



The Urban World

Quarterly Publication



RCUES
Mumbai

Regional Centre for Urban and Environmental Studies
All India Institute of Local Self-Government, Mumbai



Regional Centre for Urban & Environmental Studies (RCUES), Mumbai (Fully supported by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India)

Established in 1926, the All India Institute of Local Self Government (AIILSG), India is a premier autonomous research and training institution in India. The Institute was recognized as an Educational Institution by Government of Maharashtra in the year 1971. The Institute offers several regular training courses in urban development management and municipal administration, which are recognized by the Government of India and several State Governments in India.

In the year 1968, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), earlier Ministry of Urban Development), Government of India (GoI) established the Regional Centre for Urban & Environmental Studies (RCUES) at AIILSG, Mumbai to undertake urban policy research, technical advisory services, and building work capabilities of municipal officials and elected members from the States of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and UTs of Diu, Daman, Dadra & Nagar Haveli. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), Government of India added States of Assam and Tripura from February, 2012 and Lakshadweep from August 2017 to the domain of RCUES of AIILSG, Mumbai. The RCUES is supported by the MoHUA, Government of India. The MoHUA, Government of India has formed National Review and Monitoring Committee for RCUES under the chairmanship of the Secretary, MoHUA, Government of India. The Principal Secretary, Urban Development Department, Government of Maharashtra is the ex-officio Chairperson of the Advisory Committee of the RCUES, Mumbai, which is constituted by MoHUA, Government of India.

The RCUES was recognized by the Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India as a National Training Institute (NTI) to undertake capacity building of project functionary, municipal officials, and municipal elected members under the earlier urban poverty alleviation programme-UBSP. The RCUES was also recognized as a Nodal Resource Centre on SJSRY (NRCS) and Nodal Resource Centre (NRC) for RAY by Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Government of India.

The AIILSG, Mumbai houses the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Cell backed by the Government of Maharashtra for capacity building of municipal bodies and provide technical advisory services to ULBs in the State. The Water Supply & Sanitation Department (WSSD), Government of Maharashtra (GoM) established Change Management Unit (CMU) in AIILSG, Mumbai from 13th January, 2010 to 30th June, 2014 and also selected AIILSG, Mumbai as a Nodal Agency in preparation of City Sanitation Plans for 19 Municipal Corporations and 15 A Class Municipal Councils in Maharashtra State, under the assistance of Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India. The WSSD, GoM also established Waste Management & Research Centre in AIILSG, Mumbai, supported by Government of Maharashtra and MMRDA.

In August, 2013 Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India empanelled the AIILSG, Mumbai as Agency for providing technical support to the Cities / Towns of States / Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in the field of Water Supply and Sanitation, Sewerage and Drainage systems.

In July 2015, Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India empanelled the RCUES & AIILSG, Mumbai an Agency for technical support in Municipal Solid Waste Management under Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) programmes.

In February, 2016, Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Government of India empanelled the RCUES of AIILSG, Mumbai for conducting training and capacity building programme for experts of SMMU, CMMUs, COs, Key Officials and other stakeholders of the State and Urban Local Bodies (ULB) level under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY – NULM).

In December, 2017, AIILSG has been empanelled as a training entity regarding implementation of new Integrated Capacity Building Programmes (ICBP) under Urban Missions, viz. Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), Smart Cities Mission (SCM), National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM), Housing for All (HFA), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) and Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY) for Elected Representatives and Municipal Functionaries.

At present, RCUES and AIILSG, Mumbai is involved in providing capacity building, research and technical support to number of State Governments and ULBs for implementing various urban development missions and programmes launched by the GoI.

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Editorial

Contemporary Challenges in the Urban India

The coronavirus pandemic induced health emergency and contraction of economic activities have been a wake-up call for the urban India with regards to housing, sanitation, education, and employment. On the one hand we are witnessing fragility of the over-burdened public and commercialised private healthcare systems, the instability of our economic structures thriving on informal sector workers, rising sectarian vested interests, and to the vulnerabilities of the toiling people. These challenging times need evidence-based policies and their judicious implementation. With this perspective in mind the current issue of The Urban World has chosen the articles that provides insights from the ground reality.

The National Education Policy, 2020 has laid great emphasis on early childhood foundational education. Article by Dr. Shalini Srivastav titled, “Creating Young Minds of Tomorrow: Challenges of Urban and Rural Education” provides an overview of problems, prospects, road map to meet challenges for quality in early childhood education.

Subhomay Saha & Karan Peer, in their article titled, “Migrant Construction Workers of India: Evaluating Their Contemporary Welfare Framework” profile employment, work-condition, migration pattern and of legal safeguards that exist for these workers from a rights-based approach. Construction workers build beautiful buildings but many of them are homeless or live in slums, or cheek-by-jowl in one and two-room housing, in the midst of dirt and filth, lack of hygiene and sanitation and scarcity of water. It is nearly impossible to implement what is physical distancing/ body distancing is paradoxically called “social distancing”, vigorous hand washing and vigilant decontamination. This has made imperative to focus on low rent safe urban housing for the migrant workforce a need of an hour as 45-60% of the urban informal sector workers live in the slums in the Urban India.

Similarly, for millions of daily-wage earners, migrant workers, and self-employed workers faced hunger and starvation after the lock down due to loss of livelihoods and eviction from rented rooms due to inability to pay rent. As a result of the lockdown, the stranded workers lost their job and forced to return to their native place. Narayan Barman's study, titled, “COVID-19 and Livelihood Challenges of Migrant Workers after Returning Home – A Case Study of Reverse Migration from Kerala to West Bengal” examines the process of reverse migration of the Bengali workers from Kerala to their native place in West Bengal. The main objective of this qualitative study is to understand the daily life, pattern and livelihood of migrant workers and role of government schemes after returning in their native place. The primary data has been collected to perceive the livelihood strategy of migrant workers after returning from the destination.

As a nation, the decision-makers of urban governance must make concerted efforts to build systems and structures to support the CITY MAKERS who are the backbone of the Indian economy.

Creating Young Minds of Tomorrow : Challenges of Urban and Rural Education

Dr. Shalini Srivastav,

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Article 21A was inserted into the Constitution vide eighty-sixth amendment made in 2002 to enjoin *the State to provide free and compulsory education to all children of age of six to fourteen years, in such manner as the State may, by law, determine*, thus making the right to education of the children a Fundamental Right. State Governments have inter alia, made it mandatory to the local authorities to provide free and compulsory education to children of this age group. Various measures are taken from time to time for effective implementation of this Article.

According to a survey, namely the Annual State of Education Survey, 2017, around 25 percent of students in the 14-18-year-old age group are unable to read simple text in their native language fluently. The report also states that while the number of rural students attending schools is increasing, over half of fifth grade students are unable to read a second-grade textbook and are unable to solve simple mathematical problems. In some States, teachers as well as students' attendance was found to be in decline. This survey raised many questions about the quality of education imparted to the children other than who are learning in well-off schools.

Education - A Vital Element in a Society's Development

The significance of raising the literacy rate in an area cannot be overly emphasized as education plays an important role in both enhancing the

capacity and outlook in the life of a person and consequently being a key factor in the development of the nation. High level of literacy is always a key factor in the progress of any nation.

An education system, well-supported, and easily accessible to all the sections of society is a key determinant of the economic progress and social and cultural advancement of the society. Among other things, it makes of effective participation of citizens in public affairs. Education is a necessary means which enables the man to develop his potential and acquire skills of life and profession. The better education of the citizens and its workforce makes for the nation to provide quality of life to its citizens and earn a place in the comity of nations. This unmistakably shows that these are the children and youth who should be nurtured and trained in better and diversified education.

Primary School - the Formative Stage

When it comes to shaping our nation's bright minds, it is not enough simply to make education available to all. The quality and diversity of education given becomes a crucial factor in improving the overall quality of life – the first step towards bringing about positive social reforms. These are the years that a child spends in primary school that makes for a sound foundation in his life.

The learning process involves going from simple to complex. The training of mind that a child gets in

primary school stands him in good stead to progress on learning higher and diversified education and to make the most of his learning in life. This necessarily leads to the conclusion that the sound and better the primary school education, the more trained mind it would send for secondary and higher learning. This also necessarily implies that focus should be on better education in primary schools throughout the length and breadth of the country with a special attention in rural and far off areas. This will ensure that at during this formative stage of life, the children will be prepared for further learning and to stand up in life. All the goals of our education policy rest on this foundation.

Urban and Rural Training

Existence of opportunities and scope for better learning hugely differ between rural and urban areas. Several educational studies across the globe have pointed out this difference. Students and graduates from urban areas were found to be better equipped with skills and at an advantageous position as compared to their rural counterparts. These reports also prominently pointed out students from metropolitan areas get higher grades than those from rural areas. It is quite evident that factors impacting the performance of rural students are lack of infrastructure and limited opportunities. On the other hand, urban students' better performance can be associated with better academic infrastructure and access to a wider array of information available across digital platforms.

Several problems in rural areas of India, such as weak road connectivity, power scarcity, low Internet access, etc., have contributed to students lagging behind, and are left with minimal outside world visibility, damaging their awareness of current affairs as well. The disparity between urban and rural students is not in terms of knowledge, but in terms of their environment, comparative lesser means and facilities of learning and access to technology, and exposure to the development around. This leads us to the conclusion that the

programme for rural students has to be designed in the context of these considerations- to provide them with what they miss out in comparison to their urban counterparts. Another equally important requirement is to ensure that students are taught in a way that is readily understood in their assigned capacity. The dominant primary education goal of India at present is to universalize compulsory education, especially in rural areas. Let us look at how we can boost primary education in rural areas to close the gap in this aspect.

Education Access and Quality Must Go Hand in Hand

Quality of education hugely depends on the infrastructural facilities such as classrooms, water and sanitation facilities, energy supply, interactive learning infrastructure, athletic equipment and facilities, access to chairs and tables, book access, and learning materials, among others. For this, the Chief Minister' *Samast Shiksha Yojana* of Arunachal Pradesh was initiated in a transparent and targeted manner to decentralize availability of resources such as providing furniture, electrical wiring, solar inverters or generators, laboratory equipment, library purchases, sports equipment, etc.

Infrastructure Repair and Maintenance

This new approach involving use of apps and facilities including multimedia material, broadcasting lessons taught by professional instructors, immersive lessons by video conferencing, etc., smart classrooms in the schools for general public may go a long way towards making available these improved means. In this situation, *Samast Shiksha Yojana*, the Chief Minister..... would provide us with a versatile capital pool for the schools and colleges to make the most of learning tools. Another project, *A dhunik Pathshala Yojana*, the Chief Minister, Arunachal Pradesh is committed to developing model residential schools in each district by upgrading existing secondary / higher education facilities.

Teacher Quality and Qualification

A good instructor makes all the difference in raising the students in learning. Teachers play crucial role to ensure that students have the readings they need to hold their eyes on. This is also means for talent searching. In fact, because of their teacher and his / her quality of teaching, students may develop the like or dislike of attending classes or interests in a subject. Since teachers play such a key role in shaping a student's level of education, accomplished visiting faculty are to be hired from outside.

Digital Support

The incorporation of technologies into the classroom provides enormous possibilities for strengthening instruction and data processing. Digital learning may also assist in developing critical thinking skills. To this end, the *Adhunik Pathshala Yojana* of Chief Minister has been initiated, which will ensure the installation of smart classroom programmes in 717 State schools with the provision of high-tech computer labs, laptops, and free Wi-Fi for quality primary education.

Initiatives by the State

The aim of the Girl Hygiene Scheme is to motivate female students by providing teenage girls with sanitary napkins on Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode, and CM Vidya Scheme, Arunachal Pradesh ensures that Rs. 10000 is deposited in the bank account of each female student who passes Class V.

Special Experience

Finally, academic curricula also must adapt to the learner's needs, so that students can become the best version of themselves. On this topic, it is important to make college textbooks and methodologies of learning interesting. For rural students, to sustain their involvement in education, knowledge relevant to their history, customs, and beliefs should be integrated into their textbooks.

To expand access to education, three paths to learning, including formal, non-formal, and informal methods, should be considered. Career advice can also be offered to help students select a career that is in line with their aptitude, expertise and aspirations of jobs.

To say, "in terms of services and learning conditions, rural and urban schools are almost the same" (EQR, 2003, p.45). Yet there are several factors that may influence the success of the individual students. Improving the standard of education and employment decision-making variables in both rural and urban sectors will have a huge impact on the capacity of an person to effectively improve individual well-being, become economically competitive, establish healthy livelihoods, lead to stable, prosperous economies and work opportunities development.

Conclusion

“Quality without access will lead to inequality and exclusion; access without quality will limit the potential and would not bring [about] the desired results,” – Matthew Opoku Prempeh.

The State, not market, should play a leading role in deciding content, quality, accessibility to best early childhood education. The National Education Policy, 2020 has reiterated the recommendation Kothari Commission on Education (1966) that government expenditure on education should increase up to 6% of gross domestic product. Even the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nation directives also convey the same to the nation states. Every measure should be taken to see that the recommendations as suggested by the National Perspective Plan for Education with regards to early childhood education are fulfilled to the maximum. If the nation must progress it is imperative that the children of the nation must be mentored to be responsible citizens who value gender justice, distributive justice, economic justice, and environmental justice.

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Call for Research Papers!

The **Regional Centre for Urban & Environmental Studies** is pleased to invite contributions for **Urban World** in the form of articles and research papers from researchers, authors, publishers, academicians, administrative and executive officers, readers and well-wishers on any one the following topics:

- **Impact of COVID-19 on Urban Development.**
- **Rethinking City Planning in a Post Pandemic World.**
- **How Smart Cities are Adapting to a Post Pandemic India.**
- **WASH Response to COVID-19.**
- **Socio-Economic Impact of the Pandemic.**

Articles could be between 2000 to 4000 words. They may contain compatible tables, charts, graphs, etc. We reserve the right to edit for sense, style and space.

Contributions may be e-mailed in digital form as a Word file to the Director, RCUES, Mumbai.

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Migrant Construction Workers of India: Evaluating Their Contemporary Welfare Framework

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Introduction

This paper looks at the number and condition of construction workers, a huge percentage of which comprises migrant workers. This paper seeks to understand the number of people employed in construction sector, their spatial distribution and the proportion of inter-state migrants in the same, which has then been studied against the backdrop of legal safeguards that exist for these workers from a rights-based approach. To this end, the paper has delved into acts such as Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996, Inter-State Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979, and assessed their instrumentality, coverage and effectiveness. Furthermore, differential performances of individual States have also been evaluated to build a holistic understanding of the contemporary welfare framework for the migrant construction workers.

General Trends of Construction Migrant Workers in India

In the past two and a half decades, the spatial distribution of economic growth and prosperity in India has been agglomerated in and around pre-existing centers of growth. This has accentuated the pre-existing disparities in terms of economic growth, prosperity and livelihood opportunities

between the cities and the resource-poor regions of the country (Swerts, E., Pumain, D., & Denis, E., 2014). An outcome of this distinct pattern of economic growth has been the rise of the construction industry, particularly in the major metropolitan centers of India. From 2016 to 2019, the real growth rate of the gross value added at basic prices by economic activity by the construction sector stood at 6.8% (Economic Survey, 2018-2019). Furthermore, it absorbed a significant proportion of India's migrant labour force, making it the largest employer in India outside of agriculture, trade, hospitality and manufacturing (Soundararajan, V., 2013).

As per the Census of India 2011, there are a total of 453.6 million internal migrant workers in India, an increase of 139 million from an estimated 314.5 million in 2001 census. Assuming that the same number of internal migrants is added in the period of 2011-21, the total population of internal migrant workers is approximately 600 million. However, the corresponding data for the sectoral composition of migrant workers in India has not been released. The Census of 2001 puts the number of migrant construction workers at 4.9 million of which 3.9 million are male and 1 million are female. The more recent NSSO 64th round (2007-2008), when viewed against similar surveys in the past also suggests that the total workers in construction grew from 15.3 million in 1999- 2000 to 29.4 million in 2007-08, with a yearly increase of about 8.5%.

The spatial distribution of migrant construction workers in India shows that long-distance migration is its characteristic trait. As per the Census of 2001, inter-State migrant workers (1.1 million) make up the largest chunk (35.4%) of all the construction workers in India's urban areas. Furthermore, of all the interstate migrants in India who move out of the farm sector, construction sector absorbs around 9.8%, making it the second most preferred sector for migrant workers after retail. As per the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) (2016-17), there are estimated 74 million construction workers across the country. Upon closer, sectoral analysis, it is revealed that out of the 42.6% of the rural-urban male migrants in construction are inter-State migrants. The top 8 cities of India accommodate 52% of all the interstate migrant construction workers. The 2011 census also pegs the percentage of interstate and inter-district migrant workers at 33%, thus it can be estimated that currently 200 million (33% of estimated 600 million) migrant workers are employed across various sectors in the country away from their hometowns.

Construction workers in India are largely informally employed (both migrants and non-migrants). 90% of migrant construction workers in rural areas and 67% of the migrant construction workers in urban areas are casual/ informal labourers. As per Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2017-18, 70.4% of the overall urban construction workers are casual labourers ("Annual Report, Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2017-18" 2019). Furthermore, migrant construction workers are primarily unskilled seasonal migrants who work as daily wage labourers in the agrarian sector during the harvesting and sowing season. As per the NSSO 2007-08 about 40% of the short-term migrants, which amounts to 5.5 million, are engaged in construction work.

Estimates from National Sample Survey 2007-2008 (64th round) - Schedule 10.2 - Employment, Unemployment and Migration Particulars show that most of the rural-urban migrants in construction used to work in agriculture (47.3%) or construction-related activities (45.6%) before they moved into urban areas. Data for rural-rural migration tells a similar story. Some of this movement is seasonal and thus short-term in nature, with people regularly moving back and forth between farm and construction work. About 5.5 million short-term migrants were employed in construction during their longest spell of movement, as per the National Sample Survey 2007-2008 (64th round) - Schedule 10.2 - Employment, Unemployment and Migration Particulars, which is about 40% of all short-term migrants. This number is equally high among long-term migrants (6.3 million). Further analysis reveals that out of all persons who are currently employed in agriculture and have a history of short-term migration, about 36% worked in construction when they migrated; construction remained the second largest sector after agriculture in their work profile. Similarly, for people currently working in construction, agriculture is the second largest industry of employment when they migrated short-term. Thus, short-term construction migrants face constant economic uncertainty owing to a perennial engagement in informal work.

It is pertinent to analyse the welfare framework of migrant construction workers through the lens of gender. Although the migrant workforce in construction is disproportionately constituted by males, the share of migrants in the overall female employment in construction is higher. The NSSO survey reveals that 87% of migrant women employed in construction are not the heads of their households, which in turn is indicative of the fact they have not migrated alone and are most likely living with their husbands and families. Furthermore, 26% of all households with a migrant

worker employed in the construction sector have a minimum of three members with at least two working adults of different genders, indicative of nuclear families with children, who can be viewed as associational migrants in construction. The recently concluded Jan Saha Survey found that 54% of construction workers support 3-5 people, while 32% support more than 5 people.

Since migrant construction workers face higher spatial vulnerabilities because they are often either dependent on the employer to provide temporary accommodation on establishment premises or resort to living in slums, the presence of associational migrants in the form of families and children mandates a significant improvement in working and living conditions. Poor and often hazardous working and living conditions present a grim reality for all construction workers by virtue of deplorable access to clean drinking water and sanitation facilities. Furthermore, women and children are more disadvantaged given the fact that access to daycare/creche facilities, medical leave, health insurance and maternity benefits is severely compromised in the said scenario.

Legal Safeguards for the Migrant Construction Workers

The contemporary legal umbrella under which the welfare framework of migrant construction workers operate is the Inter-State Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979. The said act is designed to protect the interests of workers who are employed by contractors. To this end, it mandates the registration of establishments employing inter-State migrants, alongside licensing of aforementioned contractors. Inbuilt tenets of said act accommodate safeguards against discrimination of migrant workers vis a vis non-migrant worker about payment of wages, disbursement of travel and displacement allowance, working conditions. However, the instrumentality of said act is limited to those who migrate on their own. Moreover, the

aforementioned act also excludes huge number of construction migrant workers as the legal employer of the workers cannot be identified due to long chain of employers involved i.e. Builder subcontracts the employment of construction workers to a contractor who in turn further subcontracts to a petty contractor. In many cases these migrant construction workers are hired from '*naka*' (checkpoint) which thus excludes them from the ambit of the Inter-state Workmen Act.

Building and other construction workers face much vulnerability by virtue of their migrant status, socio-economic profile and informal nature of employment. As an instrument towards addressing said vulnerabilities, the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996 ("the Act"); and the Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Cess Act, 1996 ("the Cess Act"), was constituted in March 1996. This national-level legislature was reflective of pre-existing policy apparatus in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. This legislature mandates the institution of a Construction Workers Welfare Board (CWWB) which is a tripartite entity comprising up to fifteen members with equal representation from workers, employers and the government, and a Chairperson nominated by the state government. The CWWB is required to register all construction workers in the State and promote the welfare of registered construction workers through various schemes, measures or facilities. Indicative welfare benefits are listed out in section 22 of the Act and include medical assistance, maternity benefits, accident cover, pension, educational assistance for children of workers, assistance to family members in case of death, group insurance, loans, funeral assistance, and marriage assistance for children of workers (Bhatt, V., 2019).

With regard to the operational and logistical makeup of the Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Boards, there are some pertinent

challenges with regard to registration of workers, and the collection and distribution of cess. The number of active/valid registrations vis a vis the total number of construction workers registered in said boards, is a major issue, as aptly highlighted in the past by the 44th Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour. As per the findings of the aforementioned committee, there were around 0.56 million registered construction workers in Maharashtra, of which, only 50% were valid registrations. Similarly, in Delhi, the process of new registrations and the renewal of old ones are delayed. Furthermore, a subsequent pilot social audit of the BOCW Act conducted by the Centre For Policy Research, Delhi Nirman Mazdoor Sangathan and other organisations under the aegis of Ministry of Labour and Employment, Govt. of India found anomalies and errors in the registration process. As per the findings of the said audit, selective registration, non-updation of identity cards, enrolment of non-construction workers as

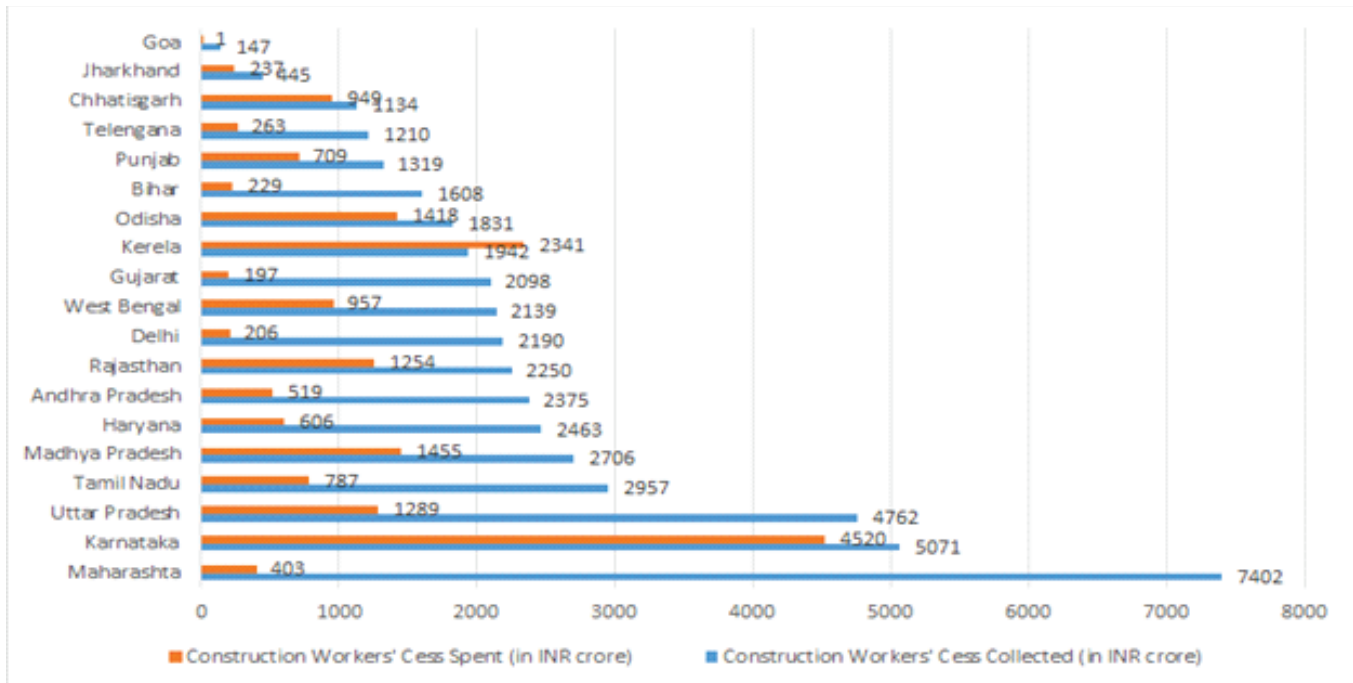
beneficiaries and corruption are commonplace in the BOCWWB of the Delhi state. These findings paved the way for an elaborate advocacy process by various NGOs and CSOs working for the welfare of the construction workers, which ultimately led to the constitution of model welfare scheme guidelines for the individual BOCWWB of different states. Under the tenets of these guidelines were provisions to commence online registration of construction workers and allotment of a unique identification number to the registered workers, to ensure portability of benefits. However, the execution of these guidelines is yet to be accomplished as only a few States have started the process of online registration and renewal of workers. Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra are some of the States which have adopted online registration and renewal of workers. However, states like Delhi and Bihar have no such mechanism yet.

Table 1: State-wise Total Number of Construction Workers and Registered Workers

Major States of India	Number of Construction Workers (million)		Number of Registered Workers (million)		Ratio (%) (3/2)	Diff (4-2)	% Change (6/3)
	2017-18	2017	2019				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Andhra Pradesh	4.15	1.73	1.82	41.7	0.1	5.0	
Assam	1.08	0.12	0.25	10.8	0.1	114.5	
Bihar	4.47	0.83	1.24	18.5	0.4	49.6	
Chhattisgarh	1.25	1.38	1.94	110.3	0.6	40.7	
Gujarat	1.50	0.60	0.65	39.9	0.1	9.3	
Haryana	1.10	0.73	0.86	66.1	0.1	17.3	
Jharkhand	1.95	0.71	0.80	36.4	0.1	12.0	
Karnataka	2.08	1.16	1.54	55.6	0.4	33.5	
Kerala	2.35	1.46	1.53	62.3	0.1	4.2	
Madhya Pradesh	3.69	2.92	3.10	79.1	0.2	6.1	
Maharashtra	2.84	0.66	1.61	23.4	0.9	142.5	
Odisha	2.66	1.85	2.72	69.4	0.9	47.1	
Punjab	1.35	0.64	0.87	47.0	0.2	36.5	
Rajasthan	3.76	1.81	2.22	48.3	0.4	22.6	
Tamil Nadu	4.43	2.79	2.83	63.0	0.0	1.3	
Uttar Pradesh	8.67	3.61	4.86	41.6	1.2	34.6	
Uttarakhand	0.35	0.16	0.23	46.9	0.1	42.2	
West Bengal	4.27	3.08	3.10	72.2	0.0	0.7	
Delhi	0.44	0.50	0.54	113.4	0.0	7.7	
All-India	54.48	28.62	34.86	52.5	6.2	21.8	

Source: Data in Column 2 are from PLFS, 2017-18 and data in Columns 3 and 4 are from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour, 2017-18, Ministry of Labour, 2017 and Lok Sabha unstarred question No-1284, November, 2019.

Table 2: Cess Collected for Construction Workers v/s Cess Spent for Construction Workers



Source: Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 278, answered on 29 June, 2019

As per the PLFS of 2017-2018, there are approximately 55 million construction workers and based on the estimation, there would be about 20 million construction workers who would be unable to avail the benefits given out by the DBT mode. This can be attributed to the fact that the registration rates are not very high, the estimations show that only 52.5% of all construction workers were registered in 2017. Rates of registration are extremely low in Assam and Bihar (< 20%), whereas, in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh, it is lower than the national average. However, states like Delhi and Chhattisgarh reported a registration rate of more than 100% indicating the possibility of duplicate and fraudulent registrations.

Moreover, the collection of cess for the BOCWWB at the rate of 1% of the total cost of construction and its proper distribution amongst workers is a major issue. As per the assessment made by the 38th Standing Committee on Labour of the Lok Sabha,

there is no proper mechanism for the collection of said cess, its transfer to the concerned BOCWWB. The committee also reported an under assessment of cess.

Besides, the collection of cess at the stipulated rate of 1% of the total cost of the construction project and its proper distribution amongst the workers has not been implemented properly. The 38th Standing Committee on Labour pointed this out in its report and stated that there is no proper mechanism for the collection of cess and its transfer. CWBs also it found that there were many instances of under assessment of cess. As of 2019, only 39% of the collected cess has been disbursed to the workers. There are many geospatial disparities with regard to the collection of the said cess and its disbursement. Some of the states like Tamil Nadu (11.8%), UP (10.5%), West Bengal (9.8%), Kerala (13.9%), Bihar (9.5%), Madhya Pradesh (8.3%), and Andhra Pradesh (8.0%) together contribute more than 70% in total construction gross value

added (GVA), but their contribution to the total cess amounts to only 37%. In 2019, Kerala and Bihar managed to collect only 3.9% and 3.24% of the cess. On the other hand, Karnataka and Maharashtra, which contribute 6.9% and 5.8% in terms of the national Gross Value Added by the construction sector, collected 10% and 15% of the cess respectively. However, in spite of being the biggest collector of cess, Maharashtra spends very little (5.4%). Kerala (120%), Karnataka (89%), Chhattisgarh (84%), Madhya Pradesh (54%), Rajasthan (55%), Odisha (77%), Punjab (54%) and West Bengal (45%) are the states who spend more than the national average.

Additionally, almost all the migrant construction workers would not be able to avail the benefits of the relief measures offered by the Employees' Provident Fund as such benefits can only be availed by the formal workers registered as contributing members of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation. This represents only a small percentage of the total construction workers in India, as estimated by the PLFS, 2018-2019. According to the survey, the construction sector employs 83% casual and 11% self-employed workers. Only 5.7% of the workers work on a regular basis, of which 3.9% are informal and only 1.6%, are regular formal workers. Overall, only 2.2% of total construction workers are availing some kind of social security benefits, and only 1.5% are regular workers eligible for benefits from the Employees' Provident Fund.

Given this background, there are many challenges with regard to providing monetary help to the migrant construction workers at a time when the country's economy has been severely hit by the pandemic. Furthermore, construction in India still has a seasonal character. Therefore, even if the period of lockdown ends, resumption of construction will take time, and by the next month, monsoon will approach, which will further delay construction activities.

Conclusion

The condition of construction workers and migrant workers in general is very precarious and the pandemic has aggravated the situation. The cities, which lay on the foundation built by these workers, left them high and dry in the pandemic. Estimates show that at least 198 migrant workers died and 1390 got injured in road accidents while going back to their homes, many in vehicles and some while walking by foot (Dutta 2020). Though the government paid heed to their woes lately and started *shramik* trains in May 2020, around 80 people died in the special trains launched to ferry such labourers home (Sharma 2020). A considerable number of these migrant workers were construction workers. These migrant construction workers are also taken for granted equally by State as well as their employers. In Karnataka, when the state government decided to run 100-plus *shramik* trains to nine states in early May 2020, representatives of the Confederation of Real Estate Developers Association of India (CREDAI) met CM Yediyurappa. After the meeting CM said that the COVID-19 situation is in control in Karnataka and industrial, construction, and trade activities need to be resumed outside areas marked as red zones. Hence, labourers may avoid unnecessary travel back to their natives (Bp 2020). This is a clear case of migrant workers, especially construction workers being coerced to stay, to supply labour to their employers who are in turn apathetic towards their psycho-social condition.

The State needs to step in. As elaborated in the paper, though a huge construction worker cess is collected, the extent to which this cess is spent on welfare of workers is less. The legal provisions are adequate to some extent but the implementation is lackadaisical. The silver lining has been the intervention by the judiciary in a few cases. Recently in July 2020, the Delhi High Court asked the AAP government to see if registration of

workers with the Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare (BOCWW) Board can be verified online as the applications were made online. The bench also said that there should be “no laxity” in registration of workers with the Board through

which they could get ex-gratia of ₹5,000 during the pandemic (Staff Reporter 2020). The state and the judiciary should step up and enable provision of benefits to all workers.

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COVID-19 and Livelihood Challenges of Migrant Workers after Returning Home – A Case Study of Reverse Migration from Kerala to West Bengal

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Introduction

The spread of COVID-19 from the epicentre of Wuhan city of China to across the world is attributed to the large migration and mobility of the people worldwide. The first case of COVID-19 reported in India on January 30 of 2020. As it is an infectious disease, so, the medical professionals largely believed that the control of the COVID-19 infection only possible through immobility and confinement like lockdown and social distancing. Therefore, on 24th March government of India announced the complete lockdown for the period of 21 days. Consequently, all the economic activity was stopped except essential services. India is a country of informal labour market with about 92 percent of the workers engaged in informal sectors. Whilst among the informal workers, migrant workers share the largest amount and depended on different metropolitan cities for their livelihood.

COVID-19 Pandemic and Predicament of the Urban Migrant

As per 2011 Census report, in India rural to urban migration are mainly concentrated in 53 million plus urban agglomerations which comprise 140 million out of 377 million urban population of the country, i.e. equivalent to 43 percent of total urban population. Similarly, the National Commission on Rural Labour in India estimates more than 10 million circular migrants in rural areas alone. These

include an estimated 4.5 million inter-state migrants and 6 million intra-state migrants in India (Negi, 2020). The incident of COVID-19 shows that these metropolitan areas are the centres from where the disease has been spreading to the near as well as far off places due to the people's mobility and physical contact. So, to control the infection, on 24th March 2020, Central government of India announced sudden complete lockdown for the period of 21 days. Subsequently, borders were sealed, transportation got stopped, factories, shops, restaurants, and all types of economic activities were shut (Bhagat et al, 2020) except the essential services. This lockdown brought the nightmare overnight for the migrants' workers who lost their livelihood immediately after lockdown and faced the critical challenge of food, wages money and others basic commodities and fear of getting infected. As a result, thousands of them started fleeing from various cities to their native place (Bhagat et al, 2020). The reverse migration refers to movement of people from the place of employment to their native place. Courtesy, COVID-19, the country is beholding the second largest mass migration in its history after the partition of India in 1947. According to report published by World Bank, more than 40 million internal migrants have been affected due to COVID-19 and around 50,000 to 60,000 individuals migrated from urban to rural areas of origin in a period of few days. This internal migration of reverse nature is reported to be two and a half times that of an international relocation

(Mukhra, et al, 2020). Though the journey of the migrant workers was not easy. Due to absence of normal transport system, they travelled by special trains, booked the buses collectively, and even walked the long distance to return to their native place. Many migrants sacrificed their lives due to hardship or on the way and even some committed suicide. West Bengal is one of the important source regions of migration. As per the report published by the department of health and family welfare (WB), due to the sudden COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent lockdown, 654,199 migrant workers came back in the State from across the country. Magnitude of the problem can be seen from the fact that out of 23 districts of West Bengal, Cooch Behar district received 115,000 workers, which is highest among all districts. The workers mostly belong to the poor socio-economic background and landless families. So, the COVID-19 and consecutive lockdown brought the new challenge for migrant workers which they never faced earlier. Therefore, sudden loss of employment and subsequent reverse migration to their native place the workers changed their livelihood strategy all of a sudden with the only alternative to survive in the native place.

This article discusses migrant workers' livelihood strategy after coming back to their native place from the work destination in the context of COVID-19, through the experiences of migrant workers in India during the period of pandemic lockdown. The article also examines the daily life experiences and impact of social security policies, initiated by the Government of India during the pandemic period to protect the most vulnerable group of workers in the context of dislocation from work, loss of income and livelihoods.

Review of Literature

The COVID-19 pandemic caused the largest number of lockdowns across the globe, affecting nearly half of the world's population by the first week of April 2020. However, the biggest

lockdown was the one declared by the Indian Government. Therefore, all economic activities were shut down overnight, impacting the lives of the nation's 1.3 billion people (Gupta et al, 2020). In the last two and half decades, India has urbanized at a rapid rate, and this urbanisation is built on the labour of the migrant population. As per Census of India report 2011, the total number of internal migrants would be 450 million, more than 30% larger than 2001, and West Bengal is one of the important source regions for the internal migration. The Corona Virus pandemic has triggered a massive reverse migration from the destination to source in large part of the country (Dandekar and Ghai, 2020). When the Government of India announced the sudden lockdown in March 2020 to contain the spread of the pandemic, migrant informal workers were mired in a survival crisis, through income loss, hunger, destitution and persecution from authorities policing containment and fearful communities maintaining social distance (Sengupta and Jha, 2020). Facing the loss of livelihood the internal migrant workers, day labourers and the poor deprived of resources decided to return to their native places (Dahdah et al, 2020). Therefore, millions of stranded informal workers were displaced within a few days. The gloomy images of migrants with infants and toddlers, trudging for days to cover hundreds of kilometres on their feet from far-off Indian cities back to their respective villages presented the severity of human crisis. Evidence suggests that the poor were the hardest hit by the COVID-19 and associated lockdown (Singh, Patel, Chaudhary, Mishra 2020). Daily wage earners such as those primarily engaged in agriculture, construction, and casual labour work, suddenly found themselves without a source of income and unable to continue their work from home. Furthermore, those households with migrants could no longer rely on remittance to buffer against this negative income shock (Gupta et al, 2020). The stranded workers are illiterate, ignorant, and belong to backward communities. They do not get minimum

wages stipulated under the minimum wage Act (Negi, 2020). The disruption caused by COVID-19 has had a significant impact on remittance flow. Importantly remittances are projected to fall by above 23 percent during the pandemic. Further, the study by Stranded Workers Action network showed that 89 percent of the stranded workers had not been paid wages by their employers during the first 21 days of lockdown and that 74 percent had less than half their daily wages to live on (Gopalan and Mishra, 2020). The spreading of COVID-19 infection and subsequent lockdown, in large part of the country has created a state of panic and anxiety among the citizen (Verma et al, 2020). So, there is not such work which have dedicated properly to the livelihood of migrant workers in their native place. Therefore, the present study is important to conceive the daily life and livelihood of migrant workers after returning at their native place.

Methodology

A mixed methodology has been used for the present study. The study addressees key areas and the findings broadly encompass issues such as the different impact of COVID-19 and subsequent lockdown on migrant workers, while specially focused on livelihood strategy of migrant workers after coming back in their native place. For the collection of primary data total 80 interviews were conducted, where purposive sampling method has been used. These interviews provide the structural context for the information regarding their journey during complete lockdown, their immediate quarantine days after returns and overall livelihood strategy after coming back in native place. The other material used here in this study also is drawn from the focus group discussions conducted during the study. Focus groups of key informants were chosen as the most appropriate method (Kelly and Shortfall, 2002) to understand the views of migrant workers. In three focus group discussions were carried out; all with migrant workers who returned to their native place during the complete lockdown

period. Total number of 45 people participated in the three focus group discussions (FGDs) and out of 45 participants, 44 were men and 1 was woman. Each FGD took approximately one hour for the discussion and a quarter of an hour for introduction. In addition, some basic statistical information was gathered from participants of group discussion such as marital status, children, education, economic status to understand the broader livelihood practices of migrant workers in their daily life.

Journey of Migrant Workers from the Urban Centre from Kerala, Karnataka and Jaipur Rajasthan to West Bengal

All the migrant workers of the present study returned during March to May 2020 from Kerala and arrived at New Cooch Behar Railway Station. The district administration received them and sent them to their respective quarantine centre which is located in the nearby area of migrant workers. Among the respondents 97 percent have returned by train, 1 percent by flight and 2 percent by buses. The study has been conducted in Gopalpur Gram Panchayat of Cooch Behar district of West Bengal. Three villages namely, Chhat Gopalpur, Horinmara and East Gopalpur has been selected for the collection of primary data. The legal virtual permission has taken from the member of respective Gram Panchayat for conducting the interview and focus group discussion. The address of the interviewee also gathered from the Gram Panchayat members. As they kept the record of migrant workers who have returned from other states during the pandemic and stayed at a quarantine centre. Ninety percent of the migrant workers returned from the State of Kerala. The workers chose Kerala as their work destination because of high daily wages and pro-migrant environment of Kerala. On the other hand, due to frequent mobility of the migrant workers from Gopalpur to Kerala, there has developed a good network among the migrants. However, among the

other respondents, 6 percent came back from Mumbai, 2 percent from Bangalore and remaining 2 percent from Jaipur.

For conducting the FGDs, a different cluster of migrant workers was found out after consulting with Gram Panchayat members of the respective villages. With maintaining the physical distance, the FGDs have been conducted. The researcher had invited all the participants of focus group discussion at a common place by phone call and assembled them. The participants assembled in during the FGD in a playground which is more suitable to maintain physical distance.

Experiences during Quarantine Days

Quarantine is the separation and restriction of movement of people who have potentially been exposed to a contagious disease. The primary purpose of the quarantine is to prevent transmission of an infectious agent from those potentially incubating it (Saurabh and Ranjan, 2020). The first COVID-19 infected patient was detected in India on 30 January and later, the cases of COVID-19 infection increased rapidly. So, on 24th March, 2020 Government of India announced initially 21 days nationwide complete lockdown which was again extended later. After the announcement of countrywide complete lockdown, the informal migrant workers lost their livelihood overnight and started to returns to their native place, though, the journey of the migrant workers was not easy. On the other hand, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in its advisory directed them to be placed under quarantine at their respective states, either at home or at quarantine centre for 14 days since the last exposure (Saurabh and Ranjan, 2020). In the present study area, the district administrator makes the quarantine centre for migrant workers. Generally, the local primary and secondary schools are turned into quarantine centre. As it is a big area and surrounded by wall, so, it's ideal place to maintain physical distance during the quarantine

time. Initially, the district administration provided all the facility to migrant workers during their quarantine, but later due to the inadequacy of quarantine centres, the administration sends directly to their home quarantine. In the present study area it has been found that the 90 percent of the workers returned to their places during the months of March to May and others 10 percent came back in the month of June, 2020. The exceptional scenario is that among the reverse migrant 98 percent are men. It is observed that the persons who migrate along with family have very less tendency to come back during the pandemic period. At the quarantine centre the administration provided the basic commodities such as food, drinking water with periodical sanitizer. Though, only two percent of the women have been reported among reverse migrants but the women face many difficulties at quarantine centre. Due to the overwhelming majority of men, feelings of insecurity were always there in women. As one of the women respondents reported that, there was no separate bathroom for women so, every day they wake up early morning and complete their bath before getting up of their counterpart. The food quality was also not good and nutritious. The food which was served by at the quarantine centre was not in the proper time and was cooked outside of the quarantine centre. Every day the particular person brought the food item twice i.e. lunch and dinner, and the breakfast and others food items they managed from their own expenditure. They shared the common tube-well with other migrant workers which was also the source of drinking water for all. The migrant workers also reported that at the quarantine centre the administration did not provide the bed and sheet for sleeping because of which they slept on the floor with their own bed sheet.

Livelihood Strategy

Migration is best understood as one of the strategies adopted by individuals, household or communities to enhance their livelihood as migration is the part

of active livelihood strategies (Haan, 2000). But the COVID-19 pandemic brought a reverse situation with reverse migration from destination to their source region. The poor and jobless workers who come back at their native place with a sordid experience. As one of the respondents reported, then the Government of India announced the 21 days lockdown, that time they were not having sufficient money to come back immediately. They continued to work at the construction site in Kerala and the contractor was not ready to pay their total wage money. So, they took half payment from the contractor and booked one bus collectively to return home. The contractor committed to transfer the remaining their half money to their account but till today the money has not come to their account.

All the workers who returned from Kerala worked in two districts namely Malappuram and Kannur. For facilitating the migrant workers to return, the district administration took the initiative to enlist the names of every migrant worker who want to returns at home and after enlisting their name they waited for the special train which was exclusive for labour transport and the route of the journey was the same for the labourer to get down at their destinations. On a particular day, the district administration of Malappuram and Kannur assembled all the migrant workers by maintaining the physical distance at the railway station. The workers had seats for sitting in the train journey for returning home. During the journey, the physical distance was maintained inside the compartment and every compartment 72 passenger were there. The workers got free lunch, dinner and water bottle free of cost from the railway department. The experience of the workers who came from Jaipur is different, as they did not get any public facility during their journey. They booked a bus collectively and every person spent 8000 rupees as transport cost. They received food, drinking water and others associate commodities at various stops during the journey, and the local people provided free food items. The women who were interviewed

during the study had come from Jaipur where she was working as a maid worker. The men who returned from Jaipur also worked in the construction sector. The workers who came from Bangalore mainly worked in the textile industry there. After resuming the air transport facility they booked the ticket and initially came to Bag Dogra Airport, near Siliguri and then reached their homes by private reserved car.

The migrant workers lost both their livelihood and savings. In the study two types of scenarios emerged. One is of the labourers who were unmarried and had some land property, did not face more difficulty as they could turn to cultivation. But the serious difficulties were faced by those workers who had not agriculture land or had other family profession. From the study it is found that there is 92 percent of the migrant workers who don't have any agricultural land. So, after completion of their quarantine days they were jobless for around two weeks. Thereafter when the Government brought about some relaxation in some sectors they found the work. Initially the migrant workers were looking for any work which would enable them to earn for covering their daily expenditure. Later they began to search particular work as per their liking. It was found in the study that 60 percent of the workers who did not have any land property were engaged in construction sector in their own village or nearby town. They also reported that they did not find work regularly and the daily wages were decreasing due to high supply of workers and less availability of work. The daily wage was five to ten percent less than what it was earlier before lockdown period. As the workers were having no bargaining capacity to negotiate with the employer, as they will hire others workers for the same work. 30 percent of the migrant workers got engaged with agriculture where they worked as an agricultural labourer with seasonal work availability. About 2 percent of the workers were found to have started their new business during pandemic period. These businesses included small grocery at home, small

retail mussiness, vegetable selling and others fast-food items. Another special scenario which has been observed in the study area is that during the pandemic period the temporary small markets were increased. For avoiding the overcrowding and maintaining physical distance, people established new daily market at different crossroads points where the local people started selling the vegetable, grocery product, fish, poultry, and also started vehicles and cycles repairing centre and garments shops. The local people are the main customer of this temporary market.

Interestingly migrant women have had a different experience after coming back to their home. As one of the women who came back from Jaipur shared her experiences that whilst in Jaipur she used to work as a maid worker and earned 10 thousand per month. But after coming back, at home she could not continue that work because of unavailability of that work. She felt that doing maid's work in nearby towns would tarnish her family's prestige. The women reported that when they worked in Jaipur nobody raises any question, but doing that work in native place they lose prestige among the neighbours and relatives.

For this reason, they did not work outside of their homes in the native place. At home they do the home-based unpaid work only. The study did not find such women who were doing paid or monthly salary-based work after coming back from their destination.

Role of the Government Schemes

As a welfare country, Government of India took different initiatives to relieve the economic burden of the poor people in the recent past. In August 2014, Government of India launched Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) with an aim to provide universal access to banking facilities to the people of India, especially to women. According to

a report, there are 53 percent accounts of women in the PMJDY scheme (India TV News Desk). This was very when on 2nd April, 2020 Government of India announced to give Rs 500 per month to women Jan Dhan account holders for the next three months through Direct Benefit Transfer under Garib Kalyan Package. Similarly, on 30th March, 2020 Government of India launched the scheme Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana to allocate of 5 kg food grain to all the beneficiaries. Likewise, on 1st May, 2016 Government of India launched Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana to distribute 50 million LPG connections to women of Below Poverty Line (BPL) families. During the COVID-19 pandemic the Government announced that beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana would be allotted 3 free Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders effective 1st April to 30th June, 2020. During the Pandemic period these three welfare schemes came to be very beneficial for migrant workers who lost their livelihood, and returned to their homes in native place as these three schemes reach the doorsteps of poor, migrant labourers amid unprecedented crisis (Sharma, 2020). Among the respondents of the study, 100 percent of the families were found to have got advantages of the facilities of these three schemes. Another important support the rural people found was of availing the work under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) which was a good during the pandemic period. As government came forward to proactively execute the schemes with increased wage (during subsequent complete lockdown period). Apart from these schemes, the civil society organisations like local clubs, political parties and other voluntary organisations played an important role to relieve the task of earning livelihood by the migrant workers during this difficult period as these types of organisation distributed free food grain, edible oil, baby food and others commodities.

Conclusion

This large-scale population migration occurred as a direct result of COVID-19 pandemic, the movements of migrant workers mostly tended to be internal, temporary, and during the early phase of the health crisis. It generally happened in the regions directly outside the immediate crisis zone. This migration mostly happened because of misunderstanding and panic, including financial crisis or fear of losing job (Khanna, 2020). Indian informal workers are one of the largest groups of workers with no social security and largely excluded from government welfare measures. Migrant workers have paid-work as their only refuge (Kumar, 2020). Most migrant workers depend on daily wages for their survival and most of them live from hand to mouth. Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic and sudden countrywide complete lockdown brought a new challenge for

migrant workers which they had never faced before. The workers who were excluded from the governmental welfare measures faced dire consequences for the survival in this lockdown situation. Loss of livelihood, risky journey to return and quarantined life after returning to the native place made migrant workers more stranded during this pandemic. Though during the pandemic period, migrant women workers suffered the most in terms of loss of paid work and massive unpaid care work, during pandemic period, all family members stayed the whole day at home. Therefore, women were more had to do multi-task in terms of adult care, childcare, elderly care, care of the sick over and above routine housework of cooking, cleaning, and other family chores. Moreover, women were less likely than men to have power in decision making in the households, and their need largely unmet (Smith and Morgan, 2020).

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ROUND & ABOUT

World Population Day observed on July, 11, 2020

Population explosion became a matter of concern to the third world countries when most of them had gained freedom from colonial rules and were grappling with many economic problems; maternal and child mortality was a serious concern. Lacks of proper nutrition to a substantial section of society, widespread unemployment, poverty, etc. were other issues. In this scenario, the United Nations Development Programme recommended the introduction of World Population Day in 1989. When the world's population reached 5 billion on July 11, 1987, inspired by the public interest and awareness that was created, the Day was observed as 'Five Million Day'.

This year the theme of the World Population Day 2020 is to raise awareness about safeguarding sexual and reproductive health needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is very timely and significant because many pregnant women succumb to poor reproductive healthcare. A study by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) revealed that 800 women die every day during the process of childbirth. UNFPA research highlighted that if the lockdown continues for 6 months, with continued major disruption to health services, then 47 million women in low and middle-income countries might not have access to modern contraceptives. This would, in turn, lead to 7 million unintended pregnancies.

India's Concerns: India has just 2% of the world's land mass and 16% of the global population. It is the second most populated country in the world. Hence, the problems and issues of overpopulation are more pronounced for India. An excerpt from the post on National Health Portal of India-

“...Right now is the moment to initiate actions, as the world is undergoing drastic shifts due to the pandemic and its social and economic aftereffects. Without the initiation of urgent action, the situation for women and girls could worsen.

Along with strengthening the capacity of health systems to respond effectively to COVID-19, other essential services, including quality sexual and reproductive health services should also be prioritized. Our response to COVID-19 and efforts to leave no one behind is critical and will determine how fast we recover and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.”

(Source: UNFPA website and National Health Portal of India).

All ULBs in Haryana Certified ODF, 21 ULBs ODF+ and 13 ODF+

It looks easy to announce the goal of making any town/city open defecation free (ODF), but never easy to achieve it. This is because the first question that arises is where the hundreds and thousands of people lacking this basic human facility would go daily for their human necessity. It requires concerted efforts towards first providing community toilets, public toilets and individual toilets in sufficient number and making the poor to use them. This necessitates surveys, planning, and construction of toilets, supplying water, linking the toilets to septic tank or underground sewage system. Thus, any announcement of a city becoming ODF is a proof of a huge work done. The work does not stop at just making a city ODF. Those thousands of community toilets and public toilets require regular hygienic cleaning, maintenance and septage management of the sewage that goes into septic tank. After fulfilling all these requirements only that ODF+ or ODF++ status is given by thorough objective assessment.

(Source: PIB, New Delhi, 8 September, 2020)

Chandigarh Achieves 100% Door-to Door Waste Collection. Also Certified ODF++ and 3 Star GFC

Municipalities have been doing the work of sweeping and keeping cities clean since 17th century when they were first set up in India. In the year 2000 the first set of statutory rules came for performing this activity on a better systematic way with accountability. Much betterment was made from time to time, including a host of other related rules on hazardous, medical waste management, etc. The latest improvement is that under SBM (Urban) cities are given certification on the basis of better stages of waste management. There are stars up to 7 stars.

(Source: PIB, New Delhi, 8 September, 2020).

Star Rating of Garbage Free Cities- Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs

It would be pertinent if the rating methodology is briefly mentioned here. Its key components are these: a) Door-to Door Collection, b) Segregation at source, c) Sweeping of public, commercial and residential areas (no visible eyesores on streets), d) Waste storage bins, litter bins and material recovery facility, e) Bulk waste generators compliance, f) Scientific waste processing, scientific Landfilling and C & D Waste Management, g) User fees, penalties, spot fines for littering and enforcement of ban on plastic, h) Citizen grievance redressal and feedback system, i) Eradication of crude dumping of garbage and dump remediation, j) Cleaning of storm drains and surface of water bodies, k) Waste Reduction, l) Visible beautification in the city.

(Source: Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs, Government of India website).

Cycles 4 Change Challenge

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs launched the India Cycles 4 Change Challenge on 25th June, 2020. The Challenge is open to all Indian cities with population above 5 lakhs, capital cities of States/Union Territories (UTs) and Smart Cities. Cycling does provide non-motorized transport to millions across cities, towns, and villages. In cities it still has lot of potential to be promoted. A recent survey by the Institute of Transport and Development Policy (ITDP) shows that cycling would increase by 50-65% as cities come out of lockdown. Cities around the world are leveraging the opportunity to expand their cycling networks and public bicycle-sharing systems. As per ITDP, increasing cycling can help cities in a green economic recovery. Investments in cycling infrastructure have economic benefits of up to 5.5 times the initial investment. Cycling for short distances can result in an annual benefit of INR 1.8 trillion to the Indian economy. As on 17th September, 2020, 107 cities have registered for the Challenge. At present, participating cities are undertaking pilot projects, citizen surveys and participating in capacity building workshops related to the Challenge.

(Source: PIB, New Delhi, 10 July, 2020. Report of registration as per a Lok Sabha Question replied by Minister of State (I/C) for Housing and Urban Affairs Shri Hardeep Singh Puri in a written reply in the Lok Sabha).

'Blue-green' Infra Policy Proposed in Master Plan 2041 of Delhi

Town planning is a discipline where innovations are taking place by the day. Every new Master Plan/Development Plan made in any city of India throws up lot of new innovative approaches to city management. Under the MPD 2041, among other things, DDA has proposed a 'blue-green' policy — integrating drains (blue areas) and land (green areas) around them. This includes developing orchards, planned parks and landscaped recreational greens alongside development of wetlands, ponds, lakes, natural drains, canals. There are around 50 drains (blue areas) which have affected the areas of the land of green areas around them. The strategy is to have an integrated approach along with all the agencies to remove sources of pollution by checking the outflow of untreated wastewater. A mix of mechanized and natural systems will be adopted and dumping of solid waste in any of these sites will be banned. Continuous green mobility circuits of pedestrian and cycling paths shall be developed along the drains to serve functional and seizure trips. Similarly, adequate amenities like toilets, drinking water fountains, resting places, recreation, exercise, yoga nature classes, will be provided.

(Source: Indian Express, New Delhi, 7 September, 2020).

Odisha Bags 1st Position in AMRUT Scheme (August, 2020)

A healthy sign of the interest and enthusiasm shown by the States in implementation of this national programme is that they are vying with each other to complete the targets of the scheme. Progress of the scheme is keenly monitored and reported, and ranking of the States changes from time to time. As for the period upto August 2020, Odisha State has been ranked as No. 1. According to the ranking of the states released by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Odisha has secured first position by scoring 85.67 percent. Nine cities of the State - Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Sambalpur, Rourkela, Baripada, Balasore, Bhadrak, Berhampur and Puri - are covered under the scheme. Out of the 191 projects started under the AMRUT scheme, 148 have been completed. Rest of the projects will be completed by March 2021. Official sources maintained that 2400 km of pipeline laying and replacement work has been completed till date in Odisha. There has also been substantial growth in the number of household connections for water supply. More than 1.23 lakh connections have been provided in the nine cities covered by AMRUT.

(Source: The Indian Express, Bhubaneswar, 11 August, 2020, as also Ministry of Housing & Affairs website).

Loans to Urban Street Vendors

Much can be written (and need to be written) about urban street vendors, called by various names across India. They are hawkers, petty traders, who carry their merchandise on their heads, or in bags hanging on their shoulders, or use a moving cart, or stand or sit at places. They hail from poor families, are semi-literate, have not been recipient of any subsidy or government support or loan. With their petty resource they bring fruits, vegetables, hundreds of items of daily use to the city dwellers at their door-steps, or their walkways and find customers with the street smart strategy. They face all the odds- scorching sun, rain, uncongenial behavior of the civic team. By all accounts they form the vulnerable section of the society. A national policy for safeguarding their right to livelihood was framed in 2009. This policy was later transformed into the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014. The COVID-19 impacted almost every section of society. On the poor people, daily wage workers, domestic helps, hawkers, or for that matter on any one who lives hand to mouth, its impact was very harsh. In order to help the street vendors, the Prime Minister Swawlamban Nidhi (SVANidhi) scheme is launched on 2 July, 2020. The scheme aims to target over 50 lakh street vendors who would be eligible to avail of a working capital loan of up to ₹ 10,000/- in the urban areas, including those from the surrounding peri-urban/ rural areas, to resume their businesses post COVID-19 lockdown. Incentives in the form of interest subsidy at 7% per annum on regular repayment of loan, cash back up to ₹ 1,200 per annum on undertaking prescribed digital transactions and eligibility for enhanced next tranche of loan have also been provided. As per the available reports till writing of this column, over 15 lakh applications had been received and 5.5 applications had been sanctioned.

(Source: Website of Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs, Government of India and Media reports).

A New Condition Imposed on ULBs to Qualify for Finance Commission grants from 2021-22 onwards

States will have to notify floor rates for Property Tax

MOHUA constituted a consultative group of Urban Development Ministers on 29.05.2020

Under article 280 of the Constitution, Finance Commissions are set up after every five years for the purposes enumerated in the article including the distribution between the Union and the States of the net proceeds of taxes which are to be, or may be, divided between them and the allocation between the States of the respective shares of such proceeds, etc. Post 74th Constitutional Amendment (1992) Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and Panchayats are also given grants on the recommendation of (Central) Finance Commissions. A salutary practice of FCs has been that either they specify the item/items on which those grants are to be expended or they impose a condition for effecting some desired reform. Various studies done on the finances of the municipalities have pointed out that the municipalities for various reasons, do not revise rate of property tax, as the Acts expect them to do so periodically. Earlier, because of such a tendency of the ULBs, the 13th Finance Commission had made it mandatory for the States to set up Property Tax Boards.

The 15th Finance Commission (15th FC) in its Report for 2020-21 has recommended that for ULBs to qualify for Finance Commission grants from 2021-22 onwards, States will have to notify floor rates for property tax and thereafter show consistent improvement in collection in tandem with the growth rate of State's own Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP).

- (i) The States will notify (a) floor rates of property tax in ULBs which are in consonance with the prevailing circle rates (i.e. guidance value for property transactions) and (b) floor rates of user charges in respect of the provision of water-supply, drainage and sewerage which reflect current costs/past inflation.
- (ii) The States will put in place a system of periodic increase in floor rates of property tax/user charges in line with price increase.

Adoption of these reforms by the States will lead to increase in property tax collection thereby increasing the revenue of the ULBs. In order to facilitate the implementation of reforms pertaining to property tax, Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has constituted a Consultative Group of Urban Development Ministers on 29.05.2020 under the chairmanship of Union Minister of State (Independent Charge), Housing and Urban Affairs with regional representation from Gujarat, Odisha, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Tripura and Uttar Pradesh.

Ministry has undertaken a landscape study for identification of the best practices in property tax and presented the findings to Consultative Group. Considering the inputs received from Consultative Group, Ministry is preparing a toolkit with actionable recommendations and stepwise implementation plan for undertaking property tax reforms in ULBs. These recommendations in toolkit are aimed to enhance the resources available for ULBs.

(Source: PIB, New Delhi, 22 September, 2020).

Substantial Progress of the National Urban Renewal Mission (Ending March 2020)

Launched in 2015 (and extended till 2022) as a national programme, the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation is a mega-scheme which carries on the ambitious agenda of transformation of urban India that started off with JNNURM (2005). This Mission has the following Thrust Areas: 1) Water Supply, 2) Sewerage and septage management, 3) Storm water drainage to reduce flooding 4) Non-motorized urban transport and 5) Green space/parks. Any achievement in its targets makes a great impact on the Mission cities. Its progress is keenly monitored and reported. Following is a brief summary of the progress of the national mission throughout India, as is widely reported in the Press and displayed on the website of the Ministry:

States across India have completed 2,854 projects worth ₹11,110 crore under the Central government's Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), according to data available on the AMRUT website. Under the scheme, State Annual Action Plans (SAAPs) submitted by all States for the entire Mission period (June 25, 2015-March 31, 2020) have been approved at a cost of ₹77,640 crore, including committed Central assistance of ₹35,990 crore. According to a reply filed by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to a query in the Lok Sabha in March, contracts have been awarded for 5,384 projects costing ₹73,641 crore under the Mission. About 2,855 projects costing ₹64,616 crore are under implementation. Further, 476 projects costing ₹10,460 crore are at various stages of tendering. Some States have taken up projects in excess of their approved SAAP size. In such cases, the entire excess amount shall be borne by the States, the Ministry said. According to data tabled by the Ministry in Lok Sabha in March, 2020. Tamil Nadu tops the chart in completing the highest number of works under the Mission. Tamil Nadu has completed 414 works costing ₹1,168 crore followed by Kerala (408 works, ₹220 crore), West Bengal (325 works, ₹382 crore), Karnataka (198 works, ₹947 crore) and Gujarat (179 works, ₹1,268 crore).

(Source: Ministry website, the Hindu Business Line website)

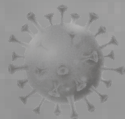
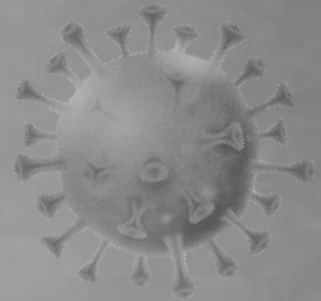
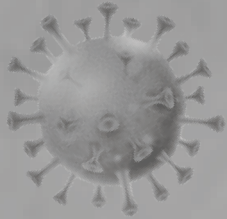
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