

A Study On Social Security Parameter Of Migrant Workers In Unorganised Sector: With Special Reference To Chennai

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Abstract

Since the era of modern civilization of human beings, transfer of human capital plays a vital role in bridging the gap of human labour requirement in the place of need. Gradually this movement increased in a progressive manner for various reasons. Poverty and indebtedness are the most important factors that lead to migration. Workers migrating within a country tend to move from less developed regions to more developed regions. In India, there are notable inequities in the development of the various states, with states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Maharashtra having attained a higher level of development than Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. This movement has evolved as one of the concern of government. The responsibility of providing all welfare and basic amenities are the burden of the concerned government. These amenities include various parameters. One of the important parameter is social security needs of the migrant labours. This study portrays several social security concerns of the migrant labours in Chennai and various measures and initiatives taken by the government to overcome the difficulties.

Keywords: Assistance measures, welfare programs, vulnerable segment

Introduction

Movement of human capital from the place of surplus to the place of deficit is always prevalent in the global scenario. This movement may include humans crossing the borders of the country, crossing the borders of the state as well as crossing borders of their native place in search of employment or source of earning. This movement is termed as migration. There is enough evidence of both voluntary and forced migration, which is the outcome of cultural and religious persecution, natural disasters, developmental projects such as dams, a failed monsoon and the consequent famine, and the search for better livelihood options. Despite the rising numbers of migrant workers, the policies of the Indian state are lacking behind in providing any form of legal or social protection to this vulnerable group. In a continuous state of drift, migrants are left out of the scope of state provisions at both ends - the "source" and the "destination". The urban labour markets treat them with opportunistic indifference extracting hard labour but denying basic amenities such as decent shelter, fair priced food, subsidized healthcare facilities or training and education.

This includes population scattering to

- Manufacturing sector – 14%
- Textiles – 10%
- Construction – 11.9%

(Source: Times of India, Movement of Migrant labours, 2016)

They are also usually out of bounds of government and civil society initiatives, both because of being "invisible" and for their inability to carry entitlements along as they move for employment

Objectives

- To portray the various social security constraints of migrant labours
- To analyze the measures of Chennai corporation in handling social security needs of the migrant labours

Research methodology:

Research type: Descriptive research

Data: Several secondary data sources have been used in assisting this study from journals, magazines, newspapers and research articles.

Problems faced by migrant workers in unorganised sector

There are numerous problems that are faced by the migrant workers. Migrants form the largest part of India's huge unorganized work sector. Their entry into the labour markets is marked with numerous endemic disadvantages. Absence of critical skills, information and bargaining power, migrant workers frequently get caught in exploitative labour contracts that forces them to work in low-end, low-value, hazardous work. Lack of identity and legal protection improves this problem. The difficulties of migrant workers are especially magnified when state boundaries are crossed and the average distance between the "source" and "destination" escalates. Migrants can also easily become victims of identity based politics and parochialism. Some of the problems include

- Insufficient labour laws
- No social security
- No guaranteed minimum wages
- Bonded labour
- Lack of basic needs
- Poor working conditions
- Over workload
- Working women issue of harassment at workplace
- Low literacy
- Low remuneration
- Vulnerable to disease

This study envisages more on the social security parameter.

Social security needs:

Social security may refer to the action programs of an organization or government intended to promote the welfare of the population through assistance measures guaranteeing access to sufficient basic resources for food and shelter and to promote health and well-being for the population at large and potentially vulnerable segments. Welfare of migrant workers has been added recently by all respective state governments due to increased proportion of problems.

Social security problems of migrant labours

The various social security problems of the migrant labour include

Moderate health care awareness

The health care facilities that are required for the migrant workers could not be achieved in full. This is especially due to several commendable factors like

- High amount of floating population of migrant workers
- Poor consideration of health by migrant workers
- Lack of time
- Fear of losing the wages
- Fear of being neglected

(Source: *Health equity for internal migrant labourers* - Ajo keBasirat 2014, IJME)

These are the few factors that are responsible for the moderate level of health care awareness among the migrant workers. This portrays they possess unconditional fear of approaching the amenities. In several cases they fear of even losing their job while moving for treatment. As we all know the government India as well several states has formulated adequate level of medical facilities, ambulance services, and primary health centres. Some workers are even vulnerable to new atmosphere and climatic conditions. There is even a big question about their housing facility and health condition in their shelter.

This can lead to wide variety of discussions that may lead to ultimate basic conditioning or standardisation of shelter facility. This also includes the dependents of the workers like wife, children who are accompanying them. Even though many hoardings in Hindi have been displayed in the primary health centres, the migrant workers still pose a state of negligence. Since the wages are primary source of income for the migrant workers, they are hesitant in taking off during the working days. This has nothing to do with the employer, because it is clear that wages pose a state of importance rather than health. Unfortunately several dependents of workers also face health problems due to this innocent hesitation that has no relation with discriminating them.

Difficulty in availing LPG cylinders

Availing LPG cylinders for household cooking activity includes several procedures. The reason for such procedures was to curb use of domestic purpose cylinders for commercial activities like hotels, restaurants, clubs and other amenities. But this procedure stands tall in

purview of migrant workers. Requirement of identity proof, valid proof of address pose a vital inconvenience for availing LPG service. Due to this discomfort they tend to prefer kerosene stoves and electric stoves for cooking. This obviously increases the cost of food preparation compared to that of LPG cylinders. So the workers tend to prefer and use kerosene and other cooking measures. The norms which are formulated for certain preventive measures have its impact on other part of the society as well. Holistically this difficulty in availing LPG cylinders plays an important role in accessing social needs for the migrant workers.

Poor transport facilities

Transport facilities that are provided by the employers to the migrant workers for moving them for the place of work is not given much importance due to

- Cost consideration
- Timing consideration
- Chances of misuse by the workers
- Chances of conflict among workers
- Traffic regulations

The primary reason for not providing proper transport facility is due to cost based implications. The employers are not willing to bear more expenses in lieu of transport. This leads to transportation of workers like dumping sacks of rice in a lorry. They are treated as products and not as human beings. The scenario of poor transportation leads to health problems and misunderstanding among several workers as well as bad impression about the employer. If more flexible vehicles are provided then there is a chance of conflict regarding timing issues and perception factor that some group of workers are given preference. In certain occasions this problem does not persist because either the workers are staying inside the employment premises or staying near to the premises.

Difficulty in accessing public distribution system

Public distribution system is responsible for providing staple food like rice, wheat, pulses, grains, sugar and kerosene at more subsidised rates for the population belonging to below poverty line and weaker sections of the society. The question of migrant workers eligible for this ration is a standing remark. Even though they are not eligible under the Tamil Nadu state requirement act due to non-availability of ration card and place of origin, recently central Government has allotted selected distribution centres for migrant workers in which they can avail ration items at reasonable price. Apart from this initiative the workers still face hesitation in approaching these centres due to fear of exploitation.

Sanitation facilities

Apart from health, ration and shelter facilities, sanitation plays an important role in wellbeing. This is because of the fact that any compromise on the hygiene factors may lead to

severe health hazards in the future course. One of the cultural practices that have a direct impact on wellbeing is open-air defecation. As this act is common in the rural areas of India, most migrants' workers moving to urban areas are found it culturally unacceptable to use toilets. This naturally creates a significant issue of sanitation in the densely populated metros in which they live. Chennai is not an exemption to this parameter. Suburbs that are surrounding southern Chennai face this issue due to migrant workers. The employers should provide some minimum toilets for certain number of workers. Limitation in the numbers leads them to inculcate cultural habits. But in several localities in Chennai the employers provide good sanitation facilities for their migrant workers.

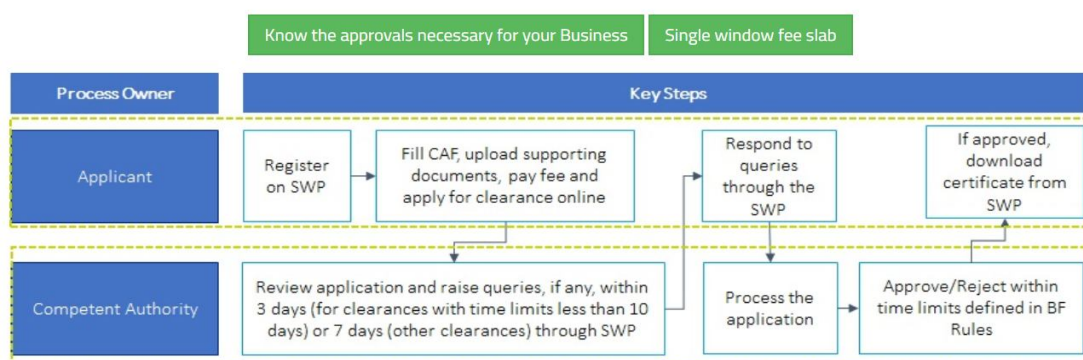
(Source: Health equity for internal migrant labourers in India 2004, IJME)

Initiatives of Tamil Nadu Government in providing social necessities to migrant workers

Government of Tamil Nadu along with Chennai Corporation mandates several componential measures and initiatives for migrant workers.

- Tamil Nadu became pioneer in registering the inter-state migrant workers engaged in construction work in Tamil Nadu Construction Workers Welfare Board.
- Dormitory for temporary accommodation of construction workers, with all facilities; first dormitory constructed in Ezhichur, Kanchipuram District.
- A toll free number cum multi-lingual assistance centre for the benefit of unorganised workers and inter-state migrant workers
- To create safety awareness for the workers and employers of construction establishments, two safety awareness programmes are conducted every month by each Deputy Director of BOCW wing. The migrant workers are imparted safety training in their mother tongue
- Ensuring safety and welfare of temporary workers engaged in difficult occupations including interstate migrant construction workers
- Single window system for registration

How To Apply



- Labour welfare department periodically inspects the unorganised workers and generate possible feedbacks for better improvement of their wellbeing.
- Local police stations have been instructed for handling any issues that are serious for migrant workers.
- Primary health centres were provide with multi language speaking nurses for better understanding of the health condition and providing treatment in an eminent manner.

(Source: LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT DEPARTMENT-Tamilnadu 2017-18)

Suggestions

- Formulation of social security schemes like life and disability cover, health, maternity benefits, old age pensions.
- Creating a database regarding the floating population of migrant workers.
- Formulating a separate division for administrating the migrant workers welfare, causative, and other beneficial schemes.
- Periodical review of the safety and social concerns of the migrant workers for hassle free administration and avoiding any sort of disasters.
- Government can ensure adequate legislature framed to address and find solution to their day today evolving problems in an eminent manner.
- Creation of awareness regarding schemes that are of welfare oriented and development of workers in unorganised sectors enacted by Government of India.

Conclusion

Economic growth in India today relies on mobility of labour. The contribution of migrant workers to national income is relatively high but there is little done in favour for their security and well-being. There is an absolute need for solutions to transform migration into a more dignified and prospective opportunity. Without this, making growth inclusive or the very least, sustainable, will remain a very distant dream. The data suggests that States need to streamline processes and act with a sense of immediacy to deliver these benefits, and are likely to see positive economic aspects if they do so. This will ensure that unorganised workers, especially migrants, are not left out of the economic growth story that they play an integral part in creating.

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