

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF WORKERS ENGAGED IN CULTURAL OPERATIONS IN THE PAKISTAN FOREST INSTITUTE

*Note by Muhammad Amjad**

This study reports the results of a sample survey of the socio-economic conditions of the labour engaged on Cultural operations and on the maintenance of the Pakistan Forest Institute grounds in August, 1976. 114 workers were employed on 20-8-76; 63 regular, 51 casual. As the number was not large a simple random sample comprising 25 workers was drawn, 13 regular and 12 casual. The workers were interviewed by the investigators. The objective of the investigation and the questions were explained to them in their language and their replies recorded on the questionnaires.

The mean age of casual workers is 23 years and that of the regular, 35.76% of the workers are 35 or below. 85% of the regular workers and 67% of the casual are married. 63% of the married workers have independent families and 37% live in joint families. The model family size of married workers is 5.57% of the families have less than 6 members. The average family size is 5.5; including dependents, 6.12% of the workers are literate (national average 26%). Even the literate are barely so, and can not read a newspaper. 33% of the children of school going age are going to school. Almost all the workers are drawn from the neighbouring villages, 60% within four miles radius of the Institute. 56% of them are farmers. 85% of the regular workers have been with us for over ten years, 58% of the casual for less than one year and 42% from 1-5 years.

In August 76 the mean monthly wage of the regular worker was Rs. 241 (now Rs. 263), and of the casual Rs. 210 (now Rs. 260). 40% of the workers supplement their income by additional work, 80% of them rearing cattle.

The main items of expenditure are food, fuel, medical treatment and education comprising 73.6%, 7.8%, 17.8% and 0.8% of the average monthly expenditure of Rs. 359.00.

60% of the workers live in their own houses, 16% in rented houses (monthly rent varying from Rs. 40-60), and 16% live free with others. Housing conditions are generally poor. 44 percent of the houses have neither water nor electricity, 4% have water, 32% electricity. Only 20% of the houses have both water and electricity.

All the tools required by the workers e.g., sickles, watering roses, mowing machines are provided by the Institute. All workers receive on-the-job training. A newly recruited

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worker is first put on operations requiring little skill such as cutting of grass, filling of tubes, shifting of plants and making of beds. The new workers usually work under the supervision of old workers and after a period of 2-3 months can handle all types of operations.

Weekly working hours for regular workers are 45. Casual workers are engaged on daily basis. Work starts at 7 a.m. Ten to ten fifteen is tea break and 12 to 2 lunch break. Closing time is 5. Fridays are off for regular workers and on Thursdays work stops at 12.15. In addition regular workers get 50 days leave with full pay in a year. They also enjoy gazetted holidays. They draw house-rent of Rs. 75 and conveyance allowance of Rs. 30 per month in addition to the emoluments already mention. They are covered by group insurance and are entitled to provident fund facilities. They also get free medical treatment at the Pakistan Forest Institute Hospital from a male and a female physician. They can draw at Government controlled rates flour and sugar rations from the Institute depot and cooking oil from the Utility store. The grass mowed from lawns and playgrounds is also taken by them free of cost.

84% of the workers like their jobs, viewing it as less arduous than construction work. The communication between worker and supervisor is free and open. None of the workers expressed a grievance against his supervisor.