

Standing Committee Report Summary

Social Security and Welfare Measures for Inter-state Migrant Workers

- The Standing Committee on Labour (Chair: Mr. Bhartruhari Mahtab) submitted its report on social security and welfare measures for inter-state migrant workers on February 11, 2021. The Committee assessed the efficacy of various schemes launched for providing relief to the migrant workers during COVID-19 pandemic. Note that the lockdown imposed in March 2020 to contain the spread of COVID-19 had left millions of migrants stranded in different states without food, livelihood, and shelter.
- **Identification of migrant labours:** The Committee noted that several steps were taken for identification of migrant workers across India. These include: (i) the modification in the definition of migrant workers to include workers voluntarily moving to another state for employment, and (ii) setting up a portal for creating a database of migrant workers. However, there is no credible database with information on the number of inter-state migrant workers. This has led to an adverse impact on the implementation of relief and rehabilitation measures for the workers. For example, in some states (such as Punjab) the distribution of food under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojna was lower than the total allocation. This defeated the objective to provide timely food to the targeted beneficiaries (especially the migrant labours). The Committee reiterated the creation of a credible real-time database of inter-state migrant workers (especially unorganised migrant workers).
- **Affordable housing facilities:** The Committee noted that migrants are not categorised as a separate category under the scheme for affordable rental housing complexes (ARHCs). The scheme is aimed at providing housing at an affordable rent to migrants near their workplace. Currently, migrants are covered under the economically weaker section (EWS) or low-income group (LIG). Thus, to ensure the protection of migrants' interest, the Committee recommended prioritising migrant workers in the ARHC scheme.
- The Committee emphasised establishing a transparent allotment process for migrant workers under ARHC scheme. It was suggested that a grievance redressal system be set up to address grievances of migrants on allotment related matters.
- **Livelihood:** The Committee noted that Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is the best scheme for providing sustainable livelihoods to unskilled workers (including migrant workers). It recommended that the process of issuing job cards by state governments be made more transparent to ensure that no migrant labourer is deprived of employment. Note that job cards are essential for any individual demanding work under MGNREGS.
- **Skill development and training:** Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan (GKRA) provides employment to returnee migrants affected by COVID-19 pandemic in 116 selected districts across six states (Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh). The Committee noted that the data of 60 lakh migrant workers have been collected from 116 selected districts under GKRA. Out of these, 2.64 lakh workers have been shortlisted in 93 districts for training. The Committee recommended that the shortlisting process in remaining 23 districts be expedited to ensure sustainable livelihood to the migrants at the earliest.
- The Committee noted that there are certain challenges in providing training to migrant workers, which include: (i) low demand for skilled workers, (ii) increasing contract employment with no provision for skill development, and (iii) difficulties in mapping skill requirements. Further, the Committee noted that out of 5.5 lakh candidates looking for a job, 3.2 lakh candidates have been offered a job. The Committee recommended the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship to take required corrective measures to ensure skill development and placement of poor people (including migrants).

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