



Fortnightly column

Village Dynamics Insights

Changes in work patterns and incomes in Jharkhand

A study of work patterns and household income in Jharkhand has revealed a move away from dependence on agricultural work towards increased employment in the non-farm sector. At the same time, women are playing an increasing role in the workforce in both the farm and non-farm sectors.

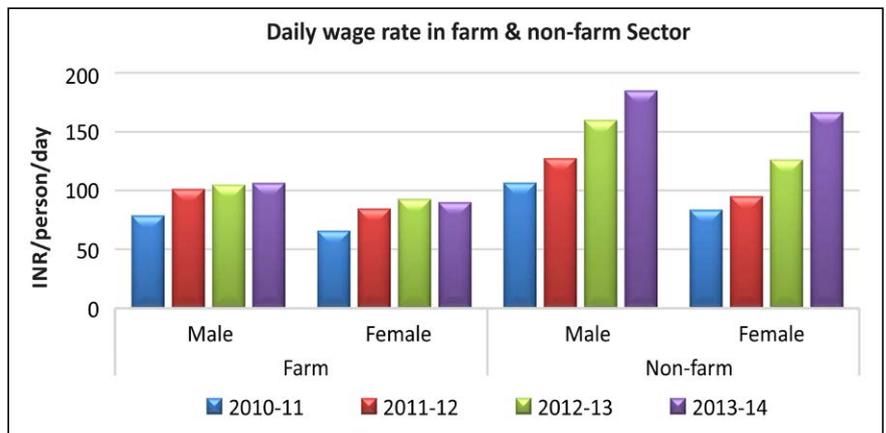
These changes were documented in a VDSA study across Ranchi and Dumka districts of Jharkhand from 2010 to 2014. As part of the study 40 households from two villages in each district are being tracked.

The state of Jharkhand in eastern India consists largely of a tribal population where educational opportunities and skills training are lacking. More than 40% of the population lives below the poverty line. The region is characterized by high rainfall, poor soil fertility, undulating land and lack of agricultural infrastructure.

VDSA insights

Study reveals that the farm sector is still the biggest employer, but the share is declining and the proportion of non-farm workers is increasing. The number of participants in the workforce has also increased, for both male and female workers.

One interesting trend is an increase in the number of women in the workforce – increasing from 3.95% to 10.84% in self-employed agriculture, and from 4.82% to 16.06% in the non-farm sector. Whilst the figures reveal



that women are increasingly taking charge in farming activities, in the non-farm sector they are moving away from low-paid domestic work towards unskilled jobs (construction worker, shops, etc).

However, the need for further education and skills training for women still remains an issue. Low levels of female literacy lead to lower earning capacity and at present only 17-18% of the female population in the region are literate above primary level.

Wage rates of both male and female workers increased in the VDSA villages over the four years of the survey, with the male wage still higher than the female wage and the wage rate for agricultural activities substantially lower than that for non-farm activities.

Conclusion

While the movement of labor from farm to non-farm sector has resulted in more people in the workforce and higher wages, one of the major impediments to growth is the lack of infrastructure. The state suffers from a lack of electricity, proper drainage, drinking water, canals and tube wells, manageable distances from metalled roads and banks. These issues need to be addressed by the government for significant growth to be achieved.

Another challenge facing the state is the population growth: 40 - 49% of the population in these areas is under 20 years of age and three-quarters of the population live in rural areas. Unless substantial educational opportunities, skills training and infrastructure are put in place this population explosion could be viewed as either the state's "greatest asset—or a demographic disaster if it doesn't get appropriate work opportunities."¹ ■

¹ Kumar R, Deb UK, Cynthia Bantilan, Nagaraj N and Bhattarai M. 2015. Economic growth and rural transformation in Eastern India: Strategies for inclusive growth. Indian Journal of Economics and Development 2:3 pp 779 -97.

Work participation rate in VDSA villages of Jharkhand (%)					
Occupation		2010	2011	2012	2013
Self-employed in agriculture	Male	62.50	59.52	52.09	49.26
	Female	3.95	2.65	2.93	10.84
Self-employed in non-agriculture	Male	4.30	4.76	4.94	5.93
	Female	0.00	0.44	0.84	1.20
Agricultural labor	Male	4.30	2.38	1.14	1.48
	Female	2.19	1.33	0.42	0.80
Non-farm worker	Male	19.92	26.19	32.70	34.44
	Female	4.82	6.64	9.21	16.06
Salaried job/contractual job	Male	6.25	6.75	7.22	6.67
	Female	3.07	1.77	2.93	2.81
Other including domestic work	Male	2.73	0.40	1.90	2.22
	Female	85.96	87.17	83.68	68.27