

CHAPTER III

EMPLOYMENT INCOME AND POVERTY

**EMPLOYMENT, INCOME
AND POVERTY**

Introduction

Employment, income and poverty still remain the biggest issues of the Indian economy in general and to the States in particular. These concepts and issues are intertwined, complex and very difficult to define. In many developing countries, poverty is associated with certain characteristics including poor economic policies, low education, unstable employment, low job status, low and unstable income, poor housing conditions, bad health large families, absence of savings, constant struggle for survival and absence of material possessions. However, economic growth is assumed to reduce the intensity of poverty and to provide relief to the poor, via creation of jobs, improvement of the revenue and creation of infrastructure to enable the poor to have easy access to information and opportunities. However, unless proper policies are designed, these would not happen immediately.

The purpose of this chapter is to know the present status of a district formed in the year 1974 by taking out some regions from Ramanathapuram, Thanjavur and Tirchirappalli districts, viz., Pudukkottai. It is a backward district in terms of education, industrial output, quality of employment and size of income per household. Hence, many entrepreneurship programmes were started; new entrepreneurs were trained by Industrial Technical Consultancy Organization of Tamil Nadu (ITCOI), District Industries Centre (DIC), Tamil Nadu Industrial Investment Corporation (TIIC), Small Industries Development Corporation (SIDCO) and funds were extended by many Industrial Promotional Agencies (IPAs) and industrial workshops and sheds were constructed and handed over to entrepreneurs at subsidized rates. Capital subsidy and interest subsidy, tax concession, and other required facilities were provided by the Central and State Governments. Some Jobs with low salaries were made available by the industrial units to the local unskilled labourers. The basic industrial structure of the District improved due to agro based industries and also due to heavy and light, capital

intensive fabrication units and Chemical industries. Recently near Thirumayam, a unit of Bharath Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) has been established. With all these efforts, the economic and social profile of the people of the district have slightly improved. However, there are also some regional imbalances and lapses.

First, if Pudukkottai district is closely looked into, three regions can be easily identified by a practicing researcher. Towards South of Pudukkottai district on the way to Karaikudi, slightly and traditionally prosperous houses and families were found. Most of them belong to higher caste, with business background and are economically rich. The other part was found around Aranthangi and Karmbakudi, which were near Thanjavur district with better irrigation facilities, thanks to Cauvery Mettur Project and high yielding crops. Here, a larger Muslim population with the members migrating to other countries and contributing higher income to the households was found. The remaining part was the most backward part of the district, which was dominated by petty traders and small farmers, dry cultivation and scheduled caste population with very low literacy levels and income levels. These three regions still continue to be different, and hence this condition has to be kept in mind while discussing the Pudukkottai economy and the people.

The details regarding employment, income and poverty of Pudukkottai is presented in this chapter. These details include net domestic product, work participation rate, land utilization pattern, operational landholding size of different social groups, agricultural landholdings, irrigation intensity, cropping intensity, livestock, employment patterns, poverty, public distribution system (PDS) and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

Employment

Employment here refers to the population engaged in productive activity. It determines the quantity and quality of output produced by a set of people in a certain area. Hence, it is a significant aspect and needs to be discussed in this report. But, employment is a very complicated concept. There are at least three aspects of employment; (i) production aspect, (ii) income aspect, and (iii) recognition aspect. Wage is determined by various factors. The worker producing more services may get lower wages, while the people with little contribution may get higher wages, depending upon their bargaining power and not necessarily by productivity.

So, one should be intelligent enough to first, accept the fact that just increase in workforce participation rate alone would not result in the reduction of incidence of poverty. What is seen today is the expansion of growthless jobs, with low wage rate per hour. Jobs in private sector are known for their exploitative characters. It is always seen that returns to capitalists far outweigh those of the working class. Availability of a larger labour force depresses wage rates. Lower labour force availability could also lower wages as capital intensive technology is opted. When workers plan to supply more labourers, automatically the wage rates will be reduced. Under such circumstances, the government elected by the people needs to focus on creating an environment for providing remunerative job opportunities to the people.

Size of the Workforce and Work Participation Rate

Table 3.1 shows the size of the workforce in Pudukkottai district in the years 2001 and 2011. In the decade 2001 to 2011, the population growth rate was maximum in Thirumayam block (23.53 per cent) and minimum in Ponnamaravathi block (4.78 per cent). The reasons for the block-wise difference in the growth rates may be different in different blocks. Similarly, in different categories of worker population also, there are wide inter-block differences. For instance, in terms of total workers, Aranthangi block recorded 17.71 per cent decline, while Viralimalai block has experienced the maximum of 26.56 per cent growth. There are differences between Aranthangi and Viralimalai blocks, which are different even historically. In the last 10 years (between 2001 and 2011), no new developmental programmes have been implemented in Viralimalai block. A very large growth was reported in marginal worker population in Viralimalai block (56 per cent), whereas a very large growth was seen in the non-working population in Aranthangi block (51.39) per cent.

Coming to the inter-block male-female variations in the district, the total female workers rate was more in Karambakkudi, followed by Viralimalai with a rate of 43.68 and 42.06 respectively. Pudukkottai and Manalmelkudi blocks registered low total female work participation rate. On the contrary, in the two blocks of Pudukkottai and Manamalekudi, the total male work participation rate was higher compared to other blocks in the district. Karambakkudi and Viralimalai blocks had high female work participation rate, but both the blocks registered low level of total male work participation rate. Likewise, Manamalekudi and Pudukkottai blocks had low level of female main workers and high level of main workers compared to other blocks in the district.

Table 3.1 Total Workers and Non-Workers

SIN oo	Block /District	Total Workers		Main Workers		Marginal Workers		Non-Workers		Total Population	
		2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
1	Annavasal	62,743	71,143	50,833	59,863	11,900	11,280	67,431	73,848	2,01,448	2,31,074
2	Arimalam	36,461	40,173	21,501	30,877	14,960	9,696	42,031	45,939	1,30,164	1,44,991
3	Kunrandarkovil	44,025	50,205	43,387	40,457	6,38	9,748	48,499	47,062	78,492	86,112
4	Ponnamaravathi	44,812	52,501	35,635	38,805	9,177	13,696	52,216	55,978	79,040	82,816
5	Pudukkottai	76,031	95,246	65,096	80,364	10,935	14,882	1,25,417	1,35,828	76,930	86,720
6	Thirumayam	35,764	37,830	24,799	30,838	10,965	6,992	43,276	44,986	1,13,516	1,40,227
7	Viralimalai	57,534	72,814	50,120	61,248	7,414	11,566	55,982	67,413	97,028	1,08,479
8	Aranthangi	80,766	83,381	84,166	70,568	17,160	12,813	68,704	1,04,009	1,56,918	1,70,419
9	Avudayarkovil	38,997	41,838	29,267	36,769	9,730	5,069	41,283	43,736	92,524	97,267
10	Gandarvakkottai	39,618	43,832	29,471	41,662	10,147	2,170	37,312	42,888	1,70,030	1,87,390
11	Karambakkudi	51,330	55,333	34,821	47,524	16,509	7,809	49,575	55,271	80,280	85,574
12	Manamelkudi	34,541	37,339	24,950	30,150	9,591	7,189	47,785	49,333	82,326	86,672
13	Thiruvarankulam	75,677	80,058	60,706	71,523	14,971	8,535	81,241	90,361	1,00,905	1,10,604
	District	6,78,289	7,61,693	5,54,752	6,40,648	1,44,097	1,21,445	7,60,752	8,56,652	14,59,601	16,18,345

Source: Census 2001 and 2011

Karambakkudi and Gandharvakkottai blocks had recorded high female main workers and low level of male main workers among the blocks. The same issue can be witnessed in the marginal workers also. Kunrandarkoil and Manamelkudi blocks had high female marginal workers and low level of male marginal workers compared to the other blocks in the district. Likewise, the two blocks Thirumayam and Arimalam had low level of female marginal workers and high level of male marginal workers. The total work participation rate was higher in Viralimalai block, followed by Gandharvakkottai. It was low in Pudukkottai and Aranthangi blocks. The female and male work participation rates were very low in Pudukkottai block compared to other blocks. These variations across the blocks may be explained by regional factors, occupational structure of the villages, cultural background of the people and so on. Thanks to transport and communication networks, nowadays, the workers find it easier to move from one place to the other (even

to far off cities and countries, particularly from Ponnamaravathi and Annavasal). Hence, the wage rates for uniform work have been equalized and the people have better access to employment opportunities. Under such circumstances, if the work force participation rates differ widely across the blocks or between male and female, it might be due to personal or cultural factors (not economic factors).

Case Study: Work Participation

Work participation is multidimensional. It influences and gets influenced by many aspects. The size of workers participating in work has no definite relationship with the level of development or standard of living of the workers. Work participation is influenced by the employment opportunities, wage rates, gender balances and many social cultural variables. Work participation influences the productivity and income levels and growth and development patterns. So, it is important to study the ground reality of work participation.

According to the Census 2011, Viralimalai block stands first in terms of workers participating in work in Pudukkottai district. So, Kanakkonpatti village of Kalamavur panchayat, Viralimalai block was chosen for making this case study. Kanakkonpatti hamlet is a dry area and consists of 35 households. As in a rural setting, the predominant occupation is agriculture. Other than this, the people here worked in the nearby industry, construction and lately MGNREGA. The workers experience different kinds of problems in different occupations. For instance, in a dry area, the monsoon plays a vital role. Hence, the availability of jobs and work participation depend on the climatic factors. For the past few years, jobs in agriculture had declined due to monsoon failure. Since, rainfed agriculture has not been able to provide sufficient jobs to the villagers, the people had to search jobs elsewhere for their survival. The fabrication units, fortunately located in the nearby district, namely, Tiruchirappalli, extended some opportunities for the village workers. This is why, inspite of unfavourable conditions explained above, the work participation has been higher. Another reason for higher work participation is that nearly, 80 per cent of women here were engaged in various work that are available to them. The young women worked in the nearby bottle manufacturing company and in shopping malls. The women above 35 years were engaged in work like agriculture, construction and MGNREGA.

Workers in a manufacturing company found the terms and conditions to be more exploitative. The workers found it difficult to get leave even for a day; ofcourse, they can take leave as loss of pay. So, basic security measures are absent in these jobs. Their working hours were 10-12 hours per day, whereas, the wages were Rs. 250-300 for men and Rs.100-150 for women. Only a couple of youths, with Diplomas were able to find employment at better wage rates and some security measures.

On the whole, MGNREGA, manufacturing units located in Tiruchirappalli district and some agricultural activities have all generated employment in this remote village. Agriculture here should be revived and the wage rates need to be revised, so that people get the benefit of development. Also, the exploitative terms and conditions against the workers in manufacturing units affect the living conditions of the people, which should also be looked into.

Work Participation Rate

According to the Classical Theory of Employment, the economy is always fully employed with certain frictional aspects, which may cause a small percentage of the population to be unemployed. But, in a country like India, unemployment has been eternal and pervasive. In this section, employment has been discussed in terms of the Workforce Participation Rate (WPR). WPR is a measure of the active portion of an economy's labour force. It refers to the number of people who are either employed or actively looking for work. The portion of the population who are not looking for employment are not taken into account. The WPR is an important tool to analyse the employment and unemployment situation in an economy.

Table 3.2 Work Participation Rate

Rural/Urban	2001	2011
Rural		
Male	58.6	59.5
Female	40.1	40.4
Persons	49.3	49.9
Urban		
Male	52.7	55.1
Female	12.9	16.1
Persons	32.7	35.5
Total		
Male	57.6	58.7
Female	35.5	35.6
Persons	46.5	47.1
Source: Census 2001 and 2011		

Table 3.2 gives details of the percentage of work participation rates of Pudukkottai district for the year 2001 and 2011. The relationship between economic growth rate and work participation rate is not strictly linear or unidirectional. A marginal

increase is noticed in the work participation rates between 2001 and 2011. In both the years, the percentage of work participation rates of both male and female are higher in rural than urban areas. The male work participation rate is higher than female work participation rate in both the years. The work participation rate gap between male and female is much higher in urban than rural areas, but the rate of increase in work participation rate of female in urban areas is greater than rural areas. This increase may be due to rural-urban migration.

Box 3.1—Child Labour Decline in District

The Government of Tamil Nadu has taken several initiatives to weed out child labour over the past decade, such as the Child Labour Monitoring Cell (1997), 15 Point Programme (2002), State Action Plan for Eradication of Child Labour (2003), State Child Labour Rehabilitation Cum Welfare Society (2003), Action Plan to Eradicate Child Labour in Domestic and Hospitality Sector (2007), District Level Task Force in all districts headed by the respective Collectors, regular inspections, various awareness programmes (like Anti Child Labour Day Messages), National Child Labour Projects (NCLP), Special Schools for out of school children, stipend, health checkup and free School Kit for rehabilitated children, Awards for best performing districts, enhancement of cash benefits to NCLP Children.

The NCLP implemented in the district has created several infrastructural facilities in the district like special schools, which are taken care by NGOs. Many children who worked in gem-cutting and quarry industries, and cattle tending have been admitted in such schools. The gem cutting industries, which used to employ child labour have been closed down in the district during the past decade due to strict enforcement of labour laws. All these initiatives have provided the desired results and as per the Labour Department of the district, there was no child labour in the district in any of the blocks, which surely is very heartening to observe. In this regard it is important to bring to notice, a survey by V.V.Giri National Labour Institute (2001) regarding the performance of NCLP, which graded the district as “Good”.

However, some issues of child labour are reported from time to time, which are taken care of through necessary measures by the district administration. To totally eradicate the symptoms of child labour, cent per cent enrolment in schools at all levels needs to be ensured and awareness in this regard needs to be spread among the parents and elders.

Sectoral Composition of Workers and Output

Table 3.3 Compositions of Workers in Major Sectors

Sl. No	Blocks (Including Taluk Area)/District	Total workers		Cultivators		Agri. Labourers		H.H.Industries		Others	
		2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
Block											
1	Annavasal	62743	71143	19435	17709	12606	29937	11900	1873	18792	21624
2	Arimalam	36461	40173	8874	13103	5166	15886	498	817	14980	10367
3	Kunrandarkovil	44025	50205	18509	15253	9254	22618	164	1008	16098	8609
4	Ponnamaravathi	44812	52501	16299	15424	8307	22366	805	1185	19301	13526
5	Pudukkottai	76031	95246	14781	12336	7121	19432	516	2321	53613	61157
6	Thirumayam	35764	37830	9943	11046	4913	14222	721	599	20187	11963
7	Viralimalai	57534	72814	24246	16985	16982	33628	7414	1146	15935	21055
8	Aranthangi	80766	83381	21868	22808	18000	35894	792	1508	40106	23171
9	Avudayarkovil	38997	41838	17991	23454	5098	9560	262	372	15646	8452
10	Gandarvakkottai	39618	43832	13600	10994	10381	26708	490	506	15147	5624
11	Karambakkudi	51330	55333	16937	15578	10850	29244	870	982	22673	9529
12	Manamelkudi	34541	37339	7081	10778	5501	10029	451	439	21508	16093
13	Thiruvarankulam	75677	80058	30187	23802	16292	35625	1048	1128	28150	19503
	District	678289	761693	219751	209270	130471	305149	25931	13884	302136	230673

Source: Department of Economics and Statistics, Pudukkottai

The total worker population has increased in the district as well as in all the blocks. The total workers have been classified into cultivators, agricultural labourer, household workers and others. In the cultivators' category, five blocks show an increase over the period 2001 to 2011, while 8 blocks record a decline. The maximum increase can be traced to Maanamelkudi block with 52.22 per cent followed by Arimalam with 47.66 per cent. Conversely, Viralimalai shows a maximum decline of 29.95 per cent followed by Thiruvarankulam with 21.15 per cent. This is in line with the physical features of the district, i.e., agrarian blocks have recorded an increase in the percentage of cultivators, whereas relatively industrial oriented or dry blocks have recorded with a decline in the percentage of cultivators.

In the case of agricultural labourers, all the 13 blocks record an increase in 2011 over 2001. Arimalam block tops the chart with an increase of 207.51 per cent followed by Thiruvarankulam with 189.48 per cent. The lowest increase can be found in Manamelkudi with 82.31 per cent followed by Avudaiyarkovil with 87.52 per cent. In the

household industries category eight blocks show an increase in 2011 over 2001, and five blocks show a decline during the same period. Kundrandarkovil recorded the highest increase with 514.63 per cent followed by Pudukkottai 349.81 per cent. Viralimalai and Annavasal recorded the highest decline with 84.54 per cent and 84.26 per cent respectively.

In the other categories, except Annavasal, Pudukkottai and Viralimalai all other blocks show a decrease in 2011 compared to 2001. The highest is Pudukkottai with 140.71 per cent followed by Aranthangi with 32.13 per cent, which may be due to higher and faster urbanization compared to the other blocks. In the overall comparison of the blocks, Viralimalai and Annavasal record a decline in 2 categories of workers, viz., cultivators and household industries. The same can be observed for the district as a whole, i.e., there is a decline in the percentage of cultivators and household industrial workers.

The sector-wise Gross District Domestic Product (GDDP) for Pudukkottai district provides a glimpse of the contribution by each sector to the output. The primary sector declined in actual numbers during 2007-08 and 2008-09, then it increased continuously. The other two sectors, viz., secondary and tertiary increased gradually all the years. In the year 2008-09, the secondary sector increase was very marginal. The GDDP of primary sector was Rs.1,10,717 lakhs. The share of primary sector (includes agriculture and allied activities and mining) to the GDDP was 16.24 per cent in 2011-12. The secondary sector, which includes manufacturing, mining, construction, etc., with a GDDP of Rs.1,61,601 lakhs contributed 23.71 per cent to the GDDP in the year 2011-12. The contribution of the tertiary sector or service sector was 60.05. Comparing the three sectors, the tertiary sector contributes more than 60 per cent to the GDDP of the district, which shows the transformation from an agricultural base to a service sector driven economy. The contribution of the agriculture sector to the GDDP is the lowest compared to the other two sectors. This phenomenon is not unique to Pudukkottai district, the State and National scenarios reflect the same picture.

In the Primary sector, agriculture forms the predominant part, which to a larger extent is influenced by natural factors, and goes uncontrolled, by manmade factors. Science or technology could in no way control or regulate the performance of the agricultural sector and hence the lower growth rate in terms of supply of agricultural output. In contrast, the demand for agricultural output continues to go up steadily with

the increase in population and income levels (Negative effect of income on demand for agricultural output would start operating only after reaching a substantially higher per capita income, which does not seem to have happened in Pudukkottai district). In this situation of uncertain and highly fluctuating supply of agricultural output on one hand and steadily increasing demand on the other hand, the Government intervention in the foodgrain market through Public Distribution System (PDS) is timely. Thus, the existing situation in Pudukkottai district undoubtedly warrants Government intervention.

Registration and Placement

The Employment Exchanges in various districts of the State are operated by the Department of Employment and Training. The major objectives of the Employment Exchanges are, registration of the job-seekers, nomination against notified vacancies, providing vocational guidance to students and unemployed, periodical collection, compilation and preparation of statements on employment, unemployment, etc. In this respect the number of job-seekers registered over the years and their placement have been provided in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Registration and Placement

Sl. No	Year	Registration	Placement
1	2007	10,427	257
2	2008	12,225	354
3	2009	12,427	346
4	2010	14,245	506
5	2011	13,656	302
6	2012	30,647	637
7	2013	26,049	518

Source: Employment Office, Pudukkottai

Table 3.4 shows the number of people registered with the District Employment Office and the number of people placed during the period 2007 to 2013. It can be seen

that the number of people getting placed is low when compared to the number of people registering every year. The backlog would keep on increasing year by year. This scenario is not only in Pudukkottai district, but throughout India. The employment growth rate in the organized sector itself is on the decline and most of the Government Jobs are provided on the basis of competitive exams. So, not much can be done by the employment exchanges.

Box 3.2 MGNREGA - Employment and Income

A majority of the poor in rural areas mainly depend on the wages earned through unskilled, casual and manual labour. Inadequate labour demand or unpredictable crisis adversely have an impact their employment opportunities. Moreover, the unorganized sector that provides employment to the unskilled rural poor, is not able to provide sufficient employment or remuneration to all. In this regard the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is an attempt to provide job for the rural illiterate and aged persons with some wage income. The programme is reported to have made some impact specifically on the earning levels of the poor old women. In terms of households provided with employment under MGNREGA in the year 2013-14 (see Appendix Table 3.1), Kunrandarkovil block tops the chart with provision of jobs to 89 per cent households under MGNREGA. Eight blocks perform better than the district level of 58 per cent. Three blocks, viz., Thirumayam, Manmelkudi and Thiruvarankulam perform below the 50 per cent level. None of the blocks provides job at 90 per cent level. The most important impact of the MGNREGA has been on rural wages, which has seen the daylight in the past six to seven years. Indeed, the rural wages have increased tremendously in the past six to seven years since the advent of MGNREGA. The increase has not only been in nominal terms, but also in real terms, which is a heartening fact in terms benefits trickling down to the poor rural masses. The wage increase for female labourers is quite remarkable and the women are able to bargain for higher wages, thanks to MGNREGA. There is a complaint about this programme from the farmer's side that they do not get sufficient workers for agricultural operations. The MGNREGA needs to be strengthened in the district firstly targeting poor performing blocks with regard to provision of jobs.

Income

Per Capita Income

Table 3.5 Per Capita Income at Constant (2004-2005) Prices

(In Rupees)

Year	District	State
2004-05	24,973	33,998
2005-06	28,597	38,435
2006-07	31,154	43,941
2007-08	32,623	46,293
2008-09	33,644	48,473
2009-10	36,937	53,359
2010-11	40,341	59,967
2011-12	43,890	63,996
Average Annual Growth Rate (%)*	8.44	9.52

Source: Department of Economics and Statistics, Tamil Nadu
* Computed

The data available in Table 3.5 show the progress of Pudukkottai economy with reasonably higher (higher than inflation rates) per capita income growth rates between 2004-05 and 2011-12. The per capita income of Pudukkottai district was Rs.24,973 in 2004-05, which increased to Rs.43,890 in 2011-12. During 2011-12, it has increased at the rate of 8.79 per cent compared to 2010-11. On comparison, the district per capita income was lower than the State during 2011-12. These figures seem to be truly representative of the economic condition of the district. It is obvious that this district lags behind many districts in Tamil Nadu in economic performance. It is indicative of the existing backwardness of this district in both agriculture and industry.

Poverty and Inequality

Poverty and inequality need no introduction in the developing countries. Poverty is generally defined as the inability to attain a minimal standard of living. Inequality is not the same as poverty, while poverty is concerned with the absolute standard of living of a part of the society – the poor – inequality refers to the relative living standards across the whole society. The burden of poverty and inequality are spread unevenly among various regions – different countries, states, districts, blocks, etc. So, poverty at the block level has to be analysed in this district.

Table 3.6 Trends in Poverty Level

Sl. No	Blocks/District	Total No. of HHs	Total No. of BPL HHs	% of BPL families
1	Annasaval	33,599	11,356	33.80
2	Arimalam	21,433	7,799	36.39
3	Kunrandarkovil	22,580	7,191	31.85
4	Ponnamaravathi	27,104	13,859	51.13
5	Pudukkottai	55,998	26,978	48.18
6	Thirumayam	20,398	7,547	37.00
7	Viralimalai	32,018	12,487	39.00
8	Aranthangi	47,360	14,666	30.97
9	Avudayarkovil	20,926	7,533	36.00
10	Gandarvakkottai	20,072	7,828	39.00
11	Karambakkudi	24,980	9,116	36.49
12	Manamelkudi	20,228	7,687	38.00
13	Thiruvarankulam	40,983	13,573	33.12
	District	3,87,679	1,47,620	37.76

Source: DRDA, Pudukkottai (2014)

Table 3.6 shows the trend in the poverty level in terms of BPL HHs for the year 2014. The lowest poverty level can be seen in Aranthangi with 30.97 per cent of the HHs below the poverty line followed by Kundrandarkoil with 31.85 per cent. Highest poverty levels can be seen in Ponnamaravathi and Pudukkottai with 51.13 per cent and 48.18 per cent. The district level stands at 37.76 per cent which is much worse than the State and National levels. Five blocks perform worse than the district level in terms of the number of HHs below the poverty line. This shows the backwardness of the district and lack of reach of development initiatives. The poverty figure relating to Pudukkottai block which is the district headquarters appears to be high compared to the district level. The development programmes in the block need to be first intensified and second restructured to suit the needs of different sections of the block.

Public Distribution System

The Public Distribution System (PDS) has been playing an important role in attaining higher level of household food security and thereby reducing the incidence of poverty ever since it was started in 1939. The PDS was started for a different purpose but has undergone metamorphosis several times and in its present form roughly distributes about 10 to 12 per cent of the annual food grains production or it meets on 12 to 15 per cent of the individual food requirements. This is the reason why the PDS is often criticized for its failure to serve the Below Poverty Line (BPL) population due to the targeting system. But, Tamil Nadu is different from the other states of India, it has the history of following universal PDS for over three decades. Currently, the Government of Tamil Nadu provides 35 kg of rice to AAY card holders and 20 kg of rice to other card holders per month free of cost through the PDS. Other than this, the Government of Tamil Nadu also offers wheat, palm oil, coarse cereals, sugar and kerosene at subsidized prices through the PDS.

Table 3.7 Family Card Holders

Sl. No	Taluk-wise	HH Provided Family Cards
1	Pudukkottai	61,602
2	Alangudi	42,630
3	Kulathur	42,151
4	Gandarvakkottai	22,351
5	Thirumayam	40,828
6	Aranthangi	52,756
7	Avudayarkovil	23,758
8	Illuppur	52,107
9	Manamelkudi	27,379
10	Ponnamaravathi	29,084
11	Karambakkudi	26,450
	District	4,21,096

Source: District Supply Office, Pudukkottai

Table 3.7 depicts the block-wise details of households with family cards of Pudukkottai district for the year 2013-14. In terms of taluk-wise percentage share of

households with family cards, Pudukkottai taluk had the largest share of 14.63 per cent against a population share of 13.36 per cent. Similar situation could be noticed in three taluks, viz., Avudaiyarkovil, Illupur and Manamelkudi.

Land Use Pattern and Agriculture

Block-wise details on sizes of different categories of lands for the period 2007-08 to 2013-2014 (see Appendix Table 3.2) reveal that, there is no change in the area under forest, barren and uncultivable land, and permanent pastures and grazing lands in the blocks. In the remaining categories, some structural changes can be observed in Pudukkottai district. Looking at the patterns of changes, it can be concluded that more and more lands are allocated for the use of agricultural and non-agricultural purposes. This is a welcoming change. Lands classified as current waste have shrunk. Also, the area covered by trees have shrunk. These trends indicate that the lands are being used up for mobilizing more money at the cost of ecological balance. This is the obvious result of the present kind of development witnessed in larger parts of the world and Pudukkottai district could not escape from the general trend.

The analysis of cropping intensity of Pudukkottai district (see Appendix Table 3.3) reveals that the net cropped area and the gross cropped area were almost the same in the year 2007-08, i.e., cropping intensity was 1.01. In the year 2013-14, the cropping intensity marginally increased to 1.04. In eight blocks, the cropping intensity was exactly 1.0 in the year 2007-08. In the remaining five blocks, it was just above 1.0 ranging from 1.01 to 1.03. But, this cannot be considered significantly higher and it may be said that all the blocks had the same cropping intensity of 1.0. The situation does not change much in 2013-14, six blocks had cropping intensity equal to 1.0, while the remaining blocks registered an increase in the gross cropped area and net cropped area over the reference period. The maximum increase in the gross cropped area in 2013-14 compared to 2007-08 can be seen in Aranthangi block (1,408 ha.), while Viralimalai block registered the highest drop in the gross cropped area during the same period (4,812 ha.).

In terms of irrigation intensity same picture as of cropping intensity (see Appendix Table 3.4) is reflected. All the blocks had irrigation intensity of 1.0 or just above one ranging from 1.00 to 1.02 in 2007-08. Over the period 2007-08 to 2013-14, eight blocks register an increase in the gross area irrigated, while one block, viz., Kunrandarkovil registered a decline. Maximum increase has been found in

Gandharvakottai over the reference period (3,874 ha.), while Annavasal registered the maximum decline during the same period (4,779 ha.).

Conclusion

From the above chapter, it can be concluded that although work participation rates in Pudukkottai district have been growing, there are variations among the blocks. The total female workers rate is more in Karambakkudi, followed by Viralimalai with the rate of 43.68 and 42.06 respectively. Pudukkottai and Manalmelkudi blocks register low total female work participation rate. In the case of agricultural labourers, all the 13 blocks record an increase in 2011 over 2001. Arimalam block tops the chart with an increase of 207.51 per cent followed by Thirumayam with 189.48 per cent. The lowest increase can be found in Manamelkudi with 82.31 per cent followed by Avudaiyarkovil with 87.52 per cent. In the household industries category labourers, Kundrandarkovil records the highest increase with 514.63 per cent followed by Pudukkottai 349.81 per cent. Viralimalai and Annavasal record the highest decline with 84.54 per cent and 84.26 per cent respectively.

These variations across the blocks may be explained by regional factors, occupational structure of the villages, cultural background of the people and so on. Thanks to transport and communication networks, nowadays, the workers find it easier to move from one place to the other (even too far off cities and countries, particularly from Ponnamaravathi and Annavasal). Hence, the wage rates for uniform works have been equalized and the people have better access to employment opportunities. Under such circumstances, if the workforce participation rates differ widely across the blocks or between male and female, it might be due to personal or cultural factors.

Comparing the three economic sectors, the tertiary sector contributes more than 60 per cent to the GDDP of the district, which shows the transformation from an agricultural base to a service sector driven economy. The contribution of the agriculture sector to the GDDP is the lowest compared to the other two sectors. The lowest poverty level can be seen in Aranthangi with 30.97 per cent of the HHs below the poverty line followed by Kundrandarkoil with 31.85 per cent. Highest poverty levels can be seen in Ponnamaravathi and Pudukkottai with 51.13 per cent and 48.18 per cent. In such blocks, MGNREGA could be extended to building toilets, clean and green environment schemes, rebunding the lakes, ponds to generate sustained employment and consequently increase income growth among such rural poor. Continued man power development has

also to be geared up to train the growing Non - Farm work force so as to be employed in building social capital in such blocks through NGOs and Socially Interested Groups (SIGs). Family card holder data during 2013-14 shows surplus of family card holders in Pudukkottai, Aranthangi, Iluppur are increasing which should be checked. Young educated entrepreneurs must be identified and trained to tap financial sources from SIDBI, SIDCO, subsidiaries of RRBs and MFIs under the Central Government's latest MUDRA bank scheme.

