

The study “Rapid Situational Assessment of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRW) in the Cotton Growing Communities in Telangana” was supported by a grant from ILO, New Delhi. The study was conducted during June to December 2021.



Telangana State is third largest cotton producer in the country. Cotton crop accounts for around 36 percent of net cropped area in the state and is majorly a rain fed crop. State ranks in medium range in terms of productivity (460kg/hectare) vis-à-vis other major cotton growing states. Around 33.7 percent or one third of total agricultural holdings cultivated cotton in the state and 99 percent cotton area is under BT hybrid. Half of the holdings of cotton are less than 2.5 acres. Cotton seed is produced predominantly in Jogulamba Gadwal district.

The study has assessed the status of the four pillars of FPRW- the freedom of association and effective recognition of right to collective bargaining; elimination of forced labour; abolition of child labour and elimination of labour market discrimination with respect to producers/farmers and workers in cotton sector in the four districts of Adilabad, Warangal, Jogulamba Gadwal and Nalgonda. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative tools such as questionnaire, and group discussions and interviews to collect hard data as well as to assess farmer and labour vulnerabilities.

FPRW are key to the achievement of SDGs 8 on Economic Growth and Decent Work for All and also in achieving SDGs 1, 4, 5, 10 and 16. Alliance 8.7 launched in 2016 aims at reduction of forced and child labour. The Global Pay Coalition was launched in 2017 to promote SDG target 8.5 on equal pay for work of equal value. ILO's Governance and Tripartism Department too emphasized some key issues like access to education, investment in social protection for vulnerable population, decent work for youth, promotion of justice and rule of law (ILO, 2016).

The field data revealed gender gaps in the indicators such as literacy, wage differentials, empowerment aspects like negotiations with employers or membership in

unions, and coverage under social security schemes. The study made a few policy recommendations flowing from the findings on the status of the four pillars of the FPRW and the vulnerabilities to non-compliance of the FPRW. FPRW being cross-cutting calls for a broader alliance across the departments of Labour, Agriculture, Education, Health and Social Welfare. These departments need to converge to emphasise how adherence to FPRW can build a more symbiotic relationship among them and improve the working conditions in cotton farming as well as in achieving some of the SDG indicators.