

## E- Shram Portal

### What is the issue?

e-Shram registration is a stepping stone towards protection of informal workers. It needs to be followed by restructuring social security and social protection programmes, and simplifying them

### How impoverished are informal workers?

- Q2 2020-21 GDP estimate shows the Indian economy is nearing its pre-pandemic level.
- But the recovery is far from complete for informal workers, including **circular migrants**.

Circular migration or repeat migration is the temporary and usually repetitive movement of a migrant worker between home and host areas.

- Pandemic has exposed the vulnerable status of their growth process.
- Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data show that the **employment-population ratio** for May-August 21 was 36.8% compared to 39.6% in the same period 2 years ago.
- The unemployment rate for both rural and urban areas is still considerably higher.
- It shows that most households perceived their current incomes as lower than their incomes two years ago.
- Persistent hunger and poverty underlie this low incomes and consumption.
- Further, greater health and educational deprivation threatens to increase the rich - poor gap even for future generations.

### Why e-Shram portal was launched?

- The [e-Shram portal](#) is expected to create a unified database for unorganised workers to help them access various benefits of central and state government welfare schemes.
- The portal has by now registered more than 120 million workers, 61% from just 4 states — UP, West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha.
- Due to emergency requirements dictated by the pandemic Supreme Court ordered a time-bound inclusive and universal registration system for informal workers and circular migrants.
- It had also been recommended by the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS) and was already mandated under Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act.

### What are the other social security measures provided to informal workers?

- The e-Shram portal merely lists 13 existing social security and social protection schemes and 6 other employment generation schemes for which some section of workers could be eligible.
- So far workers registered in the portal are entitled only to a pre-existing accident insurance policy that carries a tiny premium.

- Beyond this, no expansion of social security/protection presently appears to be on the cards.
- MGNREGA and the National Food Security Act (NFSA) in the above list are already covered by central legislations.
- NFSA has the widest coverage among social protection programmes.
- Despite cynicism in certain circles, both within and outside government, these two programmes have formed the major bulwark against joblessness and hunger in the pandemic period.
- All other schemes are non-statutory and carry differing eligibility criteria, some drawn from the Socio-economic Caste Census carried out in 2011, others related to poverty status, age etc.
- These criteria are far more demanding, and often quite different from the information, based on self-declaration, which is required for worker's registration on the portal.

## What needs to be done?

- A move from a patchwork of existing schemes towards creating specific statutory entitlements for social security as envisaged in the Code for Social Security.
- The schemes have to be clubbed, and restructured with simpler eligibility criteria to make them universal and entitlement-based.
- **Funding** - The Code on Social Security does not propose any fresh funding mechanism other than one for gig and platform workers.
- Except during the crisis year 2020-21, expenditure on major social security programmes has shown a declining trend.
- Adequate funding for social protection is necessary.
- **Role Of The States** - The Code on Social Security restricts the scope of state schemes to a very few insignificant areas.
- Their role remains unclear in new schemes. Considerable thought has to be given as to how the new design will accommodate the role of the states.
- Several states had also developed registration mechanisms for delivering programmes that are difficult to synchronise with the new national registration mechanism.

## Quick Facts

### Employment-to-population ratio

- The employment-to-population ratio is a measure of the number of people employed against the total working-age population.
- Seasonal variations and short-term labor fluctuations do not affect the employment-to-population ratio.
- Unlike the unemployment rate, the employment-to-population ratio includes unemployed people not looking for jobs.

### Reference

1. <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/e-shram-registration-informal-workers-7685990/>