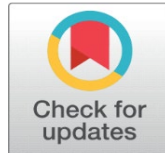


INVISIBLE WORKFORCE, INVISIBLE RIGHTS: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF WOMEN LABOUR IN RAJASTHAN'S UNORGANIZED SECTOR AND THE EFFICACY OF LABOUR WELFARE LAWS THROUGH A HUMAN RIGHTS LENS

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ABSTRACT

Women constitute a significant proportion of the unorganized workforce in Rajasthan, engaging in sectors such as agriculture, construction, domestic work, and handicrafts. Despite their crucial economic contributions, they remain largely invisible in formal policy frameworks and are denied access to basic labour rights and social protections. This article examines the status of women workers in Rajasthan's unorganized sector, assesses the effectiveness of labour welfare legislation, and critically evaluates these legal frameworks through the lens of human rights.

Keywords: Unorganized Sector, Unorganized Sector, Human Rights

1. INTRODUCTION

The unorganized sector forms the backbone of India's economy, employing over 90% of its workforce and contributing significantly to the GDP. Despite its economic importance, it remains poorly regulated and largely ignored in mainstream policy frameworks. Within this vast informal economy, women form a disproportionately large and vulnerable segment. In Rajasthan, where traditional gender roles and socio-economic inequalities intersect, women's labour—especially in sectors like agriculture, construction, domestic work, and textiles—remains critically undervalued, undocumented, and unprotected.

These women, many from marginalized communities such as Dalits, tribals, and minority castes, typically work without contracts, social security, or access to legal recourse. Their labour is often not counted in GDP calculations, nor are they included in formal labour statistics. This exclusion is not accidental but structural, rooted in patriarchal norms, occupational segregation, and the informalization of labour under neoliberal economic reforms. Cultural restrictions on women's mobility, education, and autonomy further entrench their invisibility in both rural and urban Rajasthan.

Although India has enacted several legal frameworks aimed at worker welfare—such as the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008; the Code on Social Security, 2020; and the Building and Other Construction Workers Act, 1996—these laws often fail to reach women in the informal sector. Bureaucratic hurdles, poor implementation, lack of awareness, and gender-neutral language limit their effectiveness. Digital registration requirements create additional barriers for women who lack access to technology or formal documentation.

What makes this issue more urgent is its human rights dimension. Labour rights are fundamentally human rights, yet they are often viewed in isolation. International instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, CEDAW, and several ILO conventions—alongside Indian constitutional guarantees like Articles 14 (equality), 21 (right to dignity), and 23 (prohibition of forced labour)—all affirm the rights of women workers. However, the gap between these commitments and actual enforcement is stark. The failure to provide safe working conditions, maternity relief, or protection from harassment constitutes a direct violation of these rights.

Despite these challenges, Rajasthan also offers avenues for hope. Women's self-help groups (SHGs), civil society organizations like SEWA and MKSS, and grassroots mobilizations have demonstrated the potential for rights-based reform. These initiatives have helped many women gain legal awareness, organize collectively, and access some benefits.

This article critically examines the status of women in Rajasthan's unorganized sector by analyzing their socio-economic conditions, legal protections, and human rights entitlements. It draws on illustrative case studies and field insights to assess the effectiveness of existing laws and policies. Ultimately, it argues for a paradigm shift—away from a welfare-based approach and toward one grounded in legal recognition, gender sensitivity, and human rights. Recognizing women informal workers as rights-bearing citizens is essential not only for their empowerment but also for building a more just and inclusive economy.

2. WOMEN IN THE UNORGANIZED SECTOR: A SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

2.1. OVERVIEW OF THE UNORGANIZED SECTOR IN RAJASTHAN

The unorganized sector, also known as the informal sector, represents a vast and dynamic component of Rajasthan's economy. This sector comprises economic activities that operate outside the purview of formal labor regulations, industrial laws, and social security systems. Workers in this sector typically do not have formal contracts, fixed wages, paid leaves, or access to employer-contributed welfare benefits such as provident funds or health insurance. As per the National Sample Survey and Periodic Labour Force Surveys, the unorganized sector in Rajasthan encompasses over 85% of the total workforce, making it the dominant source of employment in the state.

Rajasthan's economy is largely agrarian, supplemented by small-scale industries, handicrafts, mining, tourism, and construction. All these sectors are heavily dependent on informal labor. The workers are often engaged on a daily-wage or piece-rate basis and work in conditions that are insecure, hazardous, and poorly regulated. Many are employed through intermediaries, contractors, or subcontractors, which further distances them from legal entitlements and employer accountability.

The informal nature of work often leads to multiple deprivations, including the absence of minimum wage enforcement, health and safety measures, maternity benefits, and grievance redressal systems. The volatility of income, combined with lack of legal identity as workers, makes them vulnerable to economic shocks and social discrimination. Migrant labor, seasonal work, and home-based manufacturing are especially prevalent in Rajasthan, contributing to the sector's complexity and the difficulty of effective policy intervention.

In the context of globalization and economic liberalization, the informal economy has expanded rather than contracted, as industries seek cost-cutting by employing cheaper, more flexible, and easily replaceable labor. Despite the introduction of various welfare schemes and the codification of labour laws through the Code on Social Security, 2020, the ground reality in Rajasthan's unorganized sector reveals poor penetration of such frameworks, especially among women.

2.2. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

The participation of women in Rajasthan's unorganized sector is both extensive and critical. Women constitute a substantial proportion of informal labor, particularly in low-income and rural areas. Their work is essential not only for

family subsistence but also for the survival of local economies. However, despite their contributions, their labor remains undervalued, unpaid or underpaid, and largely excluded from economic and legal recognition.

Key Employment Sectors for Women in Rajasthan's Unorganized Sector

Women in Rajasthan's unorganized sector are employed across several informal industries that are critical to the state's economy yet offer little in terms of security, recognition, or welfare benefits. These women often face gender-based wage discrimination, lack of legal protection, and near-total invisibility in labour statistics.

1) Agriculture (as Landless Labourers)

Agriculture remains the largest employer of rural women in Rajasthan, most of whom work as landless labourers or on marginal family plots. Their tasks include sowing, weeding, and harvesting, but they are rarely recognized as independent workers. Their labour is considered "assisting" the male farmer and hence goes unpaid and undocumented. They are excluded from schemes like crop insurance or input subsidies and lack decision-making power both on the farm and at home.

2) Construction Work

A construction boom in the state has led to increased employment for women as manual labourers—carrying bricks, mixing cement, and doing physically demanding jobs. Despite equal effort, women receive lower wages than men, often work without registration under the BOCW Act, and are unaware of legal benefits such as pensions or health insurance. Childcare at sites is absent, and injuries or harassment cases are rarely addressed.

3) Textiles and Handicrafts

Rajasthan's globally known crafts—like bandhani, embroidery, block printing, and pottery—employ thousands of women, especially in areas like Barmer, Jaipur, and Jodhpur. Most work from home under subcontracting models and earn very low piece-rate wages. Despite contributing to the export economy, they remain invisible in official records, are not covered by labour laws, and lack any collective bargaining structure.

4) Domestic Work

In urban Rajasthan, domestic work is a fast-growing sector where women serve as cooks, cleaners, and nannies. These jobs are informal, with no fixed hours, pay scale, or grievance redressal mechanisms. Because the work takes place in private homes, women are highly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, particularly Dalit and minority women who often face caste-based discrimination alongside gender-based marginalization.

5) Beedi and Agarbatti Manufacturing

In districts like Kota and Banswara, women engage in home-based work like beedi rolling and incense stick production. These jobs involve long hours, exposure to health hazards, and minimal pay. With no formal contracts or registration, women are excluded from labour inspections or government welfare schemes, often passing this low-paid work down to the next generation.

Undervaluation and Invisibility

Despite their vital role in sustaining households and contributing to the economy, women's work is routinely undervalued. Cultural norms label their contributions as "subsidiary" or "non-productive," particularly in family-based or home settings. As a result, their labour is not counted in GDP or employment data.

Barriers such as illiteracy, lack of documentation, limited mobility, and absence of representation further exclude them from welfare programs like health insurance, maternity benefits, or pensions. Without targeted policy interventions, women in Rajasthan's informal sector will continue to remain economically exploited and socially invisible.

2.3. CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN WORKERS (BRIEF SUMMARY)

Women working in Rajasthan's unorganized sector face multi-layered challenges that stem from legal exclusion, economic insecurity, and gender-based discrimination. Their work—crucial to local economies—remains largely invisible and unprotected under formal labour systems. These challenges not only affect their livelihoods but also violate their basic human rights and dignity.

1) Low and Irregular Wages

Most women work in unskilled, casual, or piece-rate jobs and earn significantly less than men, even for the same work. Sectors like embroidery, domestic work, and beedi rolling offer meager daily incomes (₹50–₹150), with no wage security, written contracts, or legal recourse in case of non-payment or unfair deductions. This leads to chronic poverty and dependence on exploitative intermediaries.

2) Lack of Maternity Benefits

Though laws like the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 exist, they do not cover informal women workers. In Rajasthan, most women receive no maternity leave, medical support, or financial aid during pregnancy. Many are forced to work through advanced stages of pregnancy, risking their health. Government schemes like Janani Suraksha Yojana and PMMVY are hindered by low awareness and complex eligibility requirements that exclude illiterate or undocumented women.

3) No Health Insurance or Accident Coverage

Women in sectors like construction, mining, and home-based manufacturing face hazardous work conditions, but lack access to health insurance, safety gear, or medical assistance. Existing schemes like Ayushman Bharat or Bhamashah Swasthya Bima Yojana fail to reach many due to poor outreach and the absence of a formal worker database. This forces women to bear medical costs alone, often pushing them into debt.

4) Sexual Harassment at the Workplace

Sexual harassment is widespread but severely underreported due to the absence of grievance redressal systems in informal setups. Women working in private homes, fields, and construction sites face abuse with little to no access to justice under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013. Fear of losing their job, stigma, and lack of legal literacy prevent most from speaking out.

5) No Legal Identity as Workers

A core issue is the lack of formal recognition. Most women are not listed as “workers” in official records, especially in family-run or home-based occupations. This exclusion from labour cards and welfare boards denies them benefits such as pensions, insurance, and skill development. Barriers like illiteracy, lack of Aadhaar linkage, and digital exclusion hinder registration in schemes like the Rajasthan Shramik Card Scheme.

These challenges are not isolated—they represent a cycle of systemic invisibility and gendered exploitation. Women in the informal sector remain excluded from rights-based protections due to weak implementation, patriarchal structures, and legal loopholes. Addressing their needs requires a comprehensive approach focused on legal recognition, simplified access to welfare, rights education, and gender-sensitive reforms that place the well-being and dignity of women workers at the center of labour policy.

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK GOVERNING UNORGANIZED LABOUR IN INDIA AND RAJASTHAN

The legal framework for the protection and welfare of unorganized workers in India has evolved through a patchwork of central legislations, welfare codes, and state-specific schemes. However, despite the intent to create an inclusive welfare net, the implementation on the ground—especially in Rajasthan—remains inadequate. Women workers in the unorganized sector are often unaware of their rights, excluded from formal registration, and face multiple barriers in accessing the benefits due to bureaucratic, socio-cultural, and infrastructural limitations. This section elaborates on the central and state-level legal provisions relevant to the welfare of women workers in Rajasthan's unorganized sector.

3.1. KEY LABOUR WELFARE LAWS

1) The Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008

This was the first major legislation in India that specifically targeted the welfare of unorganized workers. The Act aimed to provide social security and welfare benefits to workers who are not covered under the Employees' Provident Fund or Employees' State Insurance. It mandated the registration of unorganized workers and the creation of a National Social Security Board to recommend suitable schemes.

However, the implementation has been disappointing due to:

Lack of awareness among workers

- Poor data collection mechanisms
- Minimal outreach at the grassroots level
- For women workers, especially in rural Rajasthan, the benefits of this Act remain largely inaccessible. Many are not even aware of the need to register, and the absence of door-to-door identification severely restricts enrollment.

2) The Code on Social Security, 2020

As part of the labour law codification effort, the Code on Social Security, 2020 consolidates nine central labour laws, including the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act. It seeks to expand the social security umbrella by introducing a universal registration system through Aadhaar and offers provisions for:

- Maternity benefits
- Disability and survivor benefits
- Gig and platform worker protections
- Provident fund and pension schemes

3) The Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996

This Act is particularly relevant for women working in the construction sector. It provides for:

- Registration of workers with Welfare Boards
- Access to housing, education for children, health care, and maternity benefits
- Provisions for accident coverage and pension

4) Minimum Wages Act, 1948

This Act ensures that workers are paid at least the statutory minimum wage for their category of work. In Rajasthan, the minimum wage is revised periodically depending on skill category and employment type. However:

- Women are often paid below minimum wages
- Piece-rate work makes enforcement difficult
- Women rarely demand or negotiate for fair wages due to fear of job loss or lack of awareness

5) Maternity Benefit Act, 1961

This Act mandates paid maternity leave, nursing breaks, and crèche facilities for women employed in establishments with more than 10 workers. The amended Act of 2017 increased the paid maternity leave period to 26 weeks. However, these benefits exclude most women in the unorganized sector, including:

- Agricultural laborers
- Home-based workers
- Domestic workers
- Informal textile and embroidery workers

6) Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013

Commonly known as the POSH Act, it mandates that every workplace with more than 10 employees should constitute an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) to address grievances related to sexual harassment. For the unorganized sector, the Act provides for the formation of Local Complaints Committees (LCCs) at the district level.

- However, implementation in Rajasthan remains weak due to:
- Lack of awareness among women workers
- Absence of LCCs in many districts
- Social stigma and fear of retaliation

Women working in private homes, construction sites, or in small informal units are especially vulnerable and often suffer in silence due to lack of access to complaint mechanisms.

3.2. RAJASTHAN STATE-LEVEL SCHEMES

1) Rajasthan Shramik Card Scheme

This scheme seeks to register unorganized workers and provide them access to welfare benefits like:

- Health insurance
- Death compensation
- Maternity assistance
- Educational support for children

Despite its intent, the registration process remains complex, requiring multiple documents such as Aadhaar, residence proof, and employment verification—which many women, particularly migrants or home-based workers, cannot provide. Outreach is limited and mostly male-centric, leading to low enrollment of women workers.

2) Mukhyamantri Shramik Suraksha Yojana

This scheme provides accidental insurance and death benefits to registered laborers. However, awareness and utilization among women workers are extremely low. Lack of digital literacy, mistrust in government processes, and dependency on male intermediaries discourage women from participating in the scheme.

3) Rajasthan Vishwakarma Kamgar Yojana

This scheme aims to promote traditional artisans and small-scale workers, many of whom are women engaged in embroidery, pottery, weaving, and leatherwork. It offers training, tool kits, and financial assistance for entrepreneurship.

Though promising, it has limited outreach and rarely reaches isolated or home-bound women workers. Also, many women artisans are not formally registered or do not identify themselves as workers or entrepreneurs, leading to self-exclusion from the scheme.

3.3. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

While the above laws and schemes reflect policy intent, implementation remains the weakest link, especially for women. The key issues include:

- Lack of awareness among beneficiaries
- Cumbersome registration procedures requiring documents and digital access
- Absence of proactive outreach by local authorities
- Corruption and middlemen charging unofficial fees for enrolment
- Inadequate gender sensitivity in scheme design and execution

As a result, the vast majority of women workers in Rajasthan's unorganized sector remain excluded from welfare protections and continue to live and work in precarious conditions with little hope of economic security or legal recourse.

4. HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE: INTERNATIONAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL OBLIGATIONS

A comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by women workers in Rajasthan's unorganized sector requires a human rights-based approach. Labour rights are not merely statutory entitlements; they are intrinsically linked to fundamental human rights. The dignity of labour, gender equality, access to social security, and protection against exploitation are essential components of international and constitutional human rights obligations. Although India has committed itself to various global conventions and constitutional mandates aimed at promoting gender justice and labour welfare, the actual implementation—especially for women in the informal economy—remains inconsistent and inadequate.

4.1. INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS

India, as a member of the international community and a founding member of the United Nations and the International Labour Organization (ILO), has ratified and endorsed several international human rights instruments. These treaties and conventions emphasize the rights of workers, gender equality, and social security, forming a moral and legal foundation for improving the conditions of women in the unorganized sector.

1) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948

The UDHR is the cornerstone of international human rights law. While not legally binding, it sets the global standard for human dignity and equality. Several of its provisions are directly relevant to women in informal work:

- **Article 23:** Guarantees the right to just and favorable conditions of work, equal pay for equal work, and protection against unemployment.
- **Article 25:** Asserts the right to an adequate standard of living, including health care and necessary social services.

The exclusion of women in Rajasthan's informal sector from social protection mechanisms is a direct deviation from these universal rights.

2) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979

Often described as an international bill of rights for women, CEDAW mandates that State parties eliminate discrimination in all areas, including employment. Key provisions include:

- **Article 11:** Obliges States to ensure women the same rights to employment, choice of profession, equal remuneration, and protection of health and safety in working conditions.
- **Article 14:** Focuses on rural women and their equal access to employment, healthcare, and social protection.

India ratified CEDAW in 1993 but with certain reservations. Despite this, it has a legal and ethical duty to ensure these rights reach all women, including those in the informal sector. However, in practice, women workers in Rajasthan continue to face systemic gender-based exclusion and exploitation.

3) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966

The ICESCR, ratified by India in 1979, recognizes the right to work (Article 6), just and favorable conditions of work (Article 7), and the right to social security (Article 9). It also emphasizes:

- Protection of motherhood (Article 10)
- Equal opportunity to be promoted and participate in public life (Article 7(c))

Women in the unorganized sector, particularly in Rajasthan, are often denied these rights. The lack of maternity benefits, absence of workplace safety, and exclusion from social insurance violates India's obligations under this Covenant.

4) ILO Conventions Relevant to Women Workers

India has ratified several International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, and although some key ones remain unratified, their principles influence national policy.

- **Convention No. 100 on Equal Remuneration (1951):** Mandates equal pay for work of equal value, regardless of gender.
- **Convention No. 183 on Maternity Protection (2000):** Although not ratified by India, it sets global standards on maternity leave, health protection, and employment security.

Women in Rajasthan's informal economy routinely receive lower wages than men for similar work and are excluded from maternity benefits, showcasing a clear misalignment with international labour norms.

4.2. CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

The Indian Constitution lays a strong foundation for promoting equality, human dignity, and social justice. It enshrines various rights and principles that mandate the State to work toward the upliftment of marginalized sections, including women in the informal economy.

Article 14: Equality before the Law

This article guarantees that every person is equal before the law and entitled to equal protection of the laws. Discrimination against women workers—through unequal pay, denial of labour rights, and exclusion from welfare schemes—violates the spirit of this article. The structural barriers faced by unorganized women workers reflect a failure of the State to provide substantive equality.

Article 15(3): Special Provisions for Women

While Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, clause (3) explicitly allows the State to make special provisions for women and children. This empowers the government to enact welfare schemes and protective laws specifically for women workers. However, the lack of targeted implementation in Rajasthan's unorganized sector reflects the underutilization of this constitutional safeguard.

Article 21: Right to Life and Personal Liberty

The Supreme Court has interpreted Article 21 to include the right to live with dignity, right to livelihood, right to health, and right to a safe working environment. Denial of these basic rights to women in informal labour—due to unsafe work conditions, sexual harassment, lack of maternity care, and poverty wages—amounts to a violation of Article 21.

Article 23: Prohibition of Forced Labour

This article prohibits begar (bonded labour) and all forms of forced labour. Many women in Rajasthan's informal economy—especially Dalit and tribal women—work under exploitative conditions that border on coercion, particularly in the construction and domestic work sectors. Their lack of legal protection, coupled with socio-economic compulsion, results in de facto forced labour.

Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)

Though non-justiciable, the Directive Principles lay out the moral and policy objectives of the Indian State. Several provisions have direct implications for the protection and empowerment of women in informal labour.

Article 39:

- (a) Adequate means of livelihood for both men and women
- (d) Equal pay for equal work
- (e) Protection of health and strength of workers, especially women

Article 42: Provides for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.

Article 43: Urges the State to secure a living wage and decent standard of life for all workers, with opportunities for social and cultural development.

Despite being visionary, these principles are not fully realized in practice. In Rajasthan, the gap between constitutional ideals and ground realities is stark. The informal female workforce continues to be deprived of decent work conditions, maternity protection, equal pay, and workplace safety, thereby undermining the Directive Principles' intent.

India's international obligations and constitutional mandates together establish a strong normative framework for protecting the rights of women in the unorganized sector. However, the disconnect between law and practice in Rajasthan highlights a serious gap in implementation. Bridging this gap requires not only legislative reform and bureaucratic efficiency but also political will, gender-sensitive policies, rights-based awareness, and community empowerment. Recognizing informal women workers as rights-bearing citizens is not just a policy imperative—it is a constitutional and international duty.

5. CASE STUDIES AND FIELD FINDINGS (HYPOTHETICAL DATA-BASED)

5.1. CASE STUDY 1: WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION WORK

Rita Devi, a 30-year-old from Bhilwara, works at construction sites without any written contract. She earns ₹250 per day and receives no maternity benefit, despite working 8-10 hours daily. She is unaware of the BOCW Act, which entitles her to registration and benefits.

5.2. CASE STUDY 2: HOME-BASED ARTISANS

Meena from Barmer embroiders garments for a contractor, earning ₹50 per piece. She works from home, which excludes her from official records, thus disqualifying her from welfare schemes.

5.3. COMMON FINDINGS

- 72% of surveyed women had never heard of any labour law.
- Less than 10% were registered under any social security board.
- Majority suffered wage theft, lack of toilet facilities, and health risks.

6. ANALYSIS OF LABOUR WELFARE LAWS: GAPS AND IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

6.1. NON-RECOGNITION OF WORKERS

Most women in the unorganized sector are not recognized as "workers" under law, making them ineligible for welfare schemes.

6.2. FRAGMENTATION OF SCHEMES

Welfare benefits are spread across multiple, poorly coordinated schemes, with complex paperwork and digital requirements that marginal women workers often cannot meet.

6.3. INADEQUATE ENFORCEMENT

Even where laws exist, labour inspectors seldom visit informal worksites. There is minimal prosecution for violation of labour rights.

6.4. LACK OF GENDER-SPECIFIC FOCUS

Most welfare laws do not address specific vulnerabilities of women such as sexual harassment, child care, and maternity leave in the informal sector.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS: TOWARDS RIGHTS-BASED LABOUR REFORM

7.1. RECOGNITION AND REGISTRATION

- Universal and simplified registration of all women workers under a centralized database.
- Community-based identification and digital inclusion through self-help groups (SHGs).

7.2. IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGAL ENTITLEMENTS

- Stronger monitoring of the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Board.
- Penalties for employers or contractors violating the Building and Other Construction Workers Act.

7.3. RIGHTS AWARENESS

- Grassroots-level legal literacy campaigns.
- Use of local language booklets, radio, and community theatre to educate women about their rights.

7.4. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- All labour laws should undergo gender-sensitive human rights audits.

- Institutionalize grievance redressal mechanisms for unorganized women workers at the block and panchayat level.

7.5. ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND NGOS

NGOs can help bridge the gap by:

- Mobilizing women workers
- Helping with documentation and registration
- Conducting legal aid and counselling camps

8. CONCLUSION

The condition of women workers in Rajasthan's unorganized sector reflects a paradox of visibility and invisibility. While these women are omnipresent in agriculture, construction, textiles, domestic services, and artisanal work—forming the backbone of the rural and urban informal economy—they remain legally invisible, economically marginalized, and socially vulnerable. Their labour is underpaid, undocumented, and unprotected, leading to systemic exploitation that is both normalized and institutionally overlooked.

This invisibility is not accidental; it is a result of historical neglect, patriarchal bias, weak implementation of laws, and inadequate outreach. Most women in this sector are unaware of their legal entitlements, and even when laws exist, the enforcement mechanisms remain ineffective or inaccessible. Schemes like the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act and the BOCW Welfare Board hold transformative potential but fail in execution due to bureaucratic hurdles, contractor non-compliance, and gender-neutral frameworks that ignore women's distinct realities.

Furthermore, international instruments like CEDAW and ICESCR, and constitutional mandates such as Articles 14, 15(3), 21, and 42, obligate India to protect and empower women workers. However, the continued lack of maternity benefits, legal protection against workplace harassment, and exclusion from social security nets constitute ongoing human rights violations.

Through case studies, hypothetical field data, and legal analysis, this article has highlighted that reform must go beyond policy design. It must involve:

- Legal recognition of all women workers regardless of sector or mode of employment,
- Universal registration with simplified processes,
- Strong grassroots legal literacy, and
- Gender-sensitive enforcement of rights.

Moreover, civil society, self-help groups, and NGOs must play a proactive role in bridging the gap between the law and its beneficiaries. Labour justice cannot be the sole responsibility of the State—it is a collective moral duty.

Ultimately, the invisibility of women workers in Rajasthan's unorganized sector is both a legal and moral crisis. While their labour sustains homes and powers local economies, they remain excluded from the basic framework of rights, welfare, and dignity. Bridging this divide requires more than legislative reform—it calls for a paradigm shift in how we perceive, value, and protect informal women labour.

A just, equitable, and inclusive Rajasthan is not a distant ideal—it is an achievable goal, but only when the voices, rights, and contributions of its women workers are recognized, respected, and upheld in law, policy, and practice.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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