

# **STUDY REPORT**

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## ***Impact of Lockdown on Lives of Women***

### ***Domestic Workers***

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## Introduction

According to World Labor Organization, there are approximately 6 million domestic workers in India. National Sample Survey, 2011-12, there were 2,38,92,791 household workers in the country out of which 4,05,831 are woman and 21,79,403 are working in cities. 22.5 lakh woman household workers were increased during five years period from 1999-2000 to 2004-05. Due to which the participation of woman workers in the working population increased by 15.7, from 11.8 percent to 27.5 percent. Both, at home and at workplace the household workers has to face so many problems. They do not get full support and happiness at their home, at the same time they face too much discrimination and insecurity at the workplace. The perception of the society towards domestic workers is also not good. Their work is not seen respectfully and due importance is not given to their job; rather they are treated as servants than workers.

In the last few decades with the increase in woman's participation in office jobs, income levels of Indian middle class has also changed and demand for domestic workers to take care of the homes, increased. Particularly in metros and big cities, where the young couples and youth got busy with their office affairs and commutation and their household affairs are totally dependent on the "didi" who comes in two shifts of morning and evening. In the decade that followed the liberalization, the number of household workers increased by 120 percent, according to one data. From 7, 40,000 in 1991, it soars to 16.6 lakh in 2001. Now in an urban household it's very common to have a domestic worker. According to a figure of labour organization based at Delhi, India has more than five crore domestic workers out of which majority are woman.

It is very difficult for a family to survive for a family migrated from a village to a town or city with only a single member earning which is mostly a man. It prompts the woman members of the family to go outside for some kind of job. They don't have any kind of skill training and household work is the one that suits them most. The women are in majority in the jobs that requires leaning in comparison the man. Domestic worker offer become victim of sexual harassment. Prevention of woman from sexual harassment at the work place act doesn't bring any relief to these women of unorganized sector. This act has provision for the woman workers of unorganized sector but it lacks the security mechanism. In many cases woman doesn't react to the wrong doings of employer fearing they will lose their job.

These women mostly become victim of domestic violence. According to a study report of Human Watch domestic workers in India has to face lot of harassment. According to information given by Woman and Child Development Department in Rajya Sabha in February 2014, the cases of violence with domestic workers were increasing in the country and 10,503

cases were registered during the period 2010 to 2012 of domestic atrocities against domestic workers out of which 3564 cases were registered in 2012. 3517 cases were registered in 2011 and 3422 cases in 2010. One major problem these woman faces is lack of toilet.

The class and caste discrimination prevails in the societies which prevent these woman workers to use toilet in the house where they clean the house. The other woman workers in the unorganized sectors such as working in factories, construction sector or as vendor, they also face the same problem. There is no separate toilet for them, neither have they got facility to feed or keep their children.

The employers show their greatness sometimes by providing the domestic workers some leftover food, torn clothes, rugged shoes and slippers. In a way this hurt their self respect but they accept it silently as their luck. In the cases of sexual harassment the society also blamed them equally. Despite investing their full salary in the family they don't have any say in the important decisions concerning the family. They have to face domestic violence. It's very commonly seen in the society that the husbands of these domestic workers spend their whole salary in liquor. The responsibility lies on the woman workers to run the family. These women don't have any social or economic security.

### **1.1 Classification of domestic workers**

In Indian context the domestic work is defined according to the work performed frequently and the time consumed in performing that job (the time spent at employers house). There are two types of domestic workers; liv-in that is full time, 24 hours living in house itself and liv-out or part-time who come for certain time. Liv-out workers are also of two different types one that works for few hours at different houses and the other who worked at one house only from morning to evening and then returned to her home in the night. Many domestic workers' works in two shifts in each house, however at few places they go for single shift only.

One way of fixing labour charges in liv-out pattern is per work piece-rate in which the wages are decided on the basis of per work. For example charges for washing bucket full of clothes. Liv-out workers are mostly from families of a group migrated to cities. They resettle here in slums and face difficult situations. Some of them have decided to work part-time before migrating to cities while others have compulsion to work as domestic worker as their husband's income is not sufficient to meet the family expenses. To begin with they work in one or two households and gradually get more work that depends on their capacity to work, need for money and life cycle. Mothers of smaller children work in lesser homes while mothers of bigger children work in many households. Besides learning their job they also need to adopt urban manners and culture. The domestic workers living in metropolitan cities always live in fear of demolition of

their slums and resettling in a far flung area outside the city which make them shelter less and unemployed.

### **1.2 Efforts of Center and State Govt and challenges**

In India the value of labour of 35 crore domestic woman is 613 billion US Dollar yet despite such a huge value due importance was not given to the labour of domestic woman. They have been placed in unproductive category. Still the common woman worker is deprived of social security, equal wages, leaves, maternity benefit, widow pension and legal aid etc. The country lacks any mechanism to address the complaints of domestic workers. Recently Delhi Police have made verification of domestic workers compulsory but another dimension of this issue is that this whole process is derogatory. Unorganized Labour Social Security Bill, 2007, does not treat woman labours as labour although the number of woman labours is much more than man in the unorganized sector.

In 1959 bill namely Domestic Workers (Condition of Labour) was introduced for protection of rights of domestic workers but it couldn't pass. Then Unorganized Labour Security Act, 2008 (domestic workers included) does not implemented its provisions properly. On June 16, 2011 International Labour Organization, during domestic workers conference, announced rights, policy and principles of domestic workers. International Labour Organization (ILO) has paid special attention towards domestic workers who have full right to enjoy effective security against all the forms of abuse, harassment and violence.

In year 2015, Labour Welfare prepared national policy draft for domestic workers which had provision for minimum wages, working hours, paid annual leave, medical leave, maternity leave, social security, accident and health insurance and security against sexual exploitation.

## **2. The work of Sangini**

Working for gender equality in the society Sangini identified the issues of domestic workers and found that the social and economic condition of the woman involved in household works such as house cleaning, broom and mopping, utensils cleaning, cooking are at the lowest level. They have so many issues as job security, low salary, no leaves, theft blaming, discriminatory behavior are very common. Violation of fundamental right is pertinent in their working conditions, terms and behavior. Its notable here that the domestic women workers are employed in different households from middle class to higher income class which also includes the stakeholders such as judges, administrative officials, lawyers etc, however their working conditions remain the same as described above. No one heeded attention towards the human and fundamental rights of these woman workers. Even they have not being treated as labors.

They are not eligible for benefits of different welfare schemes. The rules and regulations that govern the labor sector do not protect their rights.

Sangini has organized these domestic workers and formed domestic workers forum in 2006 which is registered in 2011. Named as Gharelu Kaamgaar Mahila Adhikaar Sangh) this organization provides them a platform through which they raise their demands for rights. Gharelu Kaamgaar Mahila Adhikaar Sangh has nearly 23000 members till now out of which many have been playing leadership roles. They have been adding new members to the organization and also instrumental in their capacity building. The Forum has raised issues of fixed working hours, minimum salary, secure environment for working, paid week offs, respectful behavior, basic facilities at working place and also succeeded to certain extent. This forum has also worked for advocacy of these issues with government and employers at state and national levels.

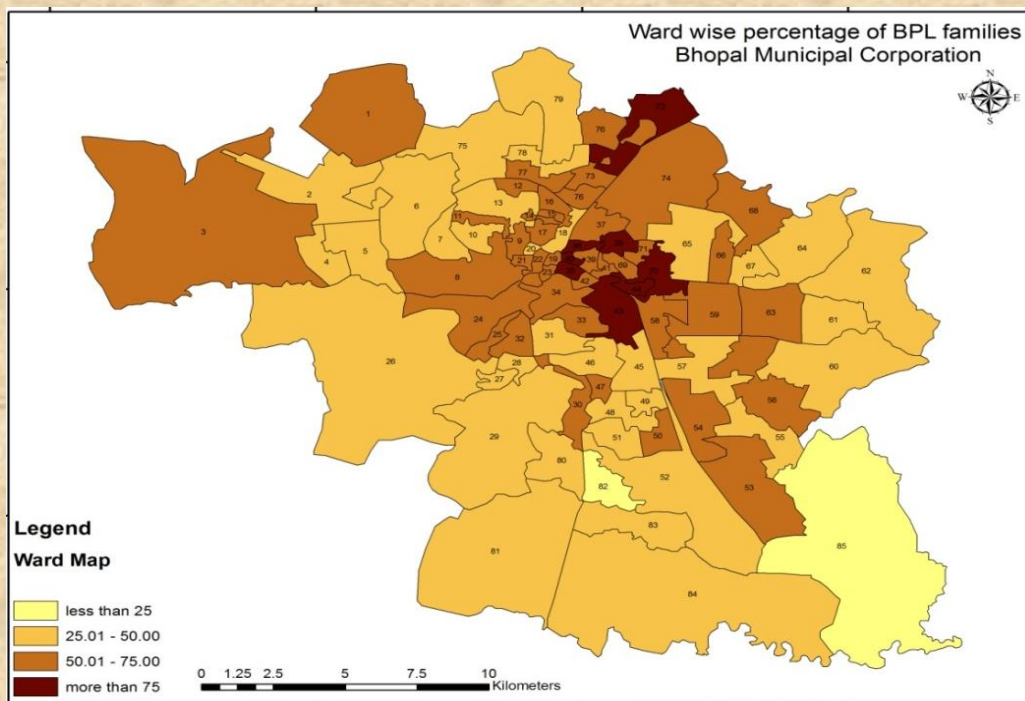
If any incident happens at our home the first person who come in the circle of doubt is the domestic worker. These woman workers are not eligible and do not get facilities such as weekly leave, annual leave sick leave, insurance, social security. In case of any accident at workplace, the employers do not pay for treatment. The contribution of domestic workers in the country's economy has not been evaluated. They have not been given status of labors. Due to this they have no specific wages and they do not have facilities of increments and allowances like labors of other sectors. The wages paid to the domestic workers is less than the minimum labor in the country. Placement agencies make false promises to them about high wages, allowances and bonus but sometimes they exploit them economically and physically.

### **3. Selected Slums and objectives of study**

Most of the working women dwell in slums in urban areas. According to Census 2011, in Bhopal city 4.79 lakh people live in slums out of which 2.29 lakh are women which is 47.92 percent. The working woman play main or complementary roles as source of income for their family while doing jobs as domestic worker, as house cleaning domestic worker or as vendor etc. In many families they fully discharge the responsibility of the family in the absence of husband or male members, husbands indulged in some kind of bad habits such as addiction, gambling . Due to Covid-19 after one day lockdown on March 22, 2020, complete lockdown was imposed on March 24, 2020 in Bhopal, capital of Madhya Pradesh. First case of Corona positive came to notice on March 28 in the capital and after that number increased gradually. The negative impact of three months lockdown period was felt badly by the people living on the margin of the society including the people of the slums that include the domestic worker woman also as their bread and butter depends on daily working and earning. The social organizations were the

first to come for their help. Mostly working woman has the background of families listed in the Below Poverty Line lists. However many domestic workers have no BPL card. Still from Map- 1 we can understand which wards of Bhopal have slums and the number of BPL families residing in them. In the slums of ward no 36, 40,35, 38, 70, 43, 44, in the middle of the city and in ward No 72 , in North, more than 75 percent of the families are BPL families. In the other hand, in the slums of most of the wards of city’s west and middle- east 50-75 percent families are from BPL. In the outer or wards adjacent to city borders 25 percent or less families are BPL families. To understand the impact of lockdown on the lives of workers particularly domestic workers, the areas affected most etc Sangini Resource Center conducted an online survey.

**Map -1 – Ward wise Percentage of BPL Families in slums**



**Source – Safe City Project, Bhopal, 2019**

### **3.1 Objectives of Study –**

**This study has conducted to know the Impact of Covid – 19 on the life of Domestic Workers.**

- How lockdown affected the job of domestic workers.
- What are the challenges they have been facing, particularly, economic, physical and mental.
- Did they get government aid during the lockdown and what are the challenges they faced in securing this aid.

- What are their future plans .

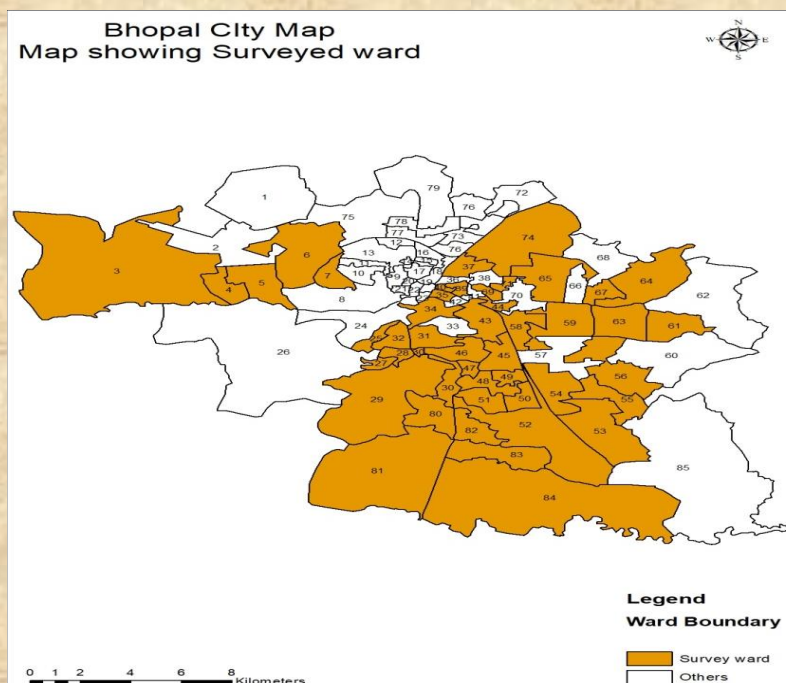
### 3.2 Methodology

Random and purposive both the method was applied in the survey which included 2733 women of the operational area of Sangini Resource Center and other Network organizations.

### 3.3 Area of Study

46 wards (Map-2) of the municipal corporation were selected for the survey where the majority families have been living below poverty line. The online survey was conducted from June 15, 2020 to June 30, 2020 in 71 slums of these wards.

#### Map-2 Wards included in the survey

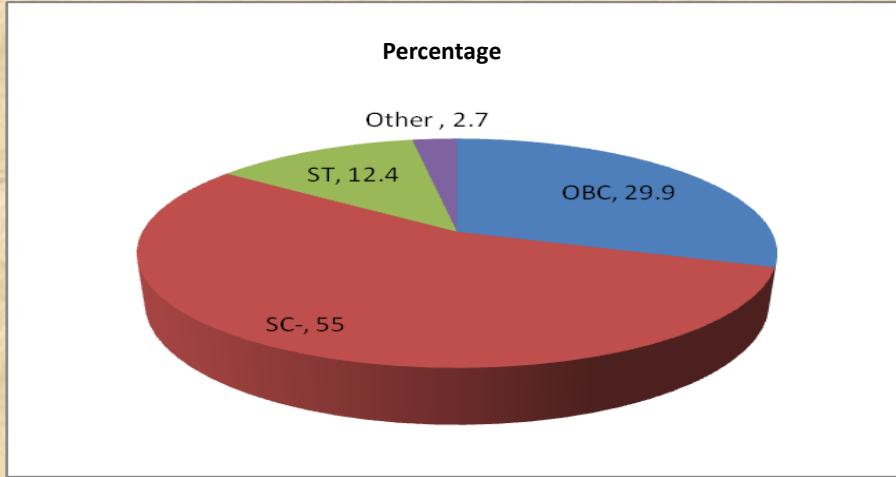


### 4- Outcome of Study

**4.1 Profile of the responders-** Yet class discrimination does not prevail in urban slums and all are similar. All belongs to labour class. In sociology, Economics and Political Science the people who earn their livelihood through physical labour are categorized as labour class. In industrial societies the labours working in factories are called as Proletariat but seldom farmers and the hard working poor people also included in that. Majority population is of lower class in the slums which reflects in the survey. 97.3 percent woman included in the survey was from schedule caste, schedule tribe and backward classes.

#### Graph 1

**Graph -1 Caste of Responders**

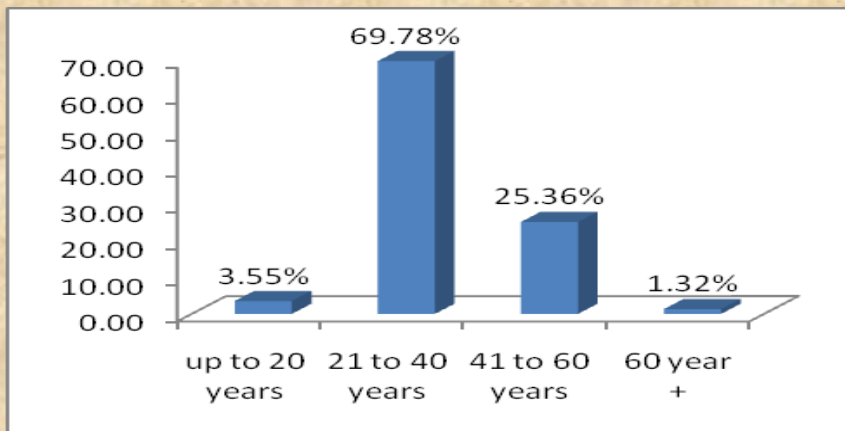


**Percentage (Source – Field Survey)**

**4.1.1 Age**

The majority responders about 69.78 percent were of 21-40 years of age. As the domestic works or other related jobs demands too much physical labour so the people prefer employing young age workers at home so that work could be performed in lesser time. The survey for domestic work included 3.55 percent responders who are up to 20 years old and their minimum age was 14 years. 25.36 percent responders were of 41-60 years and there were 1.32 percent responders who were more than 60 years age.

**Graph-2 Age of Responders**



**Source – Field Survey**

**4.1.2 Caste – wise Total workers** Out of the total 2733 responders 2576 were woman workers and others were involved in private jobs, daily workers and other works. As mentioned above



also that at least in slums of urban areas caste discrimination was not seen. People of all the communities however mostly of backward class live together and if people of upper caste are also there, then also no class discrimination is there. This reflects in the survey also. Out of the total responders 94.26 percent are working woman in which 93.63 percent of backward class, 95.1 percent of the schedule caste, 92.94 percent of schedule tribe and 92 percent of other total responders are domestic workers. (Table -1)

**Table -1 Total responders class-wise and percentage of woman workers in them**

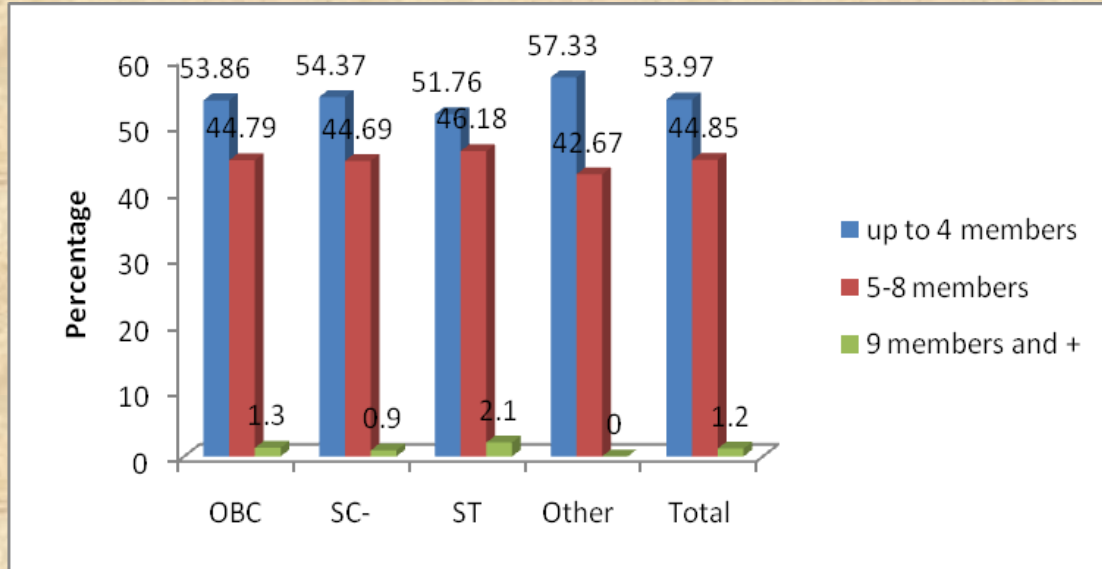
	Number	Percentage	Total respondents
<b>OBC</b>	764	93.63	816
<b>SC-</b>	1427	95.01	1502
<b>ST</b>	316	92.94	340
<b>Other</b>	69	92.00	75
<b>Total</b>	2576	94.26	2733

**Source – Field Survey**

#### **4.1.3 The Number of family members of Responders**

Generally the number of family members in urban middle class families is limited. In contrast all the classes of domestic workers, which are 94 percent of the responders living in the slums, 42.67 to 46.18 percent families have 5 to 8 members. While number of family members in 53.86 to 57.33 percent responder's have maximum 4 members. However this is possible that the size of family and the responsibilities towards the families pushed them to the domestic workers market.

**Graph-3 Class wise Number of family members of Responders**

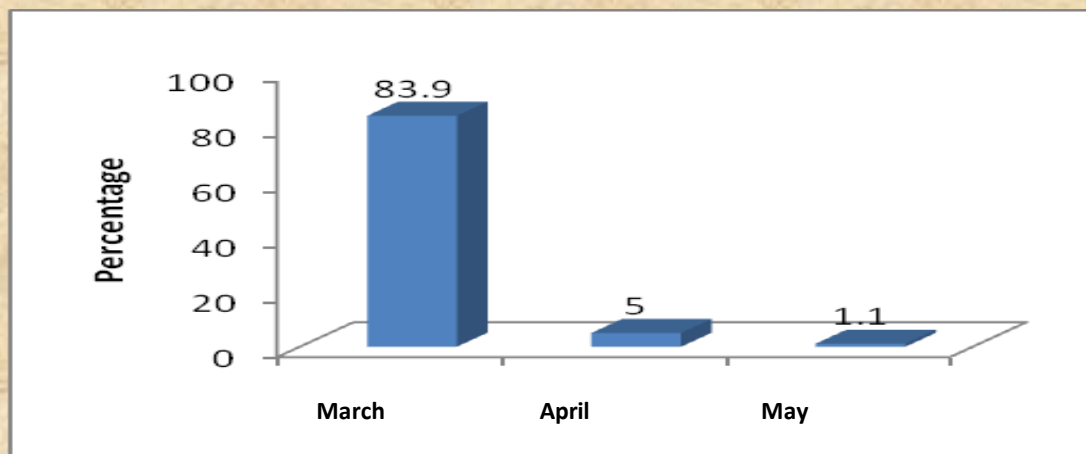


Source - Field Survey

#### 4.2 Impact of lockdown on domestic workers

4.2.1 Losing jobs during lockdown – As the lockdown was imposed gradually domestic workers lost their jobs. Out of total 2576 domestic workers 70 percent were lost their jobs; however 30 percent somehow managed to continue. Majority of the 70 percent domestic workers who lost their jobs were deprived of their work just after March 24 when first lockdown imposed. The figures show that 83.9 percent workers lost their jobs in March, 5 percent in April and 1.1 percent in May.

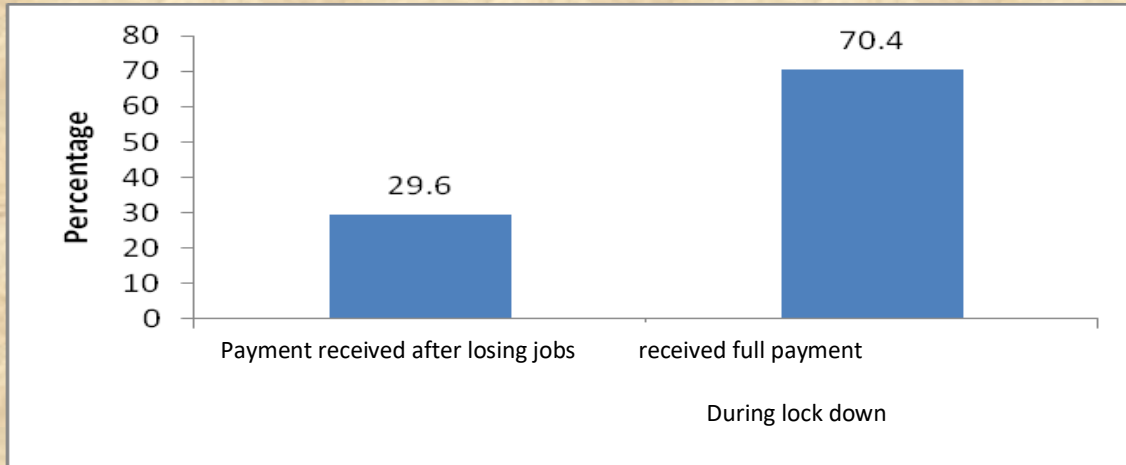
**Graph-4 Time/Month when women workers lost their jobs**



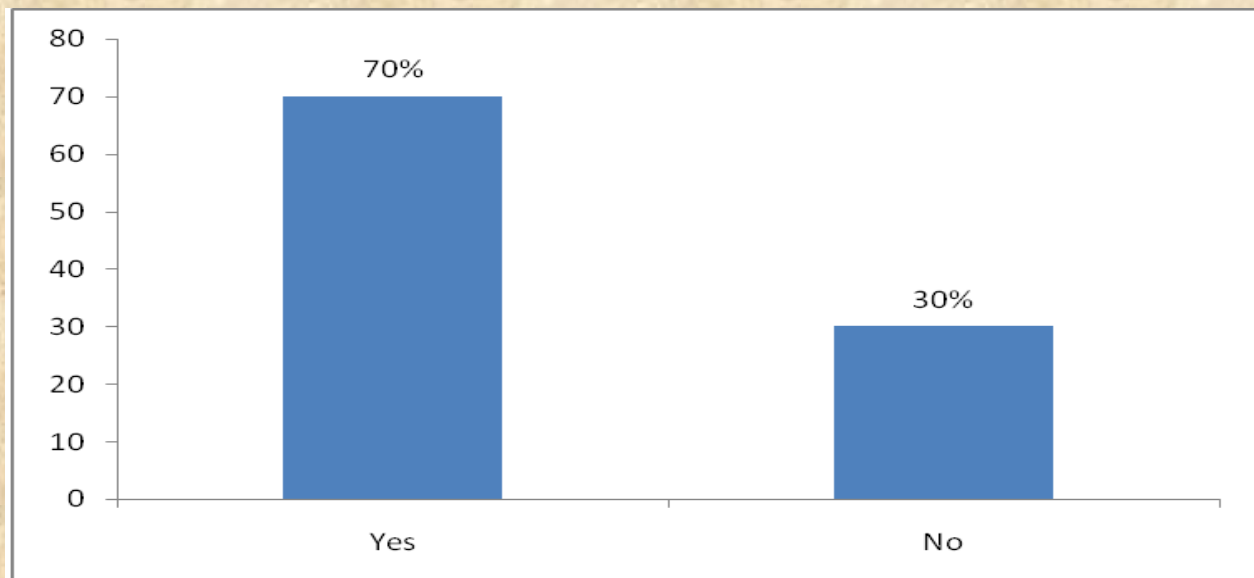
Source- Field Survey

**4.2.2 Payment after losing jobs** – The time when effective measures were taken to fight the sudden spread of pandemic, one group of society who was appreciating the corona warriors supporting by clanging utensils, clapping and lightening earthen lamps but at the same time the same people held the payments of their domestic workers. Only 29.6 percent workers out of the total who lost their jobs received payments of lockdown period. Moreover only 70 percent received full payment while 30 percent got part payment

**Graph- 5-** Payment received after job loss

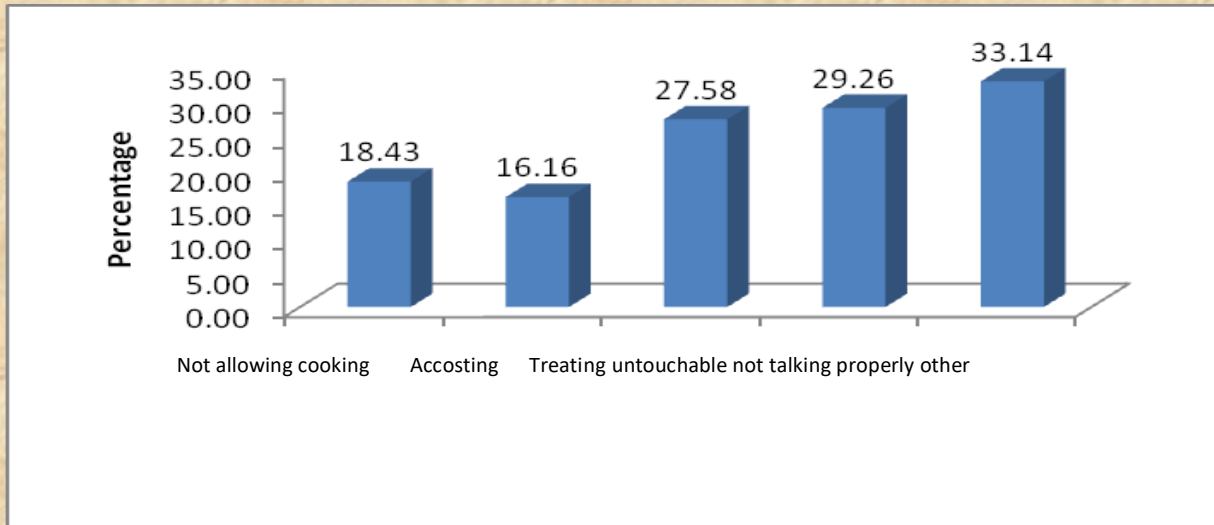


**5.1 Respondents received full payments out of who received any payments**



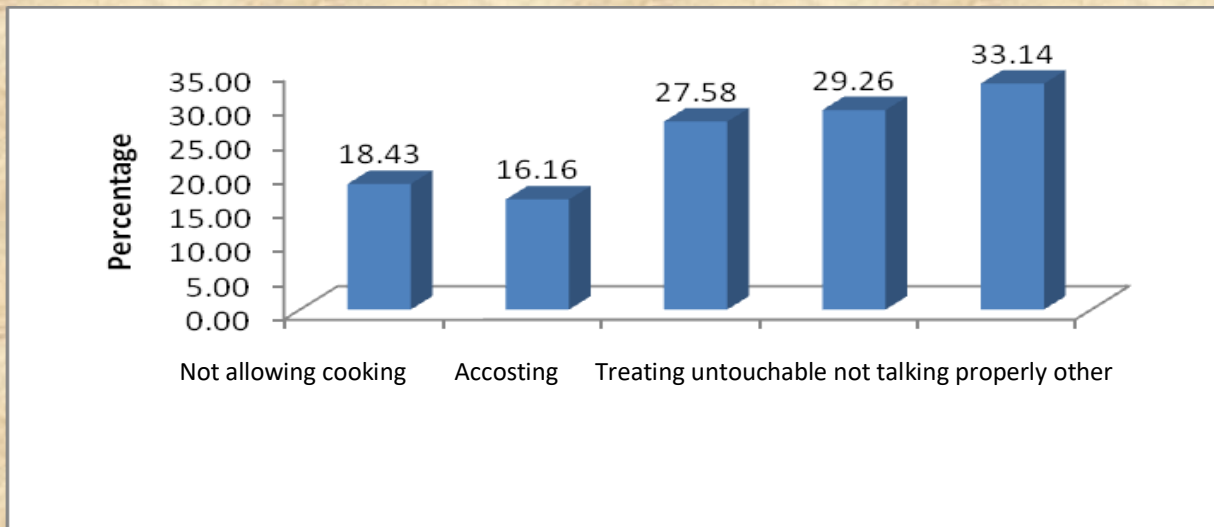
**Source – Field Survey**

**4.2.3 Resuming work after lockdown and behavior** – After the lockdown only 27.4 domestic workers, out of those who lost their jobs during lockdown were called back to jobs. The workers who were called back have to face lot of challenges at workplaces as they were treated like untouchables; families accost them and not talk to them properly.



Source – Field Survey

Graph- 6 Behavior with workers after they resume work (multi answer)

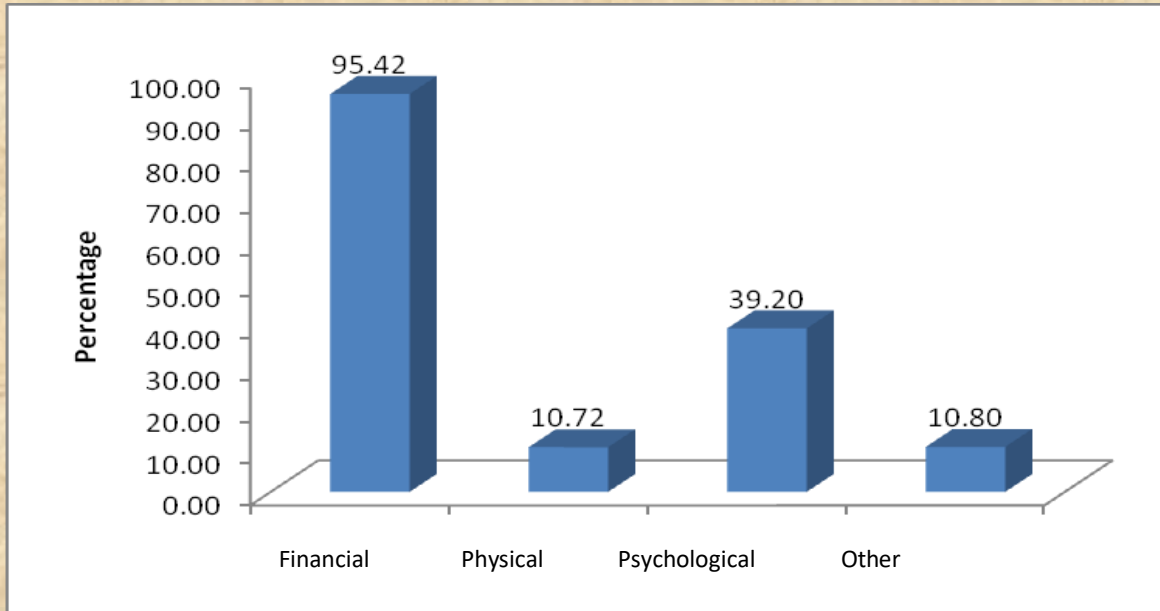


Source- Field Survey

**4 . 2 . 4 Problems of domestic workers after losing jobs** - Domestic workers have been facing too many problems after losing their jobs in the lockdown, which include financial, physical and Psychological challenges. If these problems were not addressed it would lead to hunger and

malnutrition. The mental problems and lack of support and aid could push them to suicidal tendency.

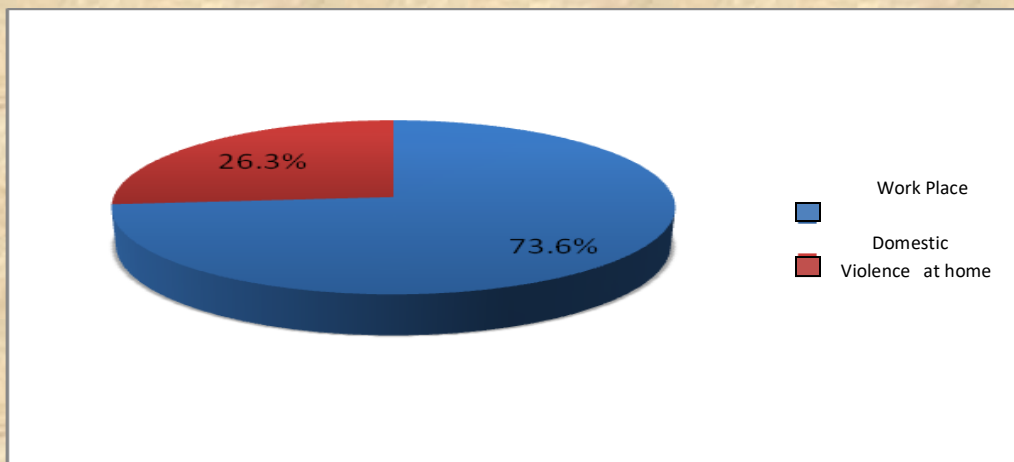
**Graph-7** Problems of domestic workers after losing jobs (Multi answer)



Source – Field Survey

**4.2.5 Physical Violence** - The domestic workers who returned to their jobs have to face physical violence not only at workplace but at home and family also. 31 percent out of the total workers told that they were being victim of violence or the violence has increased against them.

**Graph -8 Physical violence against workers – place**



Source – Field Survey

### 4.3 Aid received during lockdown

**4.3.1 PDS** - Families belong to Below Poverty Line BPL and Antyodaya families (Extreme Poor) get food grains under PDS scheme of Government. Range of PDS distribution expanded more under Food Security Act. Above Map 1 show that the majority families in the slums are Below Poverty Line. Only 68.1 percent families received food grains through PDS. Out of which who received food grains through PDS only 51.4 percent responders were aware of the quantity of grains they were eligible for. The main reason that 31.9 percent families didn't get food grains was that 31.5 percent did not possess ration Card. However the Government has omitted the requirement of ration card for supply of food grains to the poorer. The remaining responders told non possession of Samagra ID and Aadhaar card as the reason for not getting food grains.

### 4.3.2 Aid from Government, NGO and individuals

Besides the Government, NGOs and Housing Societies, their residents and social workers and individuals distributed ration to the needy people. Total 13.1 percent received aid through them. See name in the Table.

**Table -2 Name of the institution who helped during lockdown (As told by the responders)**

Sakaratomak Sanstha	Uday Sanstha
Sangini Sanstha	Samawesh Sanstha
Action Aid	Sewa Bharati
Bansal Hospital	Doctor, Advocate, Individual Aid
JK Hospital	Janwadi mahila Samiti
Ward Members and Municipal Corporation	Muskaan
World Vision India	

**Source – Field Survey**

**4.3.3 Future Plan** - When asked what they want to do in future, 70 percent responders told that they want to do the same old work that they were doing prior to lockdown. The remaining 30 percent responders said they want to start small business as making pickles, Bari and Papad, vendoring vegetables, manufacturing agarbattis, cloth shop, tailoring and embroidery etc.

**4.4 Conclusion** – The analysis clearly shows that the Covid-19 and the lockdown have badly affected the lives of woman domestic workers. It would take several years to come out of this situation. Strategic approach is required to help them. Immediate financial help is required for

them which could be started together with the stimulus package recently announced by the Prime Minister. Social Service organization can associated these women with self help Groups or Federations to manufacture materials such as mask which is useful in the Covid-19 time. This would provide jobs to so many women who lost their work during the lockdown.

## **5. Recommendations**

During the lockdown imposed due to covid-19 pandemic we saw that all the businesses were closed for two and half months to three months. However from June onwards unlocking began and gradually different sectors started operating. People started their works but the domestic working women are still in fear and insecurity. They help us our family in its daily routine work. Most of these women lost their jobs or only left with 50 percent job. Not only the domestic workers are being seen as corona virus carriers by many residential colonies, housing societies and campuses and families, which is totally unfair and wrong.

It is very necessary for all of us to be careful and safe in this Covid-19 pandemic time. It's essential to follow the guidelines issued from time to time. Every citizen should follow these guidelines and also generally we are following them. But at the same time we need to look whether someone meeting injustice in this process. Whether someone rights is not ignored. Anyone should not be defamed or stigmatized in the name of pandemic. Some residential colonies have circulated notice to restrict the entry of domestic domestic workers in the campus/society or allowing entry with some conditions given below:

- These domestic worker women will not use lifts.
- Will not hold railing while climbing stairs.
- Not sit anywhere in the campus.
- -Not sit at home in front of Employer
- Few media groups also publicized sensational news that claimed spread of corona virus through these domestic workers which made their lives and earnings more difficult.

Being an organization working on the issues of women, Sangini has appealed to all the employers and residential societies not to discontinue the jobs of domestic workers.

### **Hence we appeal to all the residential societies and the employers:**

- Release order to all the households of the campus and colony to pay these domestic workers the full wages for the lockdown period.

- Absence during the lockdown period should be treated as paid leave and payment for that period should be made.
- Do not circulate any such notice mentioning them as corona virus carriers.
- Be sensitive towards the domestic worker coming to work at your home and campus.
- Do not see them as corona virus carriers rather alert for their protection and security.
- Essentially follow the guidelines to prevent the infection.
- Tell them how to follow social distancing.
- Make arrangement at the gate for proper hand wash and sanitization before entering the campus.
- -Make it essential for all the persons entering the campus.
- If possible arrangement could be made for bathing and changeover.
- Facilitate them with gloves and mask and ensure their use.
- - Employers should also wear masks when the domestic worker is working at your house.
- Put the waste in the dustbin for their convenience.
- Better arrange for separate masks and gloves at your home.
- Provide them a common room in the campus where they can rest during the intervals and need not to commute frequently.
- Make them aware for prevention from corona infection.
- Arrange wash room for them in the campus and ensure availability of water and cleanliness.
- Make available clean drinking water to them.
- If your domestic worker facing any kind of domestic violence or other kind of violence, sexual violence at the workplace, then make them aware about the helpline number or help them register their complaint.



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