

WEST BENGAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

P r e s e n t

Date : 24/11/2014

- 1. Mr. Naparajit Mukherjee - Acting Chairperson**
- 2. Mr. M.S. Dwivedy - Member**

A socio-economic research oriented study of Bidi workers in Jangipur Subdivision of Murshidabad District of West Bengal conducted by Shri Annappa-E, IPS, Supdt. of Police, W.B.H.R.C., Inspector, Shri B. Roy and Inspector, Shri T.C. Pal both of W.B.H.R.C. at the instance and guidance of the Commission.

The area chosen for the study was certain villages under Suti P.S. and Dhulian Municipality area which falls under Samserganj P.S. The study was conducted on (a) the economic condition, (b) general health and medical facilities, (c) social and educational condition, (d) general living condition and (e) utilisation of child labour in Bidi industry. Thereafter, certain recommendations have been given by the research officers.

Summary of the findings and recommendations are as follows :-

(i) In the village of Khiderpur Dighi, P.S.Suti it was found that average production per family (consisting six members) is 1500 pcs. per day and wages for production of 1000 pcs. of Bidi is only Rs.100/- much below the minimum wage. Ninety per cent of the household including children and women folk are involved in Bidi rolling. Same situation exist in Dhulian Municipality area.

(ii) There are three types of Bidi workers viz. Type-I consisting of family of six persons average income Rs.150/- per day per family. The main task of type-I Bidi workers are to roll the Bidis which are given by the agents of various factories locally known as "Munsi". These people have I.D and Provident Fund Cards. If a Bidi Sramik pays Rs.100/- for Provident Fund, the Bidi Company contributes equal amount. After ten years of regular deposit for P.F. he is entitled to pension at the rate of forty per cent P.F. balance. Type-II Bidi workers are direct employees of Bidi factories earning about Rs.6000/- per month and enjoy facilities like E.P.F., medical, pension etc. Their main task is to 'toast'. Bidi rolls by type-I workers. The type-III Bidi workers are

engaged in packaging and labelling of finished products and are engaged by commission labour agent earning Rs.186/- to Rs.195/- for packaging and labelling of one lac Bidis. They enjoy P.F., Bonus facilities but in some Bidi Factories children are engaged for this type of work violating the provisions against child labour.

(iii) The general health condition is very poor as they have to handle tobacco flakes and tobacco dust thereby damaging the lung condition especially of children and women. There is no separate E.S.I. hospital at Aurangabad for the benefit of Bidi workers although Pataka Bidi Works has started a charitable hospital at Aurangabad. One E.S.I. hospital at Dhulian caters to all labourers of different industries including Bidi. At Tarapur and Nimtita (Jangipur Subdivision) Govt. of India established a hospital under Health and Family Welfare Ministry. But there is lack of medical officers and facilities. Hospitals are immediately required for such works.

(iv) For improving the educational facilities there is need for motivating children especially the girl child as they drop out frequently and are married off at the tender age of 16 into Bidi workers family, to provide extra “man power” for Bidi rolling thereby enhancing the income of that family. Similarly, children being employed in Bidi industries are deprived of education.

(v) There is lack of adequate drinking water and they have to depend on tube wells. For washing and other daily needs they have to depend on dirty pond water thereby leading to water borne diseases.

There is one scheme of Labour Department, Govt. of West Bengal vide Labour Department’s Resolution No.658-LW/2S-02/07 dt.23.08.07 for providing uniform grant of Rs.2500/- per family for electrification of their house. Central Government provide Rs.40,000/- for construction of their house Indira Awas Yojana. A review of implementation of the scheme is required as Bidi workers claim that they are not getting adequate benefits out of such welfare schemes.

Following are the recommendations of the West Bengal Human Rights Commission :

1. Providing P.F./I.D. Card for all Bidi Workers/Rollers. (Type I,II,III)

2. Extension of non formal education/adult education to the school dropouts and others.
3. Social Security Schemes for education of girl child like Kanyashree Project etc.
4. Access to credit like bank credit and co-operative society credit to the workers/rollers for betterment of livelihood and for alternative employment.
5. To extend the coverage of E.P.F. to all workers/rollers.
6. National Old Age Pension Scheme may be extended to bidi workers with liberalized conditions.
7. To stop child labour, one time lump sum grant may be provided for school fees, uniform etc. to the children of bidi worker families.
8. Increasing health care awareness and free medical check-up camps for bidi workers/rollers at the village level.
9. Establishment of bidi workers co-operative to reduce role of middlemen in bidi industry.
10. Consideration of diversification of employment opportunities as the anti tobacco campaign is going on to ban use of tobacco and tobacco product etc. like employment in food processing industry, goat farming, horticulture and floriculture etc.
11. Strict implementation of Minimum Wages Act.
12. Strict Rules to control harassment and rejection of bidi by contractors/middlemen etc.
13. Formation of S.H.G. for bidi rollers/workers.

Sd/-
(Naparajit Mukherjee)
Acting Chairperson

Sd/-
(M.S.Dwivedy)
Member