

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CONSTRUCTION WORKERS OF INDIA: ITS MEASURES TO WELFARE RESPONSES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

This paper attempts to understand the effect of the COVID-19 shock on the labour market in India by examining the vulnerabilities of the workforce using data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (2018-19). As the role of the state construction welfare board has been crucial, some existing issues related to boards and challenges emerged during the crisis have also been discussed. With simply 24 % of the workforce engaged in regular wage salaried jobs offering a steady flow of income and a mere 2.2% in regular salaried jobs with a written job contract for a period of more than three years and access to all social security benefits, a disproportionately large share of the workforce is likely to face job and income losses as a consequence of the dual shock of the pandemic and lockdown. Direct benefit transfer has partially helped workers to overcome their financial distress, but 65% workers did not receive any benefit due to various issues related to registration and linking of bank accounts with Aadhar. Sluggish process of registration has been a major issue which is being addressed by different mechanisms, but results would be known later. Proper collection of cess and its utilisation is still an important issue and 61% of the cess collected in 2019 was not utilised. Majority of the states are running a number of welfare schemes, but the coverage is poor despite proper guidelines set under the Model Welfare Framework of the Ministry of Labour and Employment. The objectives of Mission Mode Projects are appreciable, but the outcomes are not known even after the completion of deadlines. Above all, the emerging issues of maintaining health and hygiene at worksite and living place and getting vaccinated are major challenges for the sustainability of the construction sector. Hence, a collective effort of the government, employers, and workers' organisations is the need of the hour.

Keywords: Construction workers, Direct Benefit Transfer, Covid-19, Migrant Workers

INTRODUCTION

The widespread outbreak of the COVID-19 virus poses an exceptional challenge globally. It has created a public health crisis an economic crisis as countries across the world have adopted containment policies, physical distancing measures to reduce COVID-19 transmissions. Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE) estimates a large household survey shows that unemployment rates in the months of April and May stood at over 23%, a threefold increase from a rate of 7% at the same time last year. The impact of COVID-19 on labour market is deep and much severe than the previous economic crises. Globally, 225 million jobs were been lost, and the global labour income has declined by 8.3% in the year 2020. This paper attempts to understand the effect of the pandemic and containment measures on labour markets by examining the vulnerability of India's workforce in terms of the nature of work arrangements, security of tenure and the sectoral composition of employment. The devastation in jobs and labour income has disproportionately

affected the young, women, unprotected, disadvantaged, and migrant workers across the world. Unprotected workers are disproportionately affected because of lack of social security benefits such as provision of paid or sick leave. The young labourers who were already unemployed before the pandemic are now vulnerable due to the falling labour demand during the crisis. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2018–2019 data, around 90% of the total workforce in India is informal. They were working without a proper job contract and social security. These workers living in the countryside and in slums in mega-cities were working in poor conditions and living in filthy environment, and the disruption in economic activity and mobility restriction during lockdowns further increased their vulnerability.

To help poor and displaced workers it is required to providing immediate direct income support who have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. Such support needs to be combined with a jobs preservation scheme for formal enterprises to protect low wage workers. Employment guarantee schemes too, will play a serious role in providing support to those rendered unemployed. The crisis in India came in the backdrop of the pre-existing labour market fragilities reflected in higher informality, poor social protection, and high unemployment rate. The impact was felt most by the migrant workers both seasonal and circular, working in the informal sector. According to an estimate, in the urban labour market 51% workers are migrants and about 111 million workers in 2017–2018 comprises circular migrant workers. These migrant workers have a weak emplacement in the urban labour market due to social fragmentation, unstable accommodation, poor privileges; and lack of organisational and political voice. During the second wave in mid-April and May 2021, lakhs of circular migrants returned home in anticipation of the spread of the virus and due to lockdowns in major part of the country. A cessation of economic activity has had severe impact on employment and income. According to Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data more than 100 million people lost jobs during first wave in March–April 2020. Though jobs recovered sharply after unlocking of economic activities, but overall annual employment in 2020–2021 was below the pre-COVID level. Surveys conducted during the first wave of COVID-19 and informal evidence collected also suggest that there would have been significant income losses especially to informal workers around 3 million construction workers lost their jobs in 2020–2021 as compared to 2019–2020.

On the other side, some intervention measures like the gradual easing of the lockdown and mobility restrictions have helped the sector to turn upward and the response of the government to provide direct cash assistance and other assistance in the form of goods, commodities, services, or anything else of value to workers has been noticeable, but a detailed outcome is a matter of evaluation. Further, occupational safety, health and hygiene, proper accommodation, social security benefits, and infection prevention measures have become major issues for construction workers because of the physical intensive nature of the industry. This paper discuss the nature of employment and working conditions of construction workers and the response of the government both at union and the state levels to mitigate their vulnerabilities.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Alsharef, S. Banerjee, S. M. Jamil Uddin, A. Albert and E. Jaselskis (2021) in their article focused on the early impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the U.S. construction industry. The study was achieved by 34 telephone interviews with different project managers, engineers, designers,

and superintendents that represented different states and distinct industry sectors in the United States (U.S.). The interviewees offered information on their experience with the pandemic, including the general and adverse effects experienced. The reported adverse effects included significant delays on projects, inability to secure materials on time, reduction in productivity rates, material price escalations, and others. The study findings will be useful to industry stakeholders interested in understanding the early impacts of the pandemic on the construction industry.

Dr. Poornima G. R and Dr. Suresh Kumar M. N (2020) in their article stated that the impacts of Covid-19 on migration and reverse migration and its fallout on the scrape of labour and the intended labour laws during the time of unforeseen calamities. 17 districts account for the top 25% of India's total male out-migration. The outward movement of workers is largely from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh. Delhi and Mumbai have a migration rate of 43%, 55% respective. Surat has a highest migration rate of 65%.

S. Irudaya Rajan, P. Sivakumar, A. Srinivasan (2020) examines the vulnerability of India's internal migrants in terms of their mobility, gender and mental health. The authors critically analyses the restrictions of public policy in addressing migrants and suggests recommendations for the way ahead.

Abdul Azeez E P, D. P. Negi, Asha Rania and Senthil Kumar A P (2020) in their article explores the impact of COVID-19 on women migrant workers and their families and analysing qualitative interviews of six themes in two localities of Delhi and Gurugram of Haryana. This article was the first documenting the experience of migrant women during the COVID-19 crisis in India. The major issues arising from the study about women's experience the loss of livelihood and debt.

D. Walter (2020) in his article stated that the ILO's assessment predicts recovery from the impact of COVID-19 to be sluggish and uncertain. As a direct support measure during lockdown, the Indian Government had provisioned a package of US\$25 billion, around 0.8% of the GDP. The Reserve Bank of India has taken measures to release liquidity of about US\$18 billion into the banking system.

A. Datta (2020) in her article discusses the impact of the COVID-19-associated national lockdown and the subsequent unlock period on the lives and livelihood of women construction workers in Delhi. A mixed-methods approach involving telephone surveys and in-depth interviews was used to understand the impact of the pandemic on paid work, unpaid household and care work of women workers and their access to essential resources and services.

OBJECTIVE

1. To find out different assistances given by the union and state government to construction workers to compensate their loss of earning due to the lockdown during the first and second wave of covid-19
2. To identify how different issues related to construction workers emerged during the crisis dealt with.

DATA AND METHODS

A major part of the analysis is based on secondary data collection that are different articles, newspaper, Health and Family Welfare Dept., Govt. of Odisha. Different information relating to the total number of workers, employment status, job contract, and social security is based on the data of Employment and Unemployment Round (2011–2012) of NSSO and PLFS 2018–2019. Under Section-12 of Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulations of Employment and Condition Services) Act 1996, a worker is eligible for registration if he/she has completed 18 years of age but has not completed 60 years of age.

ASSISTANCE TO CONSTRUCTION WORKERS DURING COVID-19

This study, only focuses on government support to construction workers due to the unavailability of reliable information for other stakeholders. The Indian government instigated a cash transfer programme along with in kind support to provide a sort of subsistence allowance and short-term relief to construction workers during the emergency. Some states such as Bihar, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and some other states also provided in-kind support to construction workers and bore some special trains which is called *shramik special train* for migrant workers returning to native places. To provide cash assistance to construction workers, MoLE under Section-60 of BOCW Act 1996 advised all states and construction worker's welfare boards (CWBs) to frame a scheme under Section 22 (1) (h) of the Act for transfer of funds in the accounts of construction workers through direct benefit transfer (DBT) mode from the cess fund collected by CWBs. According to MoLE advisory, about Rs. 520 billion was available as cess fund, which may be given to 35 million registered construction workers.

Most of the states and union territories provided cash assistance to construction workers whose registrations were renewed, and bank accounts were linked with Aadhar. A significant number of construction workers were left out who were not registered. Table-1 shows that government claims to have provided Rs. 56.18 billion cash assistance through DBT to 18.3 million workers during the first wave. It is found that little more half of the total registered workers have received cash assistance i.e. around 52% either one-time or on periodic basis which is shown in the table. That means a large number of workers could not get the benefit due to non-availability of bank details of registered workers linked to Aadhar. Few states had not spent even a single penny due to the absence of such record. With respect to PMGKY, the first progress report which shows that 21.7 million construction workers in April 2020 have been benefited through DBT i.e. a total of Rs. 30.7 billion cess funds were used for this purpose. The second progress report in June 2020 shows that 23 million workers have benefitted with the use of Rs. 43.1 billion cess funds.

Table-1 Distribution of DBT to construction workers during 1st wave of covid-19

Major States	Workers received assistance		Total Amount Disbursed		Percent share of workers cash received against registered workers (As on 25.11.2019)	Per cent cash disbursement against cess collection (As on 31.03.2019)
	in millions	% shares	in Billion	% shares		
Andhra Pradesh	1.97	10.78	1.97	3.5	65.8	8.29
Assam	0.22	1.21	0.44	0.8	89	5.06
Bihar	1.11	6.07	2.22	3.9	89.4	13.78
Chhattisgarh	0.2	1.11	0	0	10.4	0

Gujarat	0.37	2.05	0.37	0.7	57.2	1.78
Haryana	0.31	1.7	1.55	2.8	36.3	6.28
Himachal Pradesh	0.13	0.73	0.77	1.4	76.1	11.18
Jammu & Kashmir	0.17	0.93	0.68	1.2	49.7	9.56
Jharkhand	0.2	1.09	0.2	0.4	25	4.5
Karnataka	1.36	7.47	6.81	12.1	88.3	13.43
Kerala	0.69	3.8	0.69	1.2	45.5	3.58
Madhya Pradesh	0.89	4.89	1.78	3.2	28.8	6.59
Maharashtra	0.97	5.3	4.84	8.6	60.1	6.54
Odisha	1.84	10.07	2.76	4.9	67.7	15.05
Punjab	0.29	1.59	1.74	3.1	33.5	13.22
Rajasthan	0.76	4.16	18	32	34.1	80
Tamil Nadu	1.37	7.51	2.74	4.9	48.5	9.27
Telangana	0.83	4.55	1.25	2.2	70.6	10.29
Uttar Pradesh	1.82	10	3.54	6.3	37.6	7.43
Uttarakhand	0.23	1.25	0.46	0.8	98.2	18.19
West Bengal	2.2	12.05	2.2	3.9	70.9	10.28
Delhi	0.04	0.24	0.44	0.8	8.1	2.01
All India	18.24	100	56.18	100	52.3	11.31

Source: Ministry of Labour Employment

Contrary to the above reports, the Ministry of Finance in its press release that 18.2 million construction workers were given cash assistance through DBT and a total of Rs. 49.87 billion had been spent. According to MoLE, the expenditure of Rs. 49.8 billion was in the form of DBT and Rs. 11.9 billion was spent in various types of in-kind support. It was also told that Bihar, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh had not been able to provide direct cash assistance. The major discrepancy is related to cash distribution in Rajasthan. Only 7.6 lakh construction workers in Rajasthan have received direct cash assistance, while the total cess fund distributed is around Rs. 18 billion in Table-1. The lack of coordination in information sharing between the states and the centre and among the ministries has brought such misinformation, which must have come in the way of providing effective support to construction workers.

There are huge variations in terms of the total number of workers who received the cash assistance and the total amount distributed against the available cess fund at the state level. In Assam, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana, Uttarakhand, and Gujarat, more than 50% of the total registered workers received cash assistance. In Delhi migrant construction workers faced a huge crisis and cash assistance was provided to only 8% of the registered workers. Overall, 52.3% registered workers received cash through DBT. The disbursement of cash against the available cess fund as in 2019 shows that Rajasthan distributed 80% of the cess fund through DBT to 7.6 lakh construction workers, which is many times higher than the national average of 11.3%.

Table-2 State-wise distribution of cash through DBT during the first and second wave of COVID-19

Name of the States	Distribution of cash per worker in 1 st wave of covid-19	Distribution of cash per worker in 2 nd wave of covid-19
Delhi	5000	6000
Uttar Pradesh	1000	1000
Tamil Nadu	1000	
Rajasthan	1000	
Punjab	3000	
Odisha	1500	
Maharashtra	2000	1500
Madhya Pradesh	1000	1000
Kerala	1000	1000
Karnataka	1500	3000
Jammu & Kashmir	1000	
Himachal Pradesh	2000	
Haryana	4500	
Gujarat	1000	
Assam	1000	
Andhra Pradesh	1000	

Source: Compiled from COVID-19 labour market measures (India), ILO; CSE Azim Premji University and 25th parliamentary standing committee report on labour 2021.

The above table shows that, majority of the states gave only one-time cash assistance of Rs. 1000 during the first wave of COVID-19. States like Delhi, Haryana, Goa, and Punjab gave per worker assistance between Rs. 1000 and Rs. 5000. States like Haryana and Himachal Pradesh provided cash assistance on per monthly basis. Overall, 4.5% of the fund available in 2021 was distributed among 35.6% workers. Governments of Delhi and Karnataka have claimed to have given Rs. 5000 per worker cash assistance, while Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Kerala gave Rs. 1000 per worker assistance during the second wave which is shown in table-4.

Table- 3 DBT to construction workers during 2nd wave of covid-19, April-May 2021

States	Workers assistance given		Amount Disbursed		Per cent share of workers cash received against registered workers (As on 10.03.2021)	% cash disbursement against cess collection (As on 10.03.2021)
	in million	% share	in billion	% share		
Karnataka	1.9	15.7	5.84	32.5	126.3	8.2
Kerala	0.7	5.6	0.7	3.9	34.8	12.4
Madhya Pradesh	1.2	9.7	1.2	6.7	95	10.5
Maharashtra	1	8.3	1.55	8.6	64.1	2.1
Punjab	0.6	4.7	0.87	4.9	100.3	13
Uttar Pradesh	6.7	54.1	6.7	37.3	118.2	12.7
Delhi	0.2	1.7	1.05	5.9	38.4	4.9
All India	12.4	100	17.95	100	35.6	4.5

Source: Ministry of Labour and Employment, Unstarred Question No. 8, Answered on 19-07-2021 in the Lok Sabha

Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1860, dated 10-03-2021

The impact of the second wave has been severe in terms of health crisis. But the lockdown restrictions were not stringent during the second wave of COVID-19; hence, the impact on construction workers was also partial. Moreover, there was no interstate mobility restriction, provided the RT-PCR report of the traveller was negative. Despite this, it was reported that lakhs of migrant workers left for their homes. To deal with this crisis and also to meet the demand by the workers' union to provide subsistence allowance to workers during the closing down of construction activities, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi have given cash assistance through DBT to registered workers which is shown in Table-4. This table shows that 12.4 million construction workers were given a cash assistance of Rs. 17.95 billion through DBT. In Uttar Pradesh highest number of construction workers get direct assistance but in Karnataka high percentage share of workers cash received against register worker which is 126.3%. Among all the states Punjab is high in percentage cash disbursement against cess collection. MoLE have mentioned that the residency status of a worker should not prevent the worker from registration and that only Aadhar and bank details are necessary.

EXISTING ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The state-wise analysis of registration of workers, collection and use of cess, and implementation of welfare schemes shows poor enactment of these measures even after 25 years of enactment of BOCW Act 1996. Table-4 shows that out of 54 million construction workers in 2018–2019, only 35 million workers were registered during the first wave of COVID-19, as in 2019.

The issue of registration got emphasised during the first wave of COVID-19. The registration of workers has increased by 21% between 2011 and 2019 and there is still a huge variation in the rate of registration across states. More than 50% compound growth in registration between 2011 and 2019 has shown in the states like Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Punjab, and Rajasthan. But, the states like Jharkhand, Assam, and Bihar total registration of workers was 30% and below. Kerala (-1.3%), Madhya Pradesh (7.7%) and Tamil Nadu (3.7%) registered the lowest growth in the last 8 years. A more important issue is related to the annual renewal of registration of workers and linking of the bank accounts of registered workers to Aadhar, then the welfare measures could be availed. Table-4 shows that the renewal of registration was relatively low in states like Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh. It also shows that states like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha, Rajasthan and West Bengal where live registration rate was higher i.e. more than 2 million. States like Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Delhi were low seeding of Aadhar with the bank account. The states like Odisha, Rajasthan, and West Bengal high number of workers accounts were seeded with Aadhar and these states were also high in live registration.

Table-4 State-wise details of estimated and registered workers, their growth and key ratios.

Major States	Estimated Workers (in million)		Registered Workers (in million)		CAGR(2019 over 2011)	Live Registered workers(in Million)	Account Seeded with Aadhar(million)
	2011-12	2018-19	2011	2019		2020	2020
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Andhra Pradesh	3.1	2.3	0.9	3	16.5	2	1.97
Assam	0.7	1.3	0.0056	0.2	62.6	0.3	0.27

Bihar	2.8	4.7	0.0196	1.2	68	1.3	0
Chhattisgarh	0.8	1.2	0.1	1.9	53.7	1.9	0
Gujarata	1.2	1.4	0.0492	0.7	38.3	0.6	0.35
Haryana	1.1	1.2	0.2	0.9	23.7	0.5	0.35
Himachal Pradesh	0.5	0.4	0.0005	0.2	101.9	0.1	0.11
Jammu & Kashmir	0.9	0.8	0	0.3		0.2	0.16
Jharkhand	1.9	2.6	0.0171	0.8	62.6	1	0
Karnataka	1.5	2.1	0.1	1.5	33.8	2.2	1.36
Kerala	2	2.2	1.7	1.5	-1.3	1.5	0.45
Madhya Pradesh	3.4	3.8	1.7	3.1	7.7	0.9	0.89
Maharashtra	2.9	3	0	1.6		1.3	0.82
Odisha	1.9	3	0.1	2.7	60.8	2.1	2.08
Punjab	1.3	1.4	0.0325	0.9	50.6	0.3	0.29
Rajashthan	4.9	3.3	0.1	2.2	59.5	2.3	2.23
Tamil Nadu	3.8	4.1	2.1	2.8	3.7	1.7	1.37
Telangana	0	1.2	0	1.2		0.8	0.83
Uttar Pradesh	8	8.7	0.1	4.9	55.3	1.9	1.81
Uttarakhand	0.4	0.4	0.0016	0.2	87.9	0.2	0.23
West Bengal	2.6	3.9	0.3	3.1	33.2	2.2	2.2
Delhi	0.2	0.4	0.0368	0.5	37.7	0.0365	0.04
All India	47	54.1	7.5	34.9	21.1	25.8	18.02

Source: unit record data of Employment and Unemployment Survey of NSSO 2011-12 and PLFS 2018-19

Cess collection and its optimal utilisation is another point of conversation. In this regard, several instructions have been given to strengthen the mechanism of cess collection and its proper utilisation for the welfare of workers. Though some progress in terms of spending has been observed, but still utilisation ratio is very low which is explain in Table-5. In table-5 only major states amount of cess collection, its amount of utilisation and percentage of construction GAV to national GAV are taken. At the aggregate level, utilisation ratio of cess has significantly increased in the last 8 years, but still over 60% of cess collected is found to be unutilised in 2019. Between 2019 and 2020, around Rs. 113.7 billion cess was collected, but only Rs. 27.8 billion was spent. Even during the first wave of COVID-19, only 11% cess was used in DBT to construction workers.

Table-5 Key ratios of cess spent and collected and share of construction GAV

Major States	Amount of cess collection in crore(Percentage)	Amount of cess spent in crore(Percentage)	Ratio of amount of cess spent and amount of cess collected	% share of construction GAV to national GAV
1	2	3	4	5
Andhra Pradesh	2374.71(4.8%)	519.17(2.68%)	21.9	4.6
Assam	874.78(1.8%)	188.62(0.97%)	21.6	2.3
Bihar	1608(3.2%)	229.41(1.18%)	14.3	3.8

Chhattisgarh	1133.9(2.3%)	949.46(4.89%)	83.7	2.4
Gujarata	2097.629(4.2%)	197.19(1.02%)	9.4	5.7
Haryana	2462.76(5%)	606.01(3.13%)	24.6	3.8
Himachal Pradesh	692.01(1.4%)	96.33(0.49%)	13.9	0.9
Jammu & Kashmir	711.53(1.4%)	301.97(1.56%)	42.4	0.9
Jharkhand	444.91(0.9%)	236.81(1.2%)	53.2	1.8
Karnataka	5071.04(10.2%)	4519.52(23.32%)	89.1	6.2
Kerala	1942.27(3.9%)	2341.02(12.08%)	120.5	7
Madhya Pradesh	2705.95(5.4%)	1454.69(7.50%)	53.8	4.7
Maharashtra	7402.15(14.9%)	402.57(2.08%)	5.4	9.5
Odisha	1830.88(3.7%)	1418.44(7.31%)	77.5	2.6
Punjab	1318.77(2.7%)	708.75(3.65%)	53.7	2.4
Rajasthan	2250.02(4.5%)	1253.71(6.47%)	55.7	5
Tamil Nadu	2957.3(6%)	787.04(4.06%)	26.6	13.1
Telangana	1210.12(2.4%)	262.96(1.35%)	21.7	2.8
Uttar Pradesh	4762(9.6%)	1289.35(6.65%)	27.1	11.7
Uttarakhand	251.11(0.5%)	68.39(0.35%)	27.2	1.3
West Bengal	2138.53(4.3%)	956.75(4.93%)	44.7	6.6
Delhi	2189.74(4.4%)	206.38(1.06%)	9.4	2.5

Source: Cess collected and spent for 2019 have been compiled from Lok Sabha Unstarred Question. State GAV at 2011-12 price has been compiled from National Account Statistics.

As observed in Table 5, there is large-scale variation in the collection and utilisation of cess. More than 50% of the total cess in 2019 was collected by six states like- Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, and Haryana. Collection of cess fund in general is found proportional to the share of construction GVA to national GVA. Kerala (7.0%), Tamil Nadu (13.1%), and Uttar Pradesh (11.7%) had significantly higher share of construction GVA in national GVA; however, these states together spent around 20% of the total cess fund. Kerala spent only 3.6% of cess fund, whereas Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh spent 9.2% and 7.4%, respectively. Many of these states also have a higher share in the total cess collection. Some of the chief states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Delhi spent less than 10% of cess in 2019, whereas Kerala, Karnataka, and Chhattisgarh reported more than 80% spending of cess. From the analysis, it is observed that utilisation of cess and registration of workers is not proportionally related. Those states where normal and active registration rates are high, spending of cess is very low. To demonstrate, Gujarat and Maharashtra with more than 80% active registration spent less than 10% of cess available in 2019. The data on registration are contested with respect to Chhattisgarh which shows very high active registration and utilisation ratio, but the state has no account seeded with Aadhar.

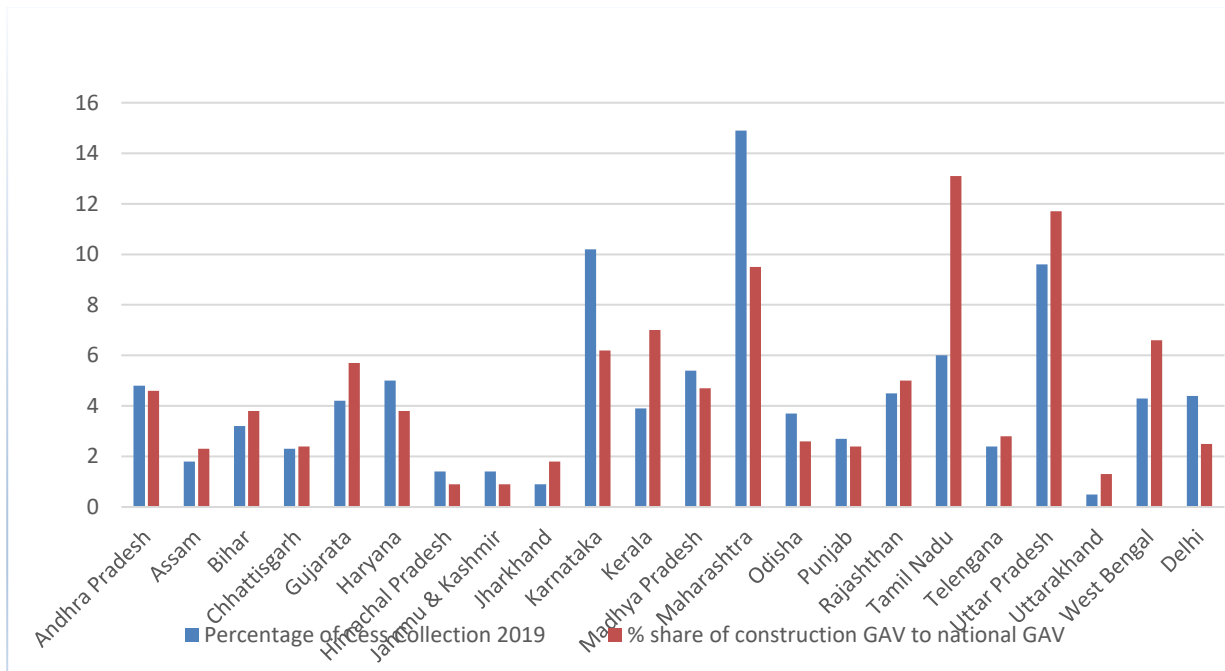


Figure-1 compare the percentage of cess collection and share of construction GAV

The above Figure shows the percentage of cess collection and percentage share of construction GAV to national GAV. In the figure Maharashtra state has high in cess collection and Tamil Nadu is high in construction GAV, after that Uttar Pradesh. But the states like Uttarakhand, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand were low both in cess collection and construction gross value added.

But during COVID-19, it came to notice that only 18 million workers i.e. 34% of total estimated workers could avail the cash assistance through DBT due to non-availability of Aadhar and bank account details in the first wave. In Bihar where details of bank account and Aadhar are mandatory to fill at the time of registration show that no account is linked with Aadhar. To continue the registration, MoLE once again launched an overall, the registration rate has increased, but 30% workers are still not registered and there is a big issue Mission Mode Project (MMP) on July 6, 2020, to register all the left-out construction workers. The aim of the project was providing social security to all, subsistence wage allowance, and collected construction welfare data in a time bound manner. The outcomes of the project, however, are not yet known. The latest information given by MoLE in March 2021 shows that only 34.7 million construction workers are registered with welfare boards.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 crisis has accentuated the problem of high unemployment and weak aggregate demand that the Indian economy was grappling with even before the onset of the pandemic. It has not only resulted in large scale job losses and loss of incomes, but also increased poverty. Cash assistance through DBT has partly helped in reducing the melancholy of the construction workers, but not more than 35% of the total workers in 2018–2019 received the benefit provided by CWBs. Due to non-renewal of annual registration and non-linking of Aadhar to the bank account a significant proportion did not get benefits. During this crisis, it has been realised that registration of all informal workers through an incorporated system is vital to bring some kind of formality in the labour market and also to provide direct welfare measures. Registration of workers is crucial

and most important insofar as welfare measures are concerned. As per the court direction that both union and state governments should complete the process of registration of all informal workers and create a database latest by December 31, 2021. Most of these individuals will not be able to afford remaining unemployed in the months to come and if the prospects of finding jobs in the near future are bleak, they are likely to resort to self-employment in the informal economy as a survival mechanism. Both self-employment and casual employment in India is largely a consequence of the fact that it facilitates work sharing arrangements as the working members of the household share the work and income from the household enterprise. Both self-employment and casual employment in India is largely a consequence of the fact that it facilitates work sharing arrangements as the working members of the household share the work and income from the household enterprise.

Portability of registration and welfare schemes is a major concern for migrant construction workers, and the ways to deal with it have already been discussed in the Mission Mode Project. However, the main concern is how to ensure registration of migrant construction workers in destination states. Moreover, with the start of e-Shram portal the question now is whether the construction workers registered with this portal would get all benefits provided by CWBs. Lack of uniformity in design and implementation of social welfare measures by the CWBs is also an issue that needs to be resolved. Now, a new task would be to coordinate centrally sponsored welfare schemes implemented through the e-Shram portal with state-specific welfare schemes executed through state CWBs.

As the pandemic is not yet over, the efforts to vaccinate, create awareness, provide extra premium to workers, and to maintain health and hygiene at worksite and living place are very crucial. For this purpose, it is very important for all stakeholders to take collective action.

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