

Corona lockdown and lost keys of migrants and urban poor

TO PROTECT THE MIGRANTS, STADIUMS, COMMUNITY HALLS CAN BE USED FOR ACCOMMODATING THEM TEMPORARILY AND SUPPLY BASIC HYGIENIC



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he ongoing nationwide lockdown which is supposedly the largest to be in world will certainly help in curbing the rate of virus spread and help keep the volatile health care system from becoming a bottleneck, but it is still not enough to control the spreading of the COVID-19.

During the lockdown, 75% economy will shut down which is equivalent to ₹9 lakh crore for Indian economy and lead to direct output loss of approx. 4.5%. According to MEA 15% of NRIs were in countries with top 10 count of COVID-19. India comprises of a significantly large share of international migrant population; of whom many have been voluntarily travelled back or has been evacuated in view of virus outbreak.

Now here lies the problem, where lockdown has forced the migrants in urban area to go back home. The problem is not only for international migration but persists for any kind of urban migration. Urban work culture and lifestyle which is best suited for self-isolation is often not repeated in rural households thus increasing the risk of contamination. Therefore, it becomes difficult to conduct self-practice of social distancing and others for prevention in rural areas.

In northern and eastern states, it is common for rural men to migrate during off farming season to look for extra money. They have a tendency to go for more developed states like Kerala and Maharashtra, which have been the early carriers and impacted the worst by COVID-19. Within the Koraput district of the eastern state of Odisha, truckloads of individuals have returned from the neigh-



boring states of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, and Kerala. Migrant workers of Rajasthan forced to steer in foot for their villages after Ahmadabad comes under lock down.

Food security threat due to the poverty and lack of income for several Indian women could hinder food and nutrition requirement during the lockdown, particularly for those whose partners have lost work. Getting food and money to people without livelihoods, and keep public services running would be the most important challenges India will face.

According to Nouman Global research, the unorganized sector will still be affected even after the lockdown is over. The GOI announced relief package of Rs 1.7 lakh crore aimed at providing a security net for those who hit the toughest by COVID-19. About 900 million people will get free cereals and cooking gas aside from cash through direct transfers for 3 months.

In a major decision, the government of Rajasthan announced a package worth ₹2,000 crores which will benefit about 1.41 crore poor, disadvantaged and marginalized families that are bereft of their livelihood during the lockdown. Government will also supply ration to the needy people not covered within the NFSA either

Union and State governments are working tirelessly to take all necessary steps to lessen our miseries by giving their political differences a go-by

with the assistance of donors, philanthropists or by utilizing untied funds available with the District Collectors. UP government will pay ₹1,000 per month to 15 Lakhs daily wagers and 20.37 lakh to construction workers to assist them meet their daily needs. Similar measures have also been taken by other state governments.

Though both national and state governments ensures no shortage of cash and resources for helping out the poor, the question here is how the institutional voids will be handled so that the migrant, urban poor and daily wage who are work-

ing within the unorganized sector with no ration cards can also avail these benefits. Informal sector has 80% of the present India's workforce with one third still working as casual labor. Migrants in urban areas, who belong to rural areas, are stuck without work, and shelters are not covered either in MNREGA or the PDS.

Therefore, to protect the migrants, stadiums, community halls, higher secondary schools etc. can be used for accommodating them temporarily and supply basic hygienic to scale back the risk of community transmission.

Pestering of migrant workers should be strictly taken care of. Harassment, beating, or money snatching should be completely stopped. Setting up of community kitchens for food, supply of free grain and dal (pulses) from the FCI is the need of the hour. Interstate co-operation to make the ration card and aadhar card benefits should be facilitated everywhere and not restricted to that particular locality.

The above suggestions are some humanitarian relief measures and supplementary benefit, however, a full proof economic and social security plan is needed urgently to save migrant labor and poor from the pandemic.

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY THE AUTHOR ARE PERSONAL



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