

GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY SUPPORT FOR WOMEN AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS IN UTTAR PRADESH: A STUDY BASED ON PUBLISHED DATA FOR 2024

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ABSTRACT

Women agricultural labourers make a substantial contribution to cultivation, livestock care, harvesting, post-harvest activities and rural household economies in Uttar Pradesh. However, their work is frequently insecure, poorly paid and insufficiently supported by formal institutions. This paper examines the development and policy prospects of women agricultural labourers in Uttar Pradesh using the uploaded project report as its conceptual and empirical foundation, together with published government and budget data released during 2024. The study gives particular attention to employment generation, women farmer empowerment, self-help groups, agricultural training, financial inclusion, insurance, market access, social security and rural infrastructure.

The uploaded project report is based on a survey of 1,000 women agricultural labourers from ten districts of Uttar Pradesh: Sitapur, Barabanki, Rae Bareilly, Gonda, Bahraich, Unnao, Hardoi, Sultanpur, Kheri and Ayodhya. Its findings show serious policy gaps: 54% of respondents lacked access to modern agricultural equipment, 79.6% reported gender-based restrictions on access to resources, 75.6% reported unequal wages, 54.7% lacked agricultural training, 68.4% lacked autonomy over the sale of produce or management of income, and 51.4% lacked agricultural-risk insurance. The 2024 policy environment created important opportunities through the Uttar Pradesh Budget 2024–25, the Women Farmer Empowerment Project, MGNREGA, agricultural development schemes, producer groups and rural health provisions. Nevertheless, policy effectiveness depends on implementation, inclusion of landless women labourers and direct monitoring of gender outcomes.

Keywords: women agricultural labourers, Uttar Pradesh, agricultural policy, MGNREGA, self-help groups, women farmers, rural development, 2024.

1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture remains central to rural livelihoods in Uttar Pradesh. Women contribute to planting, weeding, harvesting, livestock care, post-harvest processing and household food security. Their contribution is often performed as casual wage labour, unpaid family labour or work on leased and marginal plots. Although women's agricultural participation is economically important, it

does not automatically produce economic independence. Low wages, limited ownership of land, weak bargaining power, restricted access to machinery, inadequate social protection and limited participation in household decisions reduce the developmental benefits of their work.

The uploaded project report identifies these problems through a primary survey of 1,000 women agricultural labourers in ten districts of Uttar Pradesh. The report examines agricultural involvement, access to resources, income, labour conditions, decision-making, training, social support, government schemes, insurance and market access. This paper reorganises those findings around a narrower theme: development and policy support for women agricultural labourers.

The focus on 2024 is important because the Uttar Pradesh Budget 2024–25 introduced or strengthened provisions related to agriculture, employment, women's welfare, producer groups, rural development and social security. The 2024 Annual Report of the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), covering July 2023 to June 2024, also provides an official framework for understanding labour-force participation, employment status and sectoral employment in India and its states. The PLFS annual report was released on 23 September 2024 and includes indicators such as the labour force participation rate, worker population ratio, unemployment and sector of employment.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The paper has the following objectives:

1. To examine the major socio-economic problems of women agricultural labourers in Uttar Pradesh using the survey data contained in the uploaded report.
2. To analyse the relevance of 2024 government policies and budgetary provisions for women agricultural labourers.
3. To assess the role of employment schemes, producer groups, training, credit, insurance and market institutions in improving women's livelihoods.
4. To identify gaps between policy availability and actual access among women agricultural labourers.
5. To suggest policy measures for inclusive and gender-responsive agricultural development in Uttar Pradesh.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data sources

The study uses two categories of data:

- **Primary survey data:** The uploaded project report contains responses from 1,000 women agricultural labourers selected from ten districts of Uttar Pradesh. One hundred respondents were selected from each district through a stated stratified random sampling design. The questionnaire covered 37 questions on social, economic, agricultural, institutional and policy-related issues.

- Published 2024 data: The paper uses government and budget information published in 2024, particularly the PLFS Annual Report 2023–24 and the Uttar Pradesh Budget 2024–25. The PLFS report covers the period July 2023–June 2024 and was published in 2024.

3.2 Analytical approach

The analysis is primarily descriptive and policy-oriented. Percentages have been calculated from the frequencies reported in the uploaded project report. The paper also interprets the project report's statistical results, including tests of proportions, chi-square tests and logistic regression. Since the purpose is to examine policy prospects, the empirical findings are connected with 2024 policy provisions rather than treated as a general historical series.

The project report reports statistically significant associations between land ownership and access to modern agricultural facilities, and between access to training and family or community support. It also reports that harvesting and livestock care were associated with greater reported exposure to health and safety challenges. These findings are used to develop policy recommendations, while recognising that the survey is not a probability estimate for all women agricultural labourers in Uttar Pradesh.

4. SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE AND POLICY PROBLEMS

4.1 Unequal access to agricultural resources

The survey indicates that 620 respondents leased land, while 380 owned land. Of the total sample, 460 respondents had access to modern farming equipment and tools, while 540 did not. Thus, 54% of respondents remained dependent on traditional or manual methods.

The cross-tabulation in the project report shows a strong policy-relevant pattern:

Land status	No access to modern facilities	Access to modern facilities	Total
Lease	480	140	620
Own	60	320	380
Total	540	460	1,000

Only 22.6% of women leasing land had access to modern facilities, compared with 84.2% of women who owned land. The project report's chi-square result indicates a statistically significant association between land status and access to modern agricultural equipment.

This result demonstrates that land ownership operates as an entry point to agricultural services. Women who do not own land may be excluded from subsidised machinery, institutional credit, extension services and formal farmer registration. A women-centred agricultural policy must therefore include landless and tenant women rather than define beneficiaries only as landowners.

4.2 Gender restrictions and unequal wages

A total of 796 respondents, or 79.6%, reported gender-related restrictions on access to resources. Only 304 respondents reported no such restrictions. This indicates that formal schemes alone cannot guarantee equal access when household authority, social norms and local institutions remain male dominated.

Wage inequality was even more pronounced. Only 244 respondents, or 24.4%, reported receiving equal wages to men for the same agricultural activities, whereas 756 respondents, or 75.6%, reported unequal wages. This finding makes equal-pay enforcement a central policy requirement.

The problem is not limited to the nominal wage rate. Women's work may also be undervalued because activities such as weeding, transplanting, harvesting, animal care and post-harvest processing are treated as less skilled or as an extension of domestic work. In practice, the wage gap reduces women's income, bargaining power, savings and capacity to invest in productive assets.

4.3 Limited training and extension services

Only 453 respondents, or 45.3%, reported access to agricultural training and educational programmes; 547 respondents, or 54.7%, did not have access. Among the respondents who assessed the effectiveness of training, 381 considered it very effective, 310 somewhat effective and 309 ineffective.

The project report also found a significant association between access to training and family or community views. Among women with access to training, 256 reported supportive family and community attitudes. By contrast, among women without training access, 185 reported non-supportive attitudes. Although this association should be interpreted cautiously because of inconsistencies in the reported test statistics, the descriptive pattern supports the argument that training can improve not only technical capacity but also social recognition.

Training policy should cover:

- Improved agronomic practices.
- Safe use of pesticides and machinery.
- Livestock and dairy management.
- Food processing and value addition.
- Digital payments and financial literacy.
- Market prices and collective marketing.
- Legal rights and equal-wage provisions.
- Climate-resilient agricultural methods.

Training should be delivered close to villages, at times compatible with women's domestic responsibilities and through local-language, practical demonstrations.

4.4 Weak financial autonomy

Only 326 respondents, or 32.6%, reported autonomy over the sale of agricultural produce or management of agricultural income. A much larger 684 respondents, or 68.4%, lacked such autonomy.

This finding shows that income generation and empowerment are not identical. A woman may work in agriculture and contribute to household income while another household member controls the earnings. Consequently, programmes must move beyond participation targets and

measure whether women control bank accounts, payments, sales decisions, savings and productive investments.

Self-help groups, women's producer groups, joint bank accounts, direct benefit transfers and financial-literacy training can help strengthen financial autonomy. However, these measures must be accompanied by safeguards against male control over women's accounts and loans.

4.5 Employment insecurity and health risks

The project report records several labour-related challenges:

Reported challenge	Respondents	Share of sample
Physical health hazards	89	8.9%
Limited access to healthcare	335	33.5%
Reproductive health challenges	179	17.9%
Gender-based violence and discrimination	132	13.2%
Inadequate labour protection	265	26.5%

The reported logistic regression identifies harvesting and livestock care as activities associated with higher likelihood of health or safety challenges. Harvesting may involve sharp tools, repetitive movements, heavy loads and extreme weather exposure. Livestock care may involve animal injuries, zoonotic risks, unsafe structures and chemical exposure.

Policy therefore needs to include occupational safety in agriculture. Relevant measures include protective equipment, safe tools, drinking water, sanitation, first-aid facilities, maternity support, mobile health camps and referral services. Rural health policy should recognise agricultural work as an occupational environment rather than treating women's health problems only as household or reproductive concerns.

4.6 Limited insurance coverage

The survey found that 463 respondents had access to some form of insurance, while 514 did not; 23 were unsure. Therefore, at least 51.4% of respondents lacked known insurance coverage related to agricultural or health risks.

Insurance exclusion is especially serious for women who depend on casual agricultural employment. Crop insurance may not protect a landless wage labourer whose income is lost because of crop failure, while health insurance may be difficult to use because of distance, documentation or lack of awareness.

Policy design should distinguish among:

- Crop and weather insurance for women cultivators and tenants.
- Health insurance for agricultural workers.
- Accident insurance for workers handling machinery, livestock or chemicals.
- Maternity and disability protection.
- Life insurance for vulnerable rural households.

Awareness campaigns should explain eligibility, enrolment, claim procedures and exclusions in simple language.

4.7 Market access

Respondents identified the following market-related challenges:

Market challenge	Respondents	Share of sample
Distance and transportation	366	36.6%
Lack of market information	152	15.2%
Price fluctuations	254	25.4%
Limited market days	228	22.8%

These constraints reduce the returns from agricultural labour and small-scale production. Women may produce milk, vegetables, poultry, processed food or other goods but remain dependent on intermediaries because they lack transport, price information and collective bargaining power.

Producer groups, women's cooperatives, farmer-producer organisations, local procurement centres, storage facilities and digital market information can reduce these barriers. However, market interventions should include women who lease land or work as labourers, not only registered landowning farmers.

5. DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY INITIATIVES IN 2024

5.1 Uttar Pradesh Budget 2024–25

The Uttar Pradesh Budget 2024–25, presented on 5 February 2024, had a total size of approximately Rs 7.36 lakh crore and included new schemes worth Rs 24,863.57 crore. The budget placed emphasis on women, farmers, youth and employment generation.

For women agricultural labourers, the most relevant provisions include:

- A Women Farmer Empowerment Project targeting the formation of 200 producer groups in 2024–25.
- Three agriculture-related schemes with a combined provision of Rs 460 crore.
- A State Agricultural Development Scheme with a provision of Rs 200 crore.
- A World Bank-assisted UP Agri Scheme with a provision of Rs 200 crore.
- Automatic weather stations and automated rain gauges with a provision of Rs 60 crore.
- A proposed Rs 50 crore for the Chief Minister Khet Suraksha Yojana.
- A proposed Rs 2,400 crore to provide electricity at concessional rates for private agricultural tube wells.
- A rural-development allocation of approximately Rs 35,993 crore, including Rs 5,060 crore for MGNREGA according to published budget summaries.

These provisions create opportunities for women's collective organisation, climate information, agricultural productivity and rural employment. Nevertheless, a budget provision is an input and not an outcome. The actual effect on women labourers depends on beneficiary identification, timely release of funds, local implementation, monitoring and gender-disaggregated reporting.

5.2 MGNREGA and employment security

The 2024 Uttar Pradesh budget reporting stated that MGNREGA had generated 28.68 crore person-days and provided employment to 75,24,000 workers during the relevant financial year, with a target of 33 crore person-days for 2024–25.

MGNREGA can support women agricultural labourers by:

- Providing an alternative during the agricultural lean season.
- Creating bargaining power against extremely low farm wages.
- Generating local employment and reducing distress migration.
- Supporting water conservation, land development and rural infrastructure.
- Providing wage payments through formal banking channels.

However, MGNREGA must be designed to include women with childcare and mobility constraints. Worksites should provide drinking water, shade, sanitation and childcare facilities. Payment delays, lack of awareness, work allocation and difficulties in obtaining employment should be monitored by gender and district.

5.3 Women Farmer Empowerment Project and producer groups

The target to form 200 producer groups is a significant 2024 policy opportunity. Collective organisation can help women access inputs, machinery, training, credit and markets at lower cost. It can also improve their bargaining position with traders and reduce dependence on informal intermediaries.

For the project to benefit women agricultural labourers rather than only better-off farmers, eligibility should include:

- Women tenant cultivators.
- Landless women engaged in livestock, dairy, poultry or food processing.
- Women from scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other vulnerable groups.
- Women working in producer collectives without formal land titles.
- Female-headed households and widows.

Each producer group should have transparent membership rules, women-led management, audited accounts, market linkages and measurable indicators such as income growth, equipment access and women's control over earnings.

5.4 Agricultural development, climate and technology

The automatic weather station and automated rain gauge scheme is relevant to women labourers because climate variability affects the timing and availability of agricultural work. Weather information can help farmers and labourers plan sowing, harvesting, irrigation and livestock care. The World Bank-assisted agricultural scheme may also support infrastructure, technology and extension.

Yet technology programmes often reach landowners more easily than labourers. A gender-responsive approach should provide:

- Shared machinery banks managed by women's groups.
- Small tools designed to reduce repetitive physical work.

- Training in the local language.
- Affordable access for tenant farmers and labourers.
- Mobile advisories sent to women's own phones.
- Weather and pest alerts through self-help groups and village institutions.

5.5 Social protection and women's welfare

The 2024 Uttar Pradesh budget increased the amount under the Destitute Women Pension Scheme from Rs 500 to Rs 1,000 per month. This measure is particularly relevant to widowed, deserted and vulnerable women who may depend on agricultural labour for survival.[[affairscloud](#)][[money.rediff](#)]

However, pensions cannot substitute for decent wages and employment security. Social protection should be combined with:

- Universal or near-universal registration of vulnerable rural women.
- Portability for seasonal and migrant workers.
- Health and accident protection.
- Maternity support.
- Old-age support.
- Access to subsidised food and housing.
- Legal assistance in cases of wage theft, violence or land disputes.

5.6 PLFS 2023–24 as a 2024 evidence base

The PLFS Annual Report July 2023–June 2024 was released in 2024 and provides official estimates of labour-force participation, worker population ratios, unemployment, employment status and sectoral employment.

The report is important for policy research because it provides a standardised national and state-level framework. It also helps place the project's district survey in a wider labour-market context. However, the PLFS and the project survey should not be treated as identical datasets. The PLFS is a large official statistical survey covering the general population, while the uploaded report focuses specifically on women agricultural labourers in ten selected districts. The project's findings therefore provide detailed evidence about problems and institutional access, whereas PLFS provides broader labour-market indicators.

6. POLICY GAPS AND PROSPECTS

6.1 From women's participation to women's control

Many policies measure the number of women participating in training, employment or groups. The survey suggests that the more important issue is control: control over income, equipment, land, markets and decisions. Future programmes should therefore include outcome indicators such as:

- Share of women receiving wages directly.
- Share of women controlling their income.
- Percentage with individual or joint bank accounts.

- Access to machinery through women's groups.
- Number of women selling produce collectively.
- Women's participation in decisions about crops and expenditure.
- Reduction in reported wage discrimination.

6.2 Inclusion of tenant and landless women

The project report demonstrates that leased-land respondents had much lower access to modern facilities than landowners. Agricultural policies that require land documents may unintentionally exclude tenant women and wage labourers. Beneficiary identification should accept alternative evidence such as tenancy certificates, self-help group records, local-body verification, job cards, livestock ownership or participation in producer groups.

6.3 Convergence of schemes

Women agricultural labourers often need several services simultaneously: employment, training, credit, health protection, childcare, insurance and market access. Separate schemes may fail if women must visit multiple offices. District-level convergence platforms should bring together:

- Agriculture Department.
- Rural Development Department.
- MGNREGA administration.
- National Rural Livelihood Mission institutions.
- Panchayati Raj bodies.
- Health and Women and Child Development Departments.
- Banks and insurance providers.
- Krishi Vigyan Kendras and producer organisations.

6.4 District-level targeting

The sample covers ten districts, but the project report does not provide a complete district-wise comparison of policy access. A 2024 policy evaluation should generate district dashboards showing:

- Women's agricultural employment.
- Wage rates by task and gender.
- Training coverage.
- Equipment access.
- Insurance enrolment.
- MGNREGA participation and payment delays.
- Producer-group membership.
- Market distance and transport access.
- Health and safety incidents.

This would allow policy resources to be directed to districts and blocks with the greatest exclusion.

7. Policy Recommendations

1. Create a gender-responsive agricultural-worker register. The register should include landless workers, tenants, unpaid family workers, livestock workers and women engaged in post-harvest activities.
2. Enforce equal pay for equal work. Wage inspections, public display of local wage rates, grievance mechanisms and legal awareness should be strengthened at the village and block levels.
3. Establish women-managed machinery banks. Producer groups and self-help groups should receive subsidised access to small agricultural tools and equipment.
4. Expand training to uncovered women. Since 54.7% of surveyed respondents lacked training access, training should be conducted through village-level camps, self-help groups and mobile extension units.
5. Prioritise tenant and landless women. Eligibility for equipment, credit, insurance and producer groups should not depend exclusively on land ownership.
6. Strengthen MGNREGA as a lean-season protection programme. Local work planning should be aligned with agricultural seasons, and worksites should provide childcare, shade, water and sanitation.
7. Develop women's producer groups beyond formation targets. The success of the 200-group target should be measured through membership, turnover, collective sales, income and women's decision-making—not merely group registration.
8. Improve insurance awareness and portability. Enrolment drives should be linked with banks, self-help groups, panchayats and agricultural extension services.
9. Provide occupational health protection. Harvesting and livestock-care workers should receive protective equipment, safety training, first aid, health check-ups and referral support.
10. Improve market access. Women's collectives should receive transport support, storage facilities, price information, local procurement opportunities and digital-market training.
11. Promote women's financial autonomy. Wages, pensions and scheme benefits should be deposited into accounts controlled individually or jointly by women, with financial-literacy support.
12. Use gender-disaggregated monitoring. All 2024 agricultural and rural-development schemes should publish data on women beneficiaries, caste, land status, district, payments and outcomes.

8. CONCLUSION

The evidence shows that women agricultural labourers in Uttar Pradesh are economically indispensable but institutionally disadvantaged. The uploaded survey of 1,000 respondents records widespread barriers: unequal wages, restricted access to resources, weak access to training, limited financial autonomy, inadequate insurance and market difficulties. These are not isolated household problems; they are structural limitations that reduce the developmental impact of women's agricultural work.

The policy environment of 2024 offered several relevant opportunities. The Uttar Pradesh Budget 2024–25 proposed agricultural development schemes worth Rs 460 crore, targeted 200 women producer groups, supported MGNREGA employment, expanded rural-development provisions and increased assistance under the Destitute Women Pension Scheme. The PLFS Annual Report 2023–24, published in 2024, provides an official statistical basis for monitoring labour-market participation and employment patterns.

The central conclusion is that policy must move from symbolic recognition to measurable empowerment. Women should not be treated only as beneficiaries or agricultural labour supply. They should be recognised as workers, producers, entrepreneurs, decision-makers and rights-bearing citizens. The effectiveness of 2024 policies will ultimately depend on whether they improve women's wages, access to technology, control over income, protection from occupational risks and ability to participate in agricultural markets. A coordinated, district-level and gender-responsive approach can convert women's large contribution to agriculture into improved socio-economic security and genuine empowerment.

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