

AWARENESS OF INDIAN GOVERNMENT SCHEMES AMONGST THE MIGRANT LABOURERS OF INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Before the global pandemic COVID19 devastatingly affected the whole world, no one ever understood the plight of our migrating labourers and what this so called 'unorganised' sector of our country's economy had to face not only from the monetary angle but from health and dwelling front as well. Leave aside paying rent, they were deprived of roof above their heads and even basic meals during lockdown. In India, the overall number of inter-state and intra-state migrants is not in thousands or lakhs but in crores. Trying to cover up the huge loss that our migrant labour faced, government made an effort to formulate more labour-friendly schemes for them and their families and add in the already existing list. But question arises 'Is this suffering lot actually aware of these schemes? Are their families in villages able to avail of such schemes? This is one of the main concerns that need to be brought to the attention of researchers and policymakers in our country. This study is an attempt to throw light on the fact that in spite of so many schemes floated by our government, just a small percentage of our migrant labourers and their families are actually aware of these schemes. In this study multi stage sampling was done. First was purposive sampling method followed by proportionate and random sampling methods. Data was collected through direct interview method. Analysis was done using SPSS technique. From four construction sites in Mumbai 212 number of migrant labourers were taken as sample, study was carried out and results taken thereof.

KEYWORDS: Covid-19, Migrating Labour, Government Schemes, Awareness

INTRODUCTION

Labourers in India generally migrate from remote villages to urban areas as daily wage workers in order to earn their living. In majority of cases they stay out of their villages away from their families for almost nine to ten months in a year with just one or two short breaks to visit their families. Majority of them follow 'Seasonal migration' where they go back to their villages for just a couple of months only. Others migrate to their place of work permanently. According to the World Economic Forum migrating labour comprise of approximately 139 million people which is quite a big number.

Who are Migrating Labourers?

According to International Organisation for Migration 'Labour migrants' are defined as those who move for the purpose of employment.

A "migrant worker" is defined in the International Labour Organization (ILO) instruments as a person who migrates from one country to another (or who has migrated from one country to another) with a view to being employed other than on his own account, and includes any person regularly admitted as a migrant for employment (ILO background

note: the contribution of labour migration to improved development outcomes. Mainstreaming of migration in development policy and integrating migration in the post-2015 UN Development Agenda. Geneva: International Labour Organisation; 2015 [5 August 2015] http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/migrant/documents/genericdocument/wcms_220084.pdf).

The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines migrant labour as casual and unskilled workers who move about systematically from one region to another offering their services on a temporary, usually seasonal basis (Migrant labour. London: Encyclopaedia Britannica; 2015. [5 August 2015]. <http://www.britannica.com/topic/migrant-labour>).

How different are Economic Migrants from Labour Migrants?

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) differentiates between economic Migrants from labour migrants (Usher E. Migration and labour. In: Usher E, editor. Essentials of migration management: a guide for policy makers and practitioners. Geneva: United Nations Publications; 2004).

Labour migrants move for employment purpose whereas Economic migrants form a potentially broader group that includes people entering a state to perform economic activities, such as investors or business travellers, but can be understood also in a narrower sense similar to the category of labour migrants.

Why do they Migrate?

Yearning for a better livelihood in the urban areas is the main reason why migrants leave their villages. Majority of labourers leave rural areas also because of natural calamities like drought and floods. Some also leave villages as population densities are high as compared to land. There are rural areas with lot of unresolved disputes and conflicts related to social (samajik), political (rajnaitik) and economic (aarthik) reasons that may also lead to migration. Majority of village dwellers lie below the poverty line. So, even smallest of opportunities trigger them to move towards the cities.

These may include earning more, lack of local options, availability of work elsewhere, learning new skills and having a ray of hope that their younger generations will grow ahead in urban areas and not face hardships what their parents had to.

Which Type of Industries do they Prefer?

According to the Economic Survey of India, migrant labourers are engaged in more than 48 kinds of jobs. The major industries where migrant labourers land up are construction sector (approximately 50%), textile industry (approximately 13%), brick kiln work (approximately 12%) and domestic work (approximately 25%). Other industries include mines, quarries, refineries, foundries, steel mills, cotton mills, sugar mills and transportation. The choice of industry depends solely on the individual but generally migrant labourers move in groups because they are apprehensive about the new place, new people, new language, new work and hence they are influenced by contractors and other village folk.

Migrant Labourers Come from which All States?

For decades, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have been known for rural migration but now villagers of Odisha, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Assam and West Bengal have also started venturing out for newer opportunities in other states. Adivasis (tribals) of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh have also started moving to different states in search of jobs. They are known for their hard work and dedication.

GENUINE PROBLEMS FACED BY MIGRANT LABOURERS

When villagers plan to move out of their nests to earn a living, everything looks very lucrative from a distance but in reality migrant labour market is marked with lots of problems and disadvantages.

Unorganised Sector

Migrant labourers are one of the unorganised sectors in our country. There is no particular active central board or body that controls the functioning of workmen of this arena. As a result, they are the main sufferers. At the time of need they have to fight their own battle. Best example is when they had to suffer at the time of lockdown declared in India as a result of the global pandemic Covid-19.

Unskilled Lot

Migrant labourers are generally illiterate and unskilled and need lot of time to learn required skill sets. They just leave the village with a dream to learn on the job as a result of which they have to work at low wages.

Victim of Exploitation

They often become victim of exploitation at all levels because a huge percentage of their lot is uneducated and devoid of required skill sets, authentic information and bargaining power. Having gone to other states, they are cheated by contractors and employers. Maximum number of contractors do not have labour license and do not follow the provisions of Inter State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979.

Compromise on the Type of Job

At times they end up getting hazardous jobs which fetches them minimal returns. They have to compromise with whatever comes in their platter because of lack of identity and legal protection. Migrant workers' contribution to national income is enormous but there is little done in return for their security and well-being.

Devoid of Basic Living Standards

With bare minimum for their services, they are not able to get proper meals, health and hygiene facilities, education for their children and a decent shelter.

Never Prepared for Contingencies

Emergencies will never knock before coming. Migrant labourers are daily wage workers. There is no surety if they will bag a job for the day, saving for contingencies is a dream for them. During COVID-19 pandemic migrant labourers lost their jobs as factories and construction sites were declared shut during lockdown. Condition of these daily wage workers' worsened when they were asked to leave the place where they were staying. They hardly had any money to pay rent and stay elsewhere. Unfortunately they became completely hand to mouth. There were no modes of transport so that they could reach their villages and hometowns. Whatever they thought correct at that time, they did. Some bought bicycles and started heading to their hometowns. Others climbed trucks and auto rickshaws and many just started walking towards their villages without knowing how and when they would reach. Many of them caught the infection and many even lost lives.

Contribution is Never Recognised

Although migrant labourers contribute a lot to the country's economy directly and indirectly, their identity or contribution is never registered or recognised. Main reason is that this sector is highly unorganised.

Inter-State Migration is a Big Problem

The problem of this vulnerable lot gets all the more magnified if there is inter-state migration as there is language issue to a great extent and also dwelling issue because they are totally in the control of contractors.

Denied Fundamental Citizenship Right

Although we know that migrant labourers contribute in the overall economy of the country, still in majority of cases they are not able to participate in the formal electoral system and are denied their basic fundamental citizenship right i.e. their right to vote. The main reason is that Census and National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) are unable to capture circular and seasonal migration. In many cases migrants even get missed out in BPL (Below Poverty Line) surveys and also in their voter cards their village addresses are written. When they are out of their villages for almost eight to ten months in a year, they are unable to cast their votes.

Suffer from Psychosocial Disorders

Migrant labourers lack social capital and social support systems in places where they migrate to. They uproot themselves from their native place and move to a totally new environment. They initially face problems adjusting to the new socio-cultural milieu. The absence of strong social support perpetuates the psychosocial distress and has an adverse effect on the migrant labourers' mental health (Rogaly B et al, 2002, C. Annie Jane, 2016).

MGNREGA Scheme not followed Ethically

There are several issues related to existence of fake job cards, inclusion of fictitious names, missing entries and delays in making entries in job cards. Most states have failed to disburse wages within 15 days as mandated by MGNREGA. Workers are not compensated for a delay in payment of wages. Most states do not pay an unemployment allowance when work is not given on demand. The non-issuance of dated receipts of demanded work prevents workers from claiming an unemployment allowance. There has been a delay in the completion of works under MGNREGA and inspection of projects has been irregular. There have been cases with poor quality of assets created, several instances of corruption in the implementation of MGNREGA, and insufficient involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).

Unaware of Government Schemes

This is one of the 'most important problems' faced by migrant labourers and their families in our country. Earlier there was only one legislation to safeguard the interests of migrant labourers which was called Inter-State Migrant Workers Act, 1979. However, it is obsolete now and hardly enforced anywhere. Earlier also benefit of this Act could not reach the migrants as majority of them were not even aware of the same. Since a decade back Government has come up with many legislative Acts in favour of migrant workers and their families back in villages. But the major problem is that majority of them are not even aware of these schemes.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES IN FAVOUR OF MIGRANT LABOURERS

Government of India has lots of labour friendly and rural dwellers' friendly schemes. Because of COVID19 pandemic and sudden lockdown in the country, these strata suffered the most. They just thought that what they were earning as migrants was their only source of income and because of sudden loss of jobs they were in doldrums. Main point of concern is that whatever schemes the government has formulated in their favour as well as their dependents' favour back in villages, majority of them are not even aware of such schemes. Had they been aware, they would not have suffered so much. Following are the schemes especially for the labourers and their families:-

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (September 2005)

Also called MGNREGA (https://www.nrega.nic.in/netnrega/mgnrega_new/Nrega_home.aspx), Mahatma Gandhi Employment Guarantee Act 2005 is an Indian labour law and social security measure that aims to guarantee the 'right to work'. Its main objective is to guarantee 100 days of wage employment per year to rural households. It also aims at addressing causes of chronic poverty through the projects that are undertaken, and thus ensuring sustainable development. There is even an emphasis on strengthening the process of decentralisation through giving a significant role to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in planning and implementing these works. The Act provides a legal right to employment for adult members of rural households with at least one third beneficiaries as women. Employment must be provided within 15 days of being demanded failing which an 'unemployment allowance' must be given. Decentralised planning should be done with gram sabhas. All work sites should have facilities such as crèches, drinking water and first aid. There should be transparency and accountability. There are provisions for proactive disclosure through wall writings, citizen information boards, Management Information Systems and social audits. Funding received is shared between the centre and the states. There are three major items of expenditure i.e. wages for unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled labour, material and administrative costs. The central government bears 100% of the cost of unskilled labour, 75% of the cost of semi-skilled and skilled labour, 75% of the cost of materials and 6% of the administrative costs. On February 1, 2020 Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced an allocation of additional funds for MGNREGA scheme for the year 2020-21 which was down by more than 13% from the total estimated expenditure for 2019-20 which was at Rs.71,001.81 crore.

Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG) – SABLE Expansion (September 2010)

Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG) is a centrally sponsored scheme implemented under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). This scheme represents an opportunity to prepare adolescent girls for healthy adult life. Adolescence is the age between 11 and 18 years of age. Especially for girls it is a significant period as far as mental, emotional and psychological development is concerned. During this period, nutritional problems originating earlier in life can be partially corrected, in addition to addressing the current ones. It is also the period to shape and consolidate healthy eating and lifestyle behaviours, thereby preventing the onset of nutrition related chronic diseases in womanhood and prevalence of malnutrition in future generation. The Adolescent Girls also need to be treated as individuals who can be productive members of the society. Hence the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, came up with a scheme called 'Kishori Shakti Yojana' (KSY) using the infrastructure of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). Objective of the Scheme is mainly to equip them to improve and upgrade their home-based and vocational skills and also to promote their overall development including awareness about their health, personal hygiene, nutrition, family welfare

and management. The main responsibility of educating the girls about these schemes is on Anganwadi workers/ helpers, Supervisors, Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs), Sakhis and Sahelis.

Mudra Loan Scheme for Small and Marginal Fishermen (March 2017)

Through this scheme announced by the Central Government, poor and needy fishermen can purchase boats so that they can grow their business by venturing into deep sea which was otherwise not possible for them due to lack of finance. According to this scheme a loan of up to Rs.1 crore will be given to the group of poor fisherman in a village under MUDRA Yojana of central government. Also, 50 per cent of the total funds of the scheme will be contributed by the central government. Big fishing boats will be given to a group of fishermen so that they can go beyond 12 nautical miles, where they can catch large number of fish. Instead of fishing alone, small fishermen can be a part of such groups and share profits.

PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana 2020 (2018)

Announced in 2018 Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana 2020 for farmers was launched by the Central Government. Under this Farmers Income Support Scheme, government will provide Rs. 6000 per annum to small and marginal farmers with land holding up to 2 hectares. All farmers are eligible for PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana irrespective of their land holding. Central govt. will give this amount in a single year in 3 equal instalments of Rs. 2,000 each. It is a major step forward towards the welfare of farmers and will assure them of minimum income. The assistance amount would be credited directly into the bank accounts of farmers. PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Scheme 2020 is fully funded by the central government and is expected to cost around Rs. 75,000 crore per year. It is mainly going to tackle the problem of the farmers and would also reduce the agrarian distress. With this PM-KISAN Scheme for farmers, the govt. aims to assure minimum income guarantee to the farmers. The central govt. also announced relief to farmers who are affected by natural disasters and rewards for those farmers who are repaying their loans on time. Instead of rescheduling of crop loans, farmers who are severely affected by natural calamities will now get 2% interest subvention and additional 3% interest subsidy on timely repayment.

Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Swasthya Suraksha Mission (February 2018)

Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Swasthya Suraksha Yojana was launched for the expansion in health services across the country. The main objective of this scheme is to make health services available to all in different parts of the country.

Affordable and reliable institutes like AIIMS are to be set up to bring changes in health, education and training. Under this scheme a target has been set to improve medical education and expand health facilities in backward states of India. A financial allocation of Rs.14,832 crore has been made for this. Central government has full responsibility for the operation of AIIMS under this scheme.

Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (September 2018)

Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, also known as Ayushman Bharat Yojana- National Health Protection Scheme is the largest health assurance scheme in the world which aims at providing a health cover of Rs. 5 lakhs per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation to poor and vulnerable families who are in need of healthcare facilities in the country. This scheme is fully funded by the Government and cost of implementation is shared between the Central and State Governments. Benefits of the scheme are portable across the country, which means that a beneficiary can visit any

empanelled public or private hospital in India to avail of cashless treatment. The benefits are on a family floater basis which means that it can be used by one or all members of the family. This Scheme plans to make secondary and tertiary healthcare completely cashless. The coverage includes 3 days of pre-hospitalisation and 15 days of post-hospitalisation expenses. Prime Minister Narendra Modi rolled out this health insurance scheme on 23 September 2018 to cover about 50 crore citizens in India and already has several success stories to its credit.

Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Yojana (February 2019)

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) and Central Government approved Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN (Jaiv Indhan- Vatavaran Anukool fasal Awashesh Nivaran) Yojana 2019 that aims to achieve 10% blending percentage of Ethanol in Petrol under Economically Backward Programme. This scheme is going to provide financial assistance to integrated Bio-ethanol projects by the use of ligno-cellulosic biomass and other renewable feedstock. The financial implication of JI-VAN Yojana is that the Central government will support this scheme with total financial outlay of Rs. 1959.50 crore for the 2018-19 to 2023-24 duration. In addition to supplement the target set by the government under the Economically Backward Programme, PM JI-VAN Scheme will have many benefits. First would be by reducing import dependence by substituting fossil fuels with biofuels. Second would be by achieving the GHG emission reduction targets by progressive blending / substitution of fossil fuels. Third would be by addressing environment concerns which are caused due to burning of biomass, crop residues and improving health of the citizens. Fourth would be by raising the farmers' income by ensuring adequate income for their waste agricultural residues. Fifth would be by creation of rural and urban employment opportunities in 2G Ethanol projects along with biomass supply chain. Next would be by making a contribution to the Swachh Bharat Mission by supporting the aggregation of non-food biofuel feedstocks like biomass and urban waste and finally, by indigenisation of second Generation Biomass to Ethanol technologies. The ethanol, which is going to be produced by the Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Scheme beneficiaries would be supplied to the Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) to further enhance the blending percentage under the EBP programme.

Pradhan Mantri Karam Yogi Maandhan Yojana (February 2019)

Central Government has launched Pradhan Mantri Karam Yogi Maandhan (PM-KYM) Yojana or Social Security Scheme to provide assured monthly pension of Rs.3000 to retail traders and small shopkeepers on attaining the age of 60 years as announced in Union Budget 2019-20. India has a rich tradition of trade and commerce, so government is primarily focusing on betterment of traders which is essential for the economic growth of the country. Small shop owners with annual turnover below Rs. 1.5 crore will be benefited by this scheme. The primary objective of PM Traders Pension Scheme 2019 is to ensure robust architecture of universal social security.

Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan Yojana (February 2019)

It is a government scheme meant for old age protection and social security of unorganised Workers (UW) who are mostly engaged as construction workers, home based workers, street vendors, mid-day meal workers, head loaders, brick kiln workers, cobblers, rag pickers, domestic workers, washer men, rickshaw pullers, landless labourers, own account workers, agricultural workers, beedi workers, handloom workers, leather workers and like. According to the report of the Economic Survey released in 2019, 93% of the total workforce of the country is from the unorganized sector. In 2018, a report of NITI Aayog, this figure is 85 per cent. This unorganized sector has a big hand in running the country's economy. It is a voluntary and contributory pension scheme under which the subscriber would receive a minimum assured pension of Rs

3000/- per month after attaining the age of 60 years and if the subscriber dies, the spouse of the beneficiary shall be entitled to receive 50% of the pension as family pension. Family pension is applicable only to spouse. On maturity of the scheme, an individual will be entitled to obtain a monthly pension of Rs. 3000/-. The scheme is a tribute to the workers in the unorganised sector who contribute good per cent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The applicants between the age group of 18 to 40 years will have to make monthly contributions ranging between Rs 55 to Rs 200 per month till they attain the age of 60. Thereafter he/ she can claim the pension amount. Every month a fixed pension amount gets credited in the pension account of the respective individual.

One Nation One Card – National Common Mobility Card (March 2019)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched ingeniously developed National Common Mobility Card or NCMC on 4 March 2019. One Nation One Card would be an inter-operable transport card which would allow the card holders to pay for their bus travel, toll tax, parking charges, retail shopping and can even withdraw money. This 'Made in India' developed NCMC is a one-of-its-kind card and the country will no longer have to rely on foreign technology. This card runs on RuPay card and would eliminate all the travel related problems of citizens. This NCMC card will have stored value on card which will also support offline transactions across all travel needs with minimum financial risk. Moreover, it will also comprise of a service area feature which supports operator specific applications like monthly passes, season tickets etc.

PM Kisan Maandhan Pension Yojana (June 2019)

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana is a government scheme meant for old age protection and social security of farmers on attaining age of 60 years. This scheme is for small and marginal farmers having cultivable land up to 2 hectares as per land records of the concerned State/UT. People will have to make contribution as specified in the pension chart.

Central government will also contribute an equal amount (50%) to pension fund to be managed by Life Insurance Corporation. LIC would be the nodal agency for its implementation and will be responsible for the payout. For this purpose, a sum of Rs. 900 crore was allocated for the PM Kisan Maandhan Yojana in Budget 2019-20 by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. This scheme looks similar to PM Kisan Yojana but actually the main difference is that PM Kisan Yojana is applicable for all farmers while PM Kisan Maan-dhan Yojana is only for small and marginal farmers who own less than 2 hectares (5 acres) of land. All the farmers can also make contribution directly from the benefits drawn from the PM Kisan Yojana. This scheme is actually identical to the existing PM Shram Yogi Maandhan Yojana for unorganized workers and PM Karam Yogi Maandhan Yojana for retail traders and small shopkeepers.

Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (March 2020)

Government has announced 1.7 lakh crore Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana 2020-21 to tackle Coronavirus (COVID 19) to benefit farmers, MGNREGA workers, poor people, widows, old age people, disabled pensioners, Jan Dhan Account holders and women SHGs seeking loans. When men go as migrant labour, women in villages can also give monetary help to the family and raise children by availing of the special schemes offered by the Government.

Pradhan Mantri SVANidhi Yojana (June 2020)

With a budget of Rs. 700 crore, first time in India Prime Minister declared the Street Vendor's Atmanirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi), an interest-free loan scheme to provide working capital to street vendors affected by the nationwide lockdown. Although Street Vendors Act was passed in 2014, SVANidhi scheme was implemented to resume livelihood to the street

vendors. Although some states do not allow benefits of this scheme without a domicile certificate, majority of states are providing loans to this sector. According to this yojana, loan is provided without guarantee or stamp duty. If the first loan amount is repaid on time, then the street vendor can procure second loan of bigger amount.

Tejaswini Rural Women's Empowerment Programme

Main focus of this programme is on development of rural women. It is an effective means of improving the living conditions of poor households. It ensures that poor rural women have a wider range of opportunities and support. It even aims at strengthening women's self-help groups and providing access to financial services. The project intends improving income generation by developing skills, providing market and policy support. It increases women's access to functional literacy and labour-saving infrastructure and boosts their participation in local governance. The project will directly benefit approximately 11,20,000 households. The Maharashtra state cabinet on 7th October 2020 declared that Nav Tejaswini Yojana for development of rural women entrepreneurs would receive an additional Rs 523 crore. Approximately 10 lakh rural women are expected to get benefitted by this scheme. It will be for women self-help groups, to develop rural women entrepreneurs. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) will give a loan of Rs 334 crore and the state government will provide Rs 189 crore. It will strengthen women's self-help groups and take them to the next level so that they can form cooperatives, federations and companies.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS ANNOUNCED BY GOVERNMENT

Sitharaman's Plan for Migrant Workers and Farmers (The Economic Times, 14th May 2020)

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the second tranche of Covid stimulus of Rs 20 lakh crore aimed at the migrant workers, small farmers, street vendors and affordable housing. Main highlights of the major benefits announced by the government for migrant workers and farmers in the post-Covid period included the following:

Loans at Concessional Rates

Three crore marginal farmers availed loans at concessional rates. These farmers had already benefitted from Rs. 4 lakh crore of loans given to them. RBI moratorium has also benefitted them.

Kisan Credit Cards

25 lakh new Kisan credit cards sanctioned with a loan limit of Rs. 25,000 crore.

Shelter and Food for Migrants

Rs. 11,002 crore released by Central government in advance to states to augment the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) funds for helping states to set up shelters for migrant workers and provide them food. 5 kg of wheat or rice and 1 kg chana per family per month was announced for 2 months for those migrants who do not have National Food Security Act (NFSA) cards or state cards would reach through state governments. This would entail Rs. 3,500 crore and would benefit around 8 crore migrants. This scheme of providing free ration was further extended.

Self-help Groups

12,000 self-help groups at urban centres comprising urban poor have produced 3 crore masks and 1,20,000 litres of sanitizers. 7,200 new self-help groups of urban poor have been formed during the period starting March 15, 2020.

Work for Migrants

For migrant workers who have returned to their homes, work is being made available through MGNREGA. Work was offered to 2.33 crore wage seekers in 1.87 lakh gram panchayats. 40-50% more workers given work compared to May, 2019. States have also been advised to provide them work. Average wage rate has risen to Rs.202 from Rs.192 in last fiscal.

One Nation, one Ration Card

National portability ration cards can be used in any ration shops across the country and 100% Public Distribution System (PDS) beneficiaries will get covered by March 2021.

Affordable Housing

Incentives will be offered to private manufacturing units and industrial units to develop affordable housing and converting government funded houses into affordable renting accommodations for migrant workers. State government agencies will also be incentivised to develop such accommodations.

Benefits for Tribals

Rs.6000 crore worth of proposals have come from states under Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) funds. Tribals will get employment in forest management, wildlife protection and other forest related activities. (https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/nirmala-sitharaman-address-latest-updates-may-14/articleshow/75735307.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

Credible Data will allow Benefits to Reach Workers (The Times of India, 2nd October 2020)

The Minister of State for Labour and Employment Mr. Santosh Gangwar discussed about how the reforms will roll out as per the plans of the Government.

Portability of Welfare Schemes

When asked about the reason that triggered an exodus of over one crore migrant workers, he mentioned that during lockdown the reason of the estimated 40 crore of unorganised space of migrant workers could not avail of the government welfare schemes because of lack of adequate, credible data. He pointed out about the requirement of portability of welfare schemes. One of them would be a ration card to be used by migrant workers at their homes or places of work followed by universalising the social security net and bringing categories of workers under purview of some social security scheme.

Since the labour codes on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSHC), social security (SS) and Industrial Relations (IR) were being deliberated upon when the pandemic struck, government was able to address all these concerns in the new labour code laws. That is the reason he called these reforms historic.

New Labour Codes

He also mentioned the reason why The Inter-State Migrant Workers Act,1979 provided for enumeration of Migrant Workers but hardly 79,000 people registered in the last decade. According to him 'Labour' is on the Concurrent list which means that both, the Central and State Governments are competent to enact legislation subject to certain matters being reserved for the Centre. The main reason for fewer registrations under the IMSW Act was due to restrictive definition of a

migrant worker and also because of the absence of proper inter-state mechanism for registration. The existing definition did not include migrant workers coming on their own to destination states seeking employment. As per him, the new labour codes will rectify that.

Balance between Interest of Workers and Employers

He even tried to mention how labour reforms would strike a balance between the interest of workers and the employers. As far as workers are concerned, the Code on Wages would promise the right to minimum wages and their timely payment. The National Minimum Floor Wage provides that no state will be allowed to pay wages below a certain threshold. The next key benefit would be formalisation of employment in India through mechanisms like the issuance of appointment letters and by creating a legal provision for fixed-term employment. As far as industry side is concerned, the labour codes would have a simplified compliance regime. Under the 'One Registration, One License, One Return' regime, industry will need one registration instead of eight, one license instead of four and a substantial reduction in returns and registers.

NEED OF THE STUDY

Every now and then it is observed that Indian Government is announcing schemes in favour of migrant labour of the country and their families in villages but majority of them are not even aware of the same. Hence this study was required.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Main objective of this study was to highlight to the government authorities that majority of migrant labour and their families were unaware about government schemes. Efforts should be made to make them aware so that maximum number of migrant labourers and their families get benefitted.

REVIEWS OF LITERATURE

Dr. K. K. Singh et al. (2010) studied the problems of inter-state migrant workers of Bilaspur district and suggested solutions for the same. According to the study workers would migrate for better employment and livelihood but they were cheated by middlemen, agents and employers who would violate Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act 1979 and labour law. In this study it was suggested that all migrant workers should be registered in Gram Panchayat, all recruiting agents should have a proper licence while recruiting migrant workers and all remittances paid should be properly accounted for. It was also mentioned that government schemes and programmes should be implemented very honestly and promptly.

C. Annie Jane (2016) conducted a study on issues and policies of internal migrant labour. According to the study, challenges faced by the migrant labourers are quite complex. An analysis of the migrating pattern made it clear that though the migrant labourers contribute more to India's economy, they are not in a protective and prosperous zone. Suggestions were made that Central and State Governments should provide adequate measures to safeguard the interests of the migrant labourers, and derive context-specific solutions. A concerted national policy to facilitate and promote the wellbeing and a system that ensures access to entitlements and basic work conditions was highly recommended.

S. Balamurugan et al. (2018) studied MGNREGA scheme and its impact on rural livelihood. Critical study was carried out in Uthirangudi village panchayat in Nagapattinam district of Tamil Nadu. It was concluded that local authorities did not implement the programmes properly. Suggestions were made regarding creating adequate awareness about MGNREGA scheme, social audit at panchayat level and curbing corruption. It was also suggested that there was immense

need for transparency and accountability for utilisation of resources under the scheme. Moreover, it was the duty of local government and panchayat workers to make sure that the Act was implemented effectively.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study was carried out in four construction sites of Mumbai where 212 migrant labourers were taken as respondents using Cochran's formula. Survey method was used for the study where multistage sampling was carried out. First was purposive sampling method followed by proportionate and random sampling methods. Data was collected through direct structured interview method where respondents were asked about their demographic details and awareness about the government schemes in their favour. Analysis was done using SPSS technique. It is an attempt to highlight the fact that in spite of so many schemes declared by our government, the percentage of respondents amongst 212 migrant labourers who are 'actually' aware of these schemes.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Awareness about Government Schemes amongst Migrant Labourers

Table 1

Government Scheme	Number of People
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act	198
Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG)- SABLA Expansion	10
Mudra Loan Scheme for Small and Marginal Fishermen	5
PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana	0
PM Rashtriya Swasthya Suraksha Mission	12
PM Jan Arogya Yojana	7
PM JI-VAN Yojana	0
PM Karam Yogi Maandhan Yojana	0
PM Shram Yogi Maandhan Yojana	0
One Nation One Card - National Common Mobility Card	180
PM Kisan Maandhan Pension Yojana	18
PM Garib Kalyan Yojana	14
PM SVANidhi Yojana	0
Tejaswini Rural Women's Empowerment Programme	12

Note: Sample Size = 212

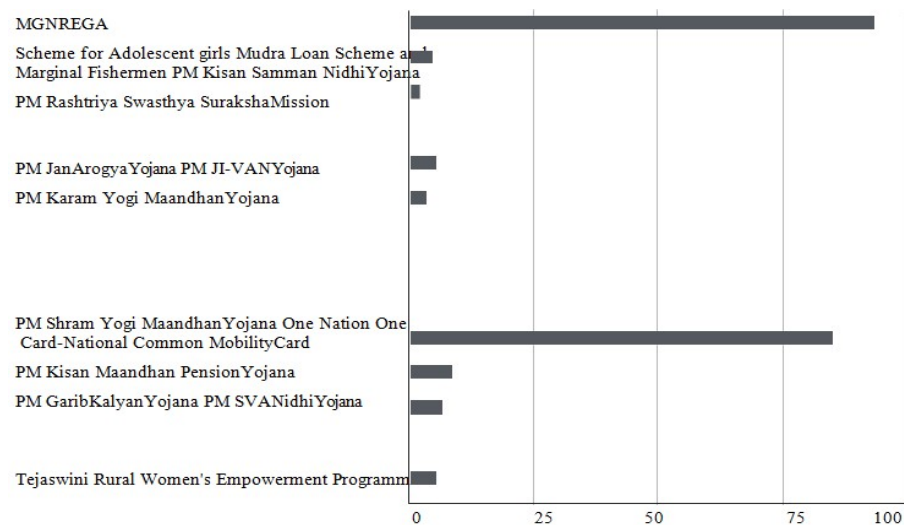


Figure 1

Awareness about Government Schemes in %

From the above table and histogram it can be observed that sample of migrant labourers were majorly aware of only two schemes. One is Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) with 93.39% awareness and other one is One Nation One Card - National Common Mobility Card with 84.91% awareness. It is also observed that seven schemes out of total fourteen surveyed, have an awareness percentage of less than 10%. Migrant labourers are not aware of five schemes at all which is a matter of great concern.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion drawn on this study is that migrant labourers are actually aware of only few government schemes, leave aside availing their benefits. Huge amount of funds are announced and supposedly allocated for these schemes by the government but not reaching the intended ones. This is quite alarming.

SUGGESTIONS

- There should be one standard central authority to safeguard the interests of migrant labourers which they can easily access at the time of need especially during contingencies as in pandemic Covid-19 lockdown, floods, cyclones, earthquakes, loss of jobs and like. Migrant labourers should know well whom to approach for help during such emergencies. For this purpose 'The Inter-State Migrant Workers Act,1979' should be amended with positive changes as it has become quite obsolete.
- As migrants generally travel to other states, Inter-State migration should become easy and welcoming. State governments should take the responsibility to set up special boards where the details of the migrants are recorded while leaving and returning to their home state. Similarly, there should be special boards in states where details of migrants are recorded when they land or leave the state where they migrate to. For this purpose, help can be taken from private corporate houses that can also make these migrants aware of all the schemes floated by the government in their favour.
- MGNREGA scheme should be followed ethically with transparency and accountability.
- As mentioned in government scheme, if required or chosen by the labourer, employment facilities should be provided in close proximity to their native place, maybe mines or construction sites and they should get wages at par with what they would have earned in urban areas. There should be small team in villages who will be kept responsible for taking care of this and making the workmen aware of the relevant schemes and their benefits.
- As these labourers indirectly affect the economy of the nation, there should be a recording system as to how much are they contributing as are source.
- The 'Job Card' system should be on an Individual basis i.e. 'One Individual-One Card' instead of one Job card for the whole family. It becomes difficult to update as all family members might go to different places for earning their living.
- Majority of labourers are not educated, hence they are not aware of the Government schemes. Efforts should be made for providing basic education so that they know what our government is doing for them and how to avail it. Not all should be asked to go online or to run from pillar to post for receiving benefits.

- Corruption should be curtailed. Middlemen should be avoided. System should be such that there is no scope of unethical practices in dealing with implementation of these schemes. Regular audits should be held at all levels.
- Special projects must be identified for people with disabilities. Personnel must be employed to ensure their participation.
- Apart from making efforts how to formulate migrant labour sector into an organised one, providing them with required skilled sets, teaching them how to voice against exploitation, training them how not to compromise on the choice of job, providing them with basic living standards, telling them how to save for contingencies, getting their contribution recognised, encouraging women to work, special efforts should be made to get fundamental citizenship rights for migrant labourers as they deserve the same.
- Voting right of every individual matters. So, migrant labourers should be allowed to vote from any place.

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