifmail.com),  
[info@deedsmangaluru.in](mailto:info@deedsmangaluru.in)

## PREFACE

Women domestic workers in the informal sector consist of the most vulnerable working segment in society. Domestic Workers come from a marginalized population who's legal, economic and political status limit their ability to demand their rights. These include domestic workers whose socio economic contributions to society are invisible to the public, the law and policies of the state.

They face challenges because their work is not considered regular work, so that their rights to minimum standards of decent work are continually violated. The unique feature of their work place which is the home of their employer, makes them vulnerable to abuses and exploitation. Therefore state would always be reluctant to consider a home a workplace that they can regulate.

Women domestic work has long been deep-rooted in the mindset of the Indian society, Domestic work is even seen as lowly and impure occupation traditionally performed by people mostly women and children, whose lives are still dominated by a caste system that assigned a woman her place in the society.

Domestic work has a long history in India with both men and women working in others' homes as servants. Caste defined the hierarchy-lower castes performed the dirty work of cleaning while higher caste men cooking. Though domestic work is not a new phenomenon in India, it can't simply be viewed as an extension of historical feudal culture where the affluent employed servants, both in the urban and rural contexts, the nature of work and workers have been rapidly changing.

The sector now primarily comprises of women domestic workers who are not recognized as workers while their work is undervalued. This is primarily due to the gender notion of housework; value is not ascribed to women's work in their home, and by extension, even paid work in other's homes is not given any value or considered as work. It is also undervalued because it is often performed by the poor, migrant women from lower castes. All these contribute to the inferior status of their work, both in their minds and in society.

Domestic work, however, is still undervalued. It is looked upon as unskilled because most women have traditionally been considered capable of doing such work, and the skills they are taught by other women in the home are perceived to be innate. When paid, therefore, the work remains undervalued and poorly regulated. By contrast that provide space for domestic work includes mental, manual and emotional aspects, including care work communities.

Domestic work is thus viewed as reproductive work that creates not only labour units but also people and social relations. The employer-employee relationship is a complex one and is viewed as one of domination, dependence and inequality. Also this is an area of work where the employer and the employee are mostly females. As a home is the site of work, relations between employer and employee are often not limited to work but spill over a larger support systems.

The lack of capacity, support and unity as that in organized sector make the challenges through studies into the profile of domestic workers, their burdens and vulnerabilities in work, existing labour and the other legislations that are applicable to them, efforts of the government to address the issues and efforts of domestic workers and partners organization to organize them.

This study aims to understand the present conditions of women domestic workers who are mostly migrated from rural areas to city in search of work due to their poor socio economic conditions.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### STATEMENT OF THE CONCERN

Women domestic workers face several problems in their personal and occupational life. They work for long hours and are poorly paid. They don't have job security. If they take leave even for genuine reasons, they may lose their job. Some of them work in more than 2-4 houses and they become sick. Women Domestic workers have health problems like respiratory disease, body ache and skin disease, due to their occupational life. Their family life is marked by family conflicts poverty and debts. This study highlights these issues.

### OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To Study the Socio- Economic background of the female domestic Workers (DWs).
- To Study the condition of the female domestic workers of Mangaluru City.
- To find out the problems of female domestic workers and to mobilise them in and around their issues.
- To identify the possibilities of skill building, train in alternative occupation for wealth generation.
- To find out the space and time to educate them on legal awareness

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research study has been designed in a descriptive framework. It tends to describe the problems and conditions of female domestic workers. The study team has selected Mangaluru city of Dakshina Kannada District, Karnataka State, India. The geographical space of the study comprises of female domestic workers who spread over in the 60 wards of Mangaluru city Corporation. As per the 2011 census, Mangaluru City Corporation [MCC] population was 4.85 lakhs.

While pretesting the study format in the slums, colonies and extensions we found that out of 10 houses one of the household member is working as domestic worker in a nearby city or in the city center. Therefore we roughly estimated that there are more than 9-10 thousand domestic workers in the Mangaluru City Corporation. Hence research team with its limitation of human resource and finance decided to study only 2-3% of the households for the study of DW. Therefore we randomized the selection of respondents covering 60 wards of the Mangaluru City Corporation. [Refer Annexure 1 for details]

The Individual Female Domestic Workers constituted the unit of analysis. The estimated respondent's sample size is 316, but few research investigator couldn't locate the exact domestic workers in specific location and as a consequence such Domestic Workers have been excluded from interview. Hence the study team was able to cover 97.4% [308] of the required sample size. The Primary data were directly collected from the respondents with the help of structured interview format which is previously pretested in different forms. The Secondary data was collected from the related books, journals, International report & Internet and from the studies which have already been conducted. Besides this, the tool of case study and group discussion were also used. The Interview schedule consisted of questions related mainly to different aspects of the domestic workers.

## FINDINGS

- Among the respondents of Mangalore city corporation, 79.5% of females above the age of 36 are engaged in domestic work. Out of which 34.4% are above 50 and 54.1% are between the ages of 36-49. There are 20.5% domestic workers (DWs) who are between the age group of 18-35. There are no DWs below the age of 18.
- Regarding the educational status of the respondents, 34.4% of female domestic workers were non-literate, 34.4% domestic workers have done primary schooling, 13.6% have done their secondary schooling and 1.6% of them have completed their pre university.
- Kannada is the major language spoken by the DWs [89.6%] followed by Tulu speaking DWs who constituted 9.2%, and rest of the people speak Hindi and Konkani.
- A vast majority of DWs, that is 87% were Hindus, 7.5% were Muslim, and 5.5% were Christians.
- The Data shows that most [54.9%] of the DWs reside at central area of Mangaluru city corporation (MCC), rest of DW working in the city center, reside at the border of the MCC area (45%)
- It was found that 50.7% of the respondents are native of Mangaluru Taluk and out of it 35.4% are from the centre of the city. Only 15.3% are out of city area. Remaining 49.3% are not belong to Mangaluru taluk but out of it 44.2% within the state and 5.2% are out of the state.
- The present study illustrates that 43.7% of females belong to OBC, 29% are from SC and ST communities. Among the Minorities, Christians are 3.9% and Muslims 6.2%. Surprisingly upper caste people such as Bunts, Gouda, Lingayats, and GSB's are 17.1%.
- Among the respondents, 75% were married females, 5.2% were unmarried females, 14.3% were widows 3.2% females were those who were either divorced, separated or abandoned by their t husbands.
- According to the study, 80.8% of female domestic workers belong to nuclear families, 14% belong to joint families, and remaining 1.9% of the female domestic workers were from the other types of families (Fragmented families).
- On the other hand the study covers the information of rest of the people in respondent's family. Out of male members of the family, 46.2% are between the age group of 21-49 , between 6-20 are 30.2%, below the age group of 05 are 4.5% and above 50 age group are 19.%. While the female members among the respondents between the age group of 6 to 20 are 42.6%, age group of 21 to 49 are 39.7%, below the age of 5 are 4.4% and above 50 age group are 13.2%.
- Study indicates that 34.9% of men in the family have studied up to primary level, 30.9% up to high school and only 15.7% have availed education up to graduation. Illiterate male members are 4.4% and those who are able to read and write without formal schooling are 13.6%. The education level of the female members are; primary is 30.4%, High school level is 30%, Graduation is 21%. Only 0.5% is Post graduation. Among the women members 3.6% are illiterate and 21.3% are semi literates.
- In terms of occupation of the men in the respondents' family, 38% were construction workers, 11% were the labourers, 6.1% driver/conductors, 4.2 petty business, 3% private jobs, 2.4% security job, factory workers 0.5%, tailors 0.3% and electricians 1.4%. Out of remaining 44%, students are 13.8% and 30.2% are either not able to work or are unemployed. At the same time other women members in the respondent's family are working as construction helper 24.4%, petty shop 4.4%, Private Company 4.4% electrician 0.8%, tailoring 0.5%, Govt. job 0.3%, factory worker 0.3%. Out of remaining 64.6% women in the family, 21% are studying and 43.6% do not have a steady job, are unable to work and are unemployed.



- The study shows the housing condition of DW's. Among the respondents 51.9% have their own houses, 41.2% were staying in rented house, 3.2% were staying in residence provided by the employer. There are 3.2% who have not disclosed their dwelling and 0.3% are staying with their relatives.
- According to the present study, 94.8% of respondents had toilets in their household & 5.1% respondents did not have toilet at home and out of it 3.2% uses public toilets remaining not disclosed.
- As per the data 71.4% respondents has MCC water connection, 14.6% has own well, 4.5% depended on public tap, 1.9% on bore well and 5.8% on public well. All most 96.1% respondents have got electricity connection.
- A vast majority of 64% of female domestic workers did not migrate but they are working at the city centre coming from the underdeveloped area of the city and 36% female domestic workers did migrate from out of Mangalore taluk, district and even out of state for various socio economic reasons.
- Duration of involvement of respondents as a DWs are 35.4% are working since 5 years. More than six years are 6.8%. Few people are working more than 10 to 20 years are 9.4%, less than 3-4 years are 16.5%, less than 2-3 years 22.7% and less than a year are 8.1%
- Data indicates that 49.7% people are working for single employer which is considered as part time, fulltime and staying at employer's house. Rest of the people are working for more than 1 employer, out of which 18.8% are working in 2 houses, 15.3% in 3 houses, 7.8% are working 4 houses. 4.5% are in 5 houses. Respondents who are working more than 6 and less than 8 houses are 3.9%.
- In term of nature of work of respondents 58.5% of DWs are serving as cooking help, washing 8.1%, floor cleaning 18.2%, nursing care 7.1% and baby care 5.5%. Most of the respondents expressed that the employer initially intake domestic help for one or two specific job. e.g.; as per one the respondents it is initially just for cooking but later they add dish wash, floor cleaning, drying the cloth and so on.
- Altogether single employer to multiple employer 62.3% of DWs are working as part time job and 29.2% are working as full day job. Only those who stay at the employer house or out house are 2.9%.
- Study found that there are no constant change of employer among the DWs. Data shows that 71.8% of DWs stick to the present owner and 19.5% DWs changed their employer due to low wages.
- According to the present study, the salaries paid to the DWs is once in a month [92%], out of this 64.3% said first week of the month, 10.4% last week of the month and 17.2% on fixed day of the month. Others are paid when they asked, weekly once and 2.3% respondent are working on daily payment basis.
- Study reveals that, on an average 26.6% respondents earn a monthly income of Rs. 3000 to Rs.5000. 25% between Rs. 5000 to Rs. 7000, between Rs. 1000 to Rs. 3000 are 19.2%, Beyond Rs. 7000 to Rs.9000 are 14.6%. There are 1.3% respondents earns up to Rs. 15,000 per month and 1.6% of Respondents Rs. 20,000 to 30,000 per month.
- A vast majority i.e., 98.7% of the respondents were getting full payment & 1.3% were getting partial payment.
- Study reveals that out of all the respondents, 55% have got bank account and but 36.7% save in the bank. The remaining 34.1% save in their respective SHGs, and 10.1% handover to their husband, a few save in the form of gold, chit funds and postal savings etc. There are 10.1% of people who are not able to save. Interestingly 33.1% weren't able to open bank account of their own.
- Study discloses that being absent for duty for one or two days or accidental breakage of materials during domestic work; 33.8% respondents expressed that employers were deducting money & while 64.6% said employers do not deduct money from the salary.

Out of which 13.3% will force DWs to do extra work, 2.6% expressed they are fired from the work.

- As per the probe 36% people migrated to Mangalore city for various reason. Rest 64% belong to Mangaluru taluk itself. Out of those who migrated, 17.9% people due to low wages in their local places, 8.4% due to work pressure, 2.9% due to scarcity of water, 5.2% because of repayment of debt.
- Those who migrated from different places expressed [84.6%] that it helped them to uplift their income and 16.4% still trailing to up come.
- A 42.9% of DWs expressed that they were getting refreshment at employer's place and even employer preserve food for them. Rest of the DWs, 23.1% not offered, 22.7% expressed they give left over food, and 10.7% said only during festival employer offer food.
- It was found that there is no proper medical support to the DWs by the Employers. A very few times [21%] employer reimburse the medical bills. Rest 78% employer don't support any kind of medical issues of the DWs.
- Respondents expressed that 48.1% will get festive gifts, 14.9% will get food items, 7.1% get medical and 6.8% were able to get bonus [extra salary]. But 19.5% expressed that they didn't avail any such benefits from their employer.
- Study reveals that 71.8% of respondents expressed that they are availing weekly off and rest of 28.2% didn't have such opportunity. Other than weekly off or holidays most of the DWs [71.4%] said that they seek prior permission from the employer and 23.7% will inform over the phone if they take a day off from the duty. Only few [4.2%] take leave without informing. The reason behind taking leave between the working days are especially on health related issues [59.4%], family issues are 26.3%, religious practice are 8.8%.
- As per the data 91.9% expressed there is no such issues which troubles them. But 4.9% said they had domestic difficulties with their husband. While 3.6% respondents expressed that their employer always finds faults in the work and scolds, few indicated that they are worried about theft threat [1.3%]. But 91.5% said that they never found any threat at work place or harassment.
- DWs are forced to do few tasks which is not mentioned while taking up the job. In this case 8.1% respondents said that is true and 18.8% expressed sometimes it is yes but not always. DWs are able to identify there will be high workload at employers house during festival 40.6%, If there are guest in employers house 25% and if the members of employers fall sick.
- DWs did not reveal any kind of harassment at workplace. Study probed if such thing happens what will be the response of the respondents? Data reveals that, 29.5% said that they will inform women groups if such incident occurs, 13.6% expressed they will keep quite due to no alternatives and 26.9% not responded.
- Study indicates that 5.9% respondents wakeup at 4 to 5 am, 69.8% DWs will get up at 5 to 6 am, and after 6 am are 13.3%. But 74.4% will go to bed early [8 pm], between 10 to 11pm 16.9%. There are few respondents who leave home to work between 4-6 pm.. Almost 84.4% respondents said that they leave home after 7am to the workplace. There are few respondents leave home between 4-6 pm to go to work. Study reveals that 61.4% DWs go to work place by walk and 33.4% by bus.
- Study finds that 93% of the respondent expressed that there were no severe health issues pertaining to their job. Only 6% of the respondents had skin or some kind of allergy due to washing soap, detergent which is used for cleaning of utensils and washing clothes. Very few [1.2%] expressed back ache and other issues related to their job
- Study finds that there are 98.4% respondents with Aadhar Card, 90.9% with Ration Card, 96.4% with Voter ID and 33.1% with Pan Card. Out of the total ration card holders 73.1% are BPL(Below poverty line) card holders, 5.5% are Anthyodaya card holders and 12.3% are APL

(Above poverty line)card holders. Other than ration card [69.8%] there are no facilities availed by the respondents.

- Study found that almost all the respondents' level of understanding on rights, wages, protection and such legal awareness is very low. Out of the total respondents, 68.5% were unaware of Wage Act, 70% were not aware of Bonus and 70.8% were unaware of Pension Scheme. Surprisingly 52 % respondents didn't even know that they have got a right to take weekly off.
- None of the Respondents knew that there is a Grievance Redressal Committee in the DC office to express their issues and problems. Almost all respondents expressed that they didn't have their own organization.
- Only 5% have undergone such training and rest of the respondent found none. Even 94.8% have not shown any interest or willingness to participate if any such training program might be arranged for them.
- Only 8% have access to self-employment training. But those who have undergone such training were not able to take it-up due to their own trivial issues. They are not even interested in taking up such training in future and only 12.7% said yes and 85.1% did not respond.

#### **LIMITATION OF THE STUDY:**

Behaviour of employer towards the respondent is not able to gather through this study. The most employer are working women in different sectors of the society.

- In term of behaviour therefore a detailed study on employers view point must be conducted in near future.
- Study is not able to find the emotional aspects of the DWs as the schedule is closed ended. The study has not been able to bring out the issue of harassment from the family members of the employer. Interestingly, 29% of the respondents have not responded to the query about harassment. A further probe is needed in this context.
- Study is not able to identify whether DWs are satisfied with regard to present work and employer. They are not even ready to participate in enhancing their skill in other Self Employment Program or information on their rights and legal aspect. The reason behind this could not be established through this study.

#### **SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION**

From the study it is found that in general, females of every age group are engaged in the domestic work, but females above 36 years of age are mostly engaged in this work in the study area. The present study shows that the involvement of married females in domestic works was more than other categories like **widowed**, divorced & unmarried. This study also indicates that even today females are responsible for domestic work. DWs are coming from low educational backgrounds which is evident from the present study too. Unorganized workforce comprises large number of illiterate and neo literate. Involvement of the Hindu females of weaker and vulnerable section of the society are more in numbers in domestic work although in this study it is also evident that after a lot of efforts made by the Government the condition of weaker and vulnerable section is unchanged eventoday. For improving present living conditions in urban areas, females of nuclear families and weaker sections of the society are more involved in domestic work than joint families.

- The present study is a positive indicator of women empowerment in weaker sections of the society, because mostly the respondents were the bread earners and were even heading the family.



- Study also indicates that females of below poverty line (BPL) families are more engaged in domestic works. So it is a clear indicator of poor living conditions of the unorganized sector of the Indian society.
- The study indicates that there are no fixed working hours in a day so their wages/payment are also not fixed just like other unorganized sectors. Hence the practice of deciding wages on mutual consent is still being practiced.
- Due to lack of social security measures, if something wrong occurs during work employers are not ready to take any responsibility of families of domestic workers.
- This study also reveals that there is no provision of protection for the families of Unorganized Sector in Karnataka.
- Breaks during work, leaves in month & deduction of money from their salary also depends on the employer which is the prevailin gpractice in unorganized sector in Karnataka.
- The extra payment for extra work & Incentive/Bonus/Reward is dependent on the mercy of the employer and not on the performance of DWs.
- In the light of these conclusions the following suggestions can be cited to improve the conditions of domestic workers in Mangalore City:
  - Proper arrangement of Formal/Informal classes for improving the educational status of DW should be organized by the District Administration.
  - As DWs are involved in this type of work due to poor economic status, proper skill development programs for them should be organized by the Department of Women & Child Department and Labor Department.
  - DWs need to be mobilized as Domestic Help community and their work should be recognized as other professions.
  - Minimum Wages Act should be executed effectively in the field of domestic work by Labor Department and district administration.
  - Conditions of work as well as working condition of DW can be improved by the initiatives of Professional Socialworkers, civil society organizations, Government Organizations, Social activists, bureaucrats, policy makers, legislatures & political leaders.
  - The harassment of DW should be covered by The Sexual harassment at workplace Act.
  - State Commission for Women should take initiative for improving the conditions and solving the problems of DWs.
  - The advocacy of DWs should be done so that they themselves take initiatives for improving their conditions.

## Annexure-1

### Selection of Respondents<sup>1</sup>

Name of the Ward & No.	Population	HH	Approx No of DWs	Resp.
1. Surathkal (West)	10658	1776	197	6
2. Surathkal (East)	8107	1351	150	5
3. Katipalla (East)	9806	1634	182	5
4. Katipalla-Krishnapura	10859	1810	201	6
5. Katipalla (North)	11330	1888	210	6
6. Iddya (East)	10647	1775	197	6
7. Iddya (West)	9176	1529	170	5
8. Hosabettu	10874	1812	201	6
9. Kulai	12144	2024	225	7
10. Baikampady	8556	1426	158	5
<b>11. Panambur</b>	11324	1887	210	6
12. Panjimogaru	9756	1626	181	5
13. Kunjathbail (North)	9825	1638	182	5
14. Marakada	9513	1586	176	5
15. Kunjathbail (South)	8139	1357	151	5
16. Bangrakalur	9465	1578	175	5
17. Derebail (North)	11852	1975	219	7
18. Kavour	13435	2239	249	7
19. Pachanady	9260	1543	171	5
20. Tiruvail	10430	1738	193	6
21. Padavu (West)	9527	1588	176	5
22. Kadri Padavu	12493	2082	231	7
23. Derebail (East)	11513	1919	213	6
24. Derebail (South)	10682	1780	198	6
25. Derebail (West)	9412	1569	174	5
26. Derebail (South-west)	10290	1715	191	6
27. Bolor	8071	1345	149	4
28. Mannagudda	7687	1281	142	4
29. Kambla	7584	1264	140	4
30. Kodialbail	7276	1213	135	4
31. Bejai	9545	1591	177	5
32. Kadri (North)	8163	1361	151	5
33. Kadri (South)	7409	1235	137	4
34. Shivabagh	7294	1216	135	4
35. Padavu (Central)	10103	1684	187	6
36. Padavu (East)	8507	1418	158	5

<sup>1</sup>Source: [www.indikosh.com/city/660676/mangalore](http://www.indikosh.com/city/660676/mangalore)

37.Maroli	8892	1482	165	5
38.Bendoor	8350	1392	155	5
39.Falnir	8827	1471	163	5
40.Court	7888	1315	146	4
41.Central Market	6647	1108	123	4
42.Dongerkey	8153	1359	151	5
43.Kudroli	7128	1188	132	4
44.Bunder	7697	1283	143	4
45.Port	8495	1416	157	5
46.Cantonment	7878	1313	146	4
47.Milagres	9121	1520	169	5
48.Kankanady-Valencia	9704	1617	180	5
49. <u>Kankanady</u>	10663	1777	197	6
50.Alape (South)	8012	1335	148	4
51.Alape (North)	9071	1512	168	5
52.Kannur	9209	1535	171	5
53.Bajal	9810	1635	182	5
54.Jeppinamogaru	8341	1390	154	5
55.Attavar	9577	1596	177	5
56.Mangaladevi	9370	1562	174	5
57. <u>Hoige Bazaar</u>	8261	1377	153	5
58.Bolar	7273	1212	135	4
59.Jeppu	8800	1467	163	5
60.Bengre	9741	1624	180	5
61.Chelliru	3738	623	69	2
62.Kuthethur	4323	721	80	2
63.Bala	3007	501	56	2
64.Padushedde	927	155	17	1
Total	5,69,615	94936	10548	316