

## **Report on the progress of Minor Research Project titled ‘Technological development and marginalisation of women in Mumbai garment units‘**

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The study relates to the garment units in Mumbai in the manufacturing of readymade garments like shirts, pants, kids wear, skirts etc. The knitwear units are not a part of the study.

This study has been undertaken in the context of the ongoing changes in the post liberalization period. While economic reforms have introduced several changes in the labour market the introduction of high speed machines, computer aided designs and flexible production systems in manufacturing are other changes which have drawn considerable attention. In this context, the garment units and the employment of women workers in these units makes an interesting case for study. With the end of quota system there are tremendous opportunities for Indian garment exporters to raise production and increase their exports. The scope for modernization is widened in the context of international competition.

Most employees in the clothing industry are women, all too often holding the lowest skilled jobs, mostly confined to the unorganized sector, where labour is subject to harsh working conditions and low wages. Another important feature of the garment industry is subcontracting. As compared to other countries, Indian firms subcontract 74 percent of their out put. Given the fact that Indian firms were for a long time characterised by strong traditional artisanal fervor, the emerging global restructuring and technological up gradation gain greater relevance where women workers are concerned.

### **Gender and technology**

In the emerging global restructuring, continuous technological up gradation is a perpetual reality. Demand for raw materials and cheap labour force is being replaced by technology and skilled labour. The industrial employment brings to fore three particular aspects of relevance in the context of women workers: First, technological unemployment created by introduction of hi-tech machines and automation poses greater threat to women than to men as lower level jobs are automated first where women are highly concentrated. Second, technological up gradation introduces changes in skills and job structure. These changes demand high skilled, polyvalent, specialist workers on the one hand and semi skilled, flexible and casual workers on the other. Women workers are more likely to occupy the latter group given their low skill-low educational status. Third, technological innovations imply changing skill requirements. This creates a demand on workers for flexible work hours, continuous training on and off the job, increase in workload, specialisation and so on. Women workers are more likely to be affected given their concentration in labour intensive lower level jobs, where scope for enhancement of skills is poor.

The study focuses on the impact of technology on women workers, their employment, and the quality of their working lives, in the garment industry.

The objective of the study is to examine the marginalisation of women workers in the context of adoption of various advanced machines in garment units and analyse the gendered implications .

**The progress of the study undertaken,so far :**

1. The secondary data on garment units and labour conditions has been collected from related books, journal articles and micro study reports .

2. As the study is based on primary data, collection of data by field survey has been completed.

a) Sampling method : Random sampling

b) Questionnaire : Structured

c) Surveyed 140 units and 250 workers with structured questionnaire.

3. The analysis of data with statistical applications is in progress.

4. As garmenting is highly concentrated in small informal units and function outside the legal framework, access to these units and collection of data is limited. Most of the units have low technology and little modernisation and function as subcontracting units.