



A Brief Report of the National Webinar
On
The Impact of the Pandemic on Women in the Informal Economy
Organized by

INTERNAL COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE (ICC)
NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY (NSOU)

Event Details: 14th Aug 2021, Saturday, 11:30 A.M

Web Platform: On Zoom Meet, supported by NSOU ICT Agency

Participants: Around **130** participants logged in for the webinar.

INAUGURAL SESSION: 11:30-11:50 A.M

Welcoming all:

On behalf of the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC), Netaji Subhas Open University, Dr. Papiya Upadhyay, Assistant Professor, School of Education and Member, ICC, NSOU extended greetings to distinguished speakers, officers, Directors, faculty members, staff members, Coordinators from LSCs of NSOU and all learned participants.

Dr. Upadhyay was the moderator of the entire event. She subscribed that the title of the webinar reveals that the impacts of crises are never gender-neutral, and COVID-19 is no exception. Economic crises hit women harder. Here's why Women:

- ✚ tend to earn less.
- ✚ have fewer savings.
- ✚ are disproportionately more in the informal economy.

- ✚ have less access to social protections.
- ✚ are more likely to be burdened with unpaid care and domestic work, and therefore have to drop out of the labour force
- ✚ make up the majority of single-parent households

The webinar proceeded through the following display of sessions:

Welcome Address was diligently presented by Sri. Prosenjit Bhattacharya, Dy Director, RC, NSOU & Convenor, ICC. He welcomed one and all in the august congregation. Sri. Bhattacharya recollected the past endeavors and put into record the various initiatives drawn by ICC.

The Focus of the Webinar was deliberated by Dr. Barnana Guha Thakurta Banerjee, Associate Professor of Political Science, School of Social Sciences, NSOU & Member, ICC. The major theme of webinar The Impact brought by the Pandemic in the Informal Economy. Dr. Guha Thakurta Banerjee added that the term 'informal sector' has been used so extensively in recent years, that to define now might be considered redundant. Yet, what constitutes the informal economy is the major point which is required to be analysed at the very beginning of our discussion. Generally, the informal economy includes both the rural and the urban sections, and would encompass the categories of self-employed and wage workers in both manufacturing and service activities that are marked with flexibility of entry and exit points, reliance on indigenous sources, small scale operation, labour intensive technology, unregulated and competitive market. Thus, she subsumed her focus by including the vast majority of workers engaged in household productions, small workshops and factories to the informal labour in the formal sector and also all other forms of casual labour in rural and urban areas. However, the informal sector cannot be viewed as homogeneous and is said to include even sections of free wage labour.

PLENARY SESSION: 11:55 A.M-1:50 P.M

1st Speaker: Prof Sharmistha Banerjee, Deptt of Management Studies, University of Calcutta. Prof. Banerjee discussed upon 'Vulnerability and resilience of women during and after Covid 19 pandemic'. Her thought provoking and circumstantial deliberation was lauded with interaction.

She added that women who are poor and marginalized face an even higher risk of COVID-19 transmission and fatalities, loss of livelihood, and increased violence. Globally, 70 per cent of health workers and first responders are women, and yet, they are not at par with their male counterparts. At 28 per cent, the gender pay gap in the health sector is higher than the overall gender pay gap (16 per cent).

2nd Speaker: Dr. Nandini Dhar, Associate Professor of Literature and Gender Studies, OP Jindal Global University. Her luminous talk was on Beyond Sentimentality, Beyond Numbers: Jamlo Makdam and the Contemporary Crisis of Representation-Focusing specifically on the representation of little girls during the pandemic, especially one particular little girl, who also happened to be a migrant worker – Jamlo Makdam. Dr. Dhar’s discussion attempted to demonstrate, how both sentimentality and “objective” numerical analyses – both often used in the discussion of gender and marginalization – might be inadequate to open up discussions of the ways in which the pandemic has affected the lives of the women and young girls.

3rd Speaker: Smt Anchita Ghatak, Founder, Parichiti. A prolific speaker and a grassroots-level expert in this field chose to speak on ‘Women Domestic Workers and the Pandemic’. Smt. Ghatak’s fluent and real time experience with the domestic workers and the informal economy helped the audience connect to the essence of the webinar. She cited numerous examples and raised issues of concern among the audience. She also hinted at possible ways and few legal steps as a safeguard the domestic workers. Smt. Ghatak reflected on Government’s active role is urgently required to ensure safe livelihood of these women in the informal economy.

Interaction Session (1.55- 2.05 PM): This session was dynamically Coordinated by Smt. Ananya Mitra, Dy Registrar (Admin), NSOU & Presiding Officer, ICC. Smt. Mitra invited queries/questions from the audience. The session was enthusiastically carried out by the session coordinator. There were queries flooded on the chat box and also participants were asked to unmute and interact and or share their experiences on the theme. **One of the participants added that 13th August is the ‘Kanyashree Dibas’ declared by the Govt of West Bengal and congratulated ICC, NSOU for organizing such a webinar to mark the significance of the day.** This added an extra laurel to the National Webinar. Smt. Mitra reminded the participants to fill up the feedback link posted in the chat box.

Summing up session (5 mints): Dr. Manosanta Biswas, Assistant Professor of History, School of Social Sciences, NSOU & Member, ICC ardently highlighted the basic areas of deliberations offered by the three illustrious speakers. Dr. Biswas contoured a systematic verbal display of the facts in a very quick summary.

Vote of Thanks (5 mints): Sri. Manick Ch Das, Asst Controller of Examinations, NSOU & Member, proposed the formal thanks to one all, especially Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, whose support, encouragement and inspiration plays a significant factor in organizing such quality initiatives at NSOU. He extended thanks to all officers, faculties, officials, staff, ICC members and the learned muster to etch the formal vote of thanks.

Closing Session (2.20 PM): Dr. Upadhyay announced that upon successful submission of the feedback form, E-Certificates will be received by all active participants within 07 days of completion of the event in their registered email IDs. The participants lauded with praise and appreciation for organizing the National webinar on a very pertinent and contemporary theme. Subsequently the event was formally closed.

Report prepared by-

Dr. Papiya Upadhyay & Smt. Ananya Mitra
