

Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the migrant workers: A case study of Indian migrant workers

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ABSTRACT: The novel corona virus which is also known as covid-19 has its origin in China. The virus then eventually spread to all over the world. The death tolls all over the world are still on the rise. Indian government had announced a complete nation wise lockdown from mid march of 2020 to prevent the spread of the novel corona virus. This sudden nation wise lockdown posed a real challenge for the migrant workers who went to work in different parts of the country from their native states. As there was no transport available, the migrant workers forced to stay in the other states. Their day by day life became challenging as there was no job available for them in the lockdown period. They started to face serious economic crisis as there was no money available in their hands and started to live a starvation life. Most of the workers started to migrate to their native state by walking a long distance through the rail line as it was easier to identify the track. Many of them died in train accident as they slept over the train line due to starvation and fatigue. The Indian Government eventually accommodated Shramik special train and bus to bring back the migrant workers to their native place. The migrant workers are still going through hardship as they don't have any earning job to do in their native place.

Index Terms—COVID- 19, Migrant workers, Lockdown, hardship

INTRODUCTION

During the Covid-19 period, the Indian migrant workers have faced many difficulties. Due to lockdown in the country, many migrant workers have faced food shortages, lost of income and became helpless. They have been forced to stay in the other state as there were no transports available in the lockdown. Later on Central Government have arranged Shramik special train to bring them back home. Majority of the migrant workers are from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh. Many of the migrant workers went Delhi, Chennai and Mumbai for work.

Shortages of Food

Although the Centre and State Government have ensured that the migrant workers will get sufficient ration, but same doesn't happened due to multiple reasons. Many of the migrant workers don't have any ration card as they have remained outside for a long time. Later the State Government have also arranged token for them who don't have any ration card. In the hard situation many of the migrant workers started to coming back home by walking a long distance. Many of them died in train accident. Even when they were coming back home by availing Shramik special train, maintenance of Social distancing was not possible due to huge gathering in the train.

Relief camps

Different State Government have arranged special relief camp for the migrant workers. In the camp they have provided shelter and food for the migrant workers. It really helped the migrant workers as they don't have any money to pay for the rent and buy food for themselves. In the camp necessary medicines, sanitizer and mask were also provided.

Arrangements of Transports

Central Government have asked the migrant workers to register themselves for accommodation in the special train. Although it sparks a lot of confusion as the workers don't know from where and when they will get the desired train. Eventually the Central Government have arranged Shramik special train to bring back the migrant workers. Different State Government have also arranged buses to accommodate the migrant workers. By the end of the month of May, majority of the migrant workers have come back home by availing these shramik special trains and buses.

Relief Measures

The central Government have arranged relief measures for the migrant workers. The Government in the month of April have released Rs 12 Crore under the NRDF for arranging food and shelter for the migrants. The Central Government have also initiated "Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan" for job opportunities for the migrant workers.

Quarantine measures

The Central and different State Government have set up different quarantine centre for the migrant workers who are coming back home. Different State Government have ensured that the migrant workers should remain in quarantine for at least of 14 days. During the quarantine time the workers faced many difficulties as the neighbours had asked them not to come in contact to the locality. The workers even don't get sufficient food in the quarantine centre.

Deaths

In the lockdown period many migrant workers have died due to starvation and lack of appropriate medical care. Many of the migrant workers have also died in the train accident. More than 200 migrant workers have died in train accident while they tried to return home by walking along the railway track.

Conclusion

Although the world has seen different pandemic before Covid-19, but the characteristics of this virus is totally different from the other and hence it is known as novel corona virus. India is now on the verge of community transmission to this disease. Indian Government enacted a nation wise lockdown to prevent the transmission of this disease. This lockdown highly impacted on the migrant workers as it posed a serious economic threat to them. The migrant workers of West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Jharkhand faced a very stressful and challenging life in the lockdown period and many of them died due to starvation. The Indian Government eventually bring them back to their native places by arranging Shramik special train and buses. The migrant workers had to undergone a self quarantine of 14 days after coming back from other places. The migrant workers of India are still in mental trauma as they are still uncertain about their future. Only the time can tell whether they will be able to regain their job in the other states or might have to change their profession and have to settle themselves in their native places.

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