
AN EVALUATION STUDY OF ATMANIRBHAR BHARATH SCHEMES FOR MIGRANTS

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ABSTRACT

Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan is the new version of 'Make in India' which was announced by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on May 12th, 2020, with a new vision. The detailed announcements were made in a five-day relief package by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman to mitigate the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The paper is based on secondary data. The study also found that the majority of the informal and migrant workers are working in marginal and small-scale industries. These workers are the major victims of the pandemic. The Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan provides different provisions and relief packages, like loans to MSMEs to increase employment and production. The scheme includes relief packages like food distribution to needy people; health services; employment creation through MGNREGA; and housing for the urban poor.

Keywords: Pandemic, MSME, Atmanirbhar Bharat, Migrants

INTRODUCTION

The year 2019 brought with it a new pandemic called COVID-19, which was first reported in December as per WHO reports and put the whole world in an unprecedented crisis that has pushed it into a state of lingering uncertainty. The COVID-19 pandemic, a corollary of the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2, has led to innumerable deaths, a global public health crisis, redundancy, general economic depression, and quarantines (Aragona et al., 2020). The coronavirus pandemic caused a massive shift in the existing system, creating a whirlpool of challenges that people had never faced before and had no idea how to overcome. This eventually created overwhelming fear and mounting anxiety among the people due to the novelty of the crisis and the uncertainty it brought with it about how and when the situation would get back to normal. The biggest challenge was the complete lack of an effective preventive vaccine and treatment method to overcome the coronavirus.

The pandemic had an economic, psychological, political, and social impact in addition to physical effects. People belonging to different socio-economic strata were affected adversely in this situation. Without considering their social status, everyone prayed for the fall of this health crisis. The pandemic changes people's ways of thinking, working, and interacting with one another around the world. It has also provided the world with a lesson about the worthlessness of the rat race and the fragility of human life. The pandemic brought with it lockdowns and travel bans that were imposed by governments all over the world as a necessity to tackle the pandemic and rein in its spread. However, the lockdown disturbs the daily routine of the people, especially the working class, who are put in a major financial predicament. For survival, the uncertainty of a new batch of novel practices came into existence as a part of rigorous mitigation efforts such as household quarantine, social distancing, vigilant sanitization, facemasks, hand washing, avoidance of public gatherings and public

transportation, etc (Rolland, 2020). As time passes, people slowly understand the reality and adopt the new way of life with the virus. Daily wage earners are the worst sufferers of this lockdown. With this enforcement of the lockdown, not only were they without jobs but also frustrated because of the cessation of their daily income on which they survived (Ram, 2020). Their very livelihood came to a complete standstill. As a result, they could not meet their and their family's daily need. Migrant workers were discovered to be the most vulnerable among the working class to economic fallout. The situation impacted people of all socioeconomic backgrounds; additionally, it exposed the obvious disparities that exist in socioeconomic and healthcare facilities. The pandemic imposes a mental strain on the common people, and migrants are highly and adversely affected by this crisis. There are about 100 million internal migrant workers in India, and most of them are daily wage earners who have traveled from their states to other states in search of semi-skilled and unskilled jobs. According to the National Sample Survey 2007-08, out of the total workforce in India, about 28.3% were migrants. According to the 2011 census, about 37% of India's population was found to be migrants. The migrants were trapped in the lockdown with no money and no jobs, facing a major economic setback, besides being isolated from their families due to the sudden lockdown. Total migrants increased by 30% between the 2001 and 2011 census. Migrants' major destination states are Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala. In the lockdown situation, people are privileged to stay at home with their families, but migrants are stuck in migrant land with no means to survive. Migrants face more hardship than anyone else, not only financially but also mentally and socially. In order to alleviate the suffering of migrants, central and state governments announce many programs and policies.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The Atmanirbhar Bharat scheme for turning a crisis into an opportunity The best example is that the production of PPE kits and masks in India has gone up. Remaking that self-reliance is the only way out for India. Self-reliance will make globalization human-centric. The definition has changed in a globalized world, and it is different from being self-centered. India's fundamental thinking and tradition of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" provides a ray of hope to the world. This should be seen in the context of Human-Centric Globalization versus Economic-Centralized Globalization. Self-reliance does not mean cutting India off from the world. India believes in the welfare of the world and India's progress is linked with the world. The world believes that India has a lot to contribute to the development of humanity as a whole. The union government also stressed the need to be vocal about local products and urged people to buy only local products. In the same way, a pandemic poses a challenge. The major victims are informal sector workers and migrant laborers who are working in the informal sector. The majority of the labourers are working in MSMEs. The scheme provides a boost to the MSME sector to increase the employability of migrant workers and production. Under Athamanirbhar Bharath, the government provides food grains to eligible families, employs MGNREGA, and housing to needy people in urban areas. The present study tries to analyse the Athamanirbhar Bharath scheme for informal and migrant workers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Smita Dubey and Harish Kumar Dubey (July 2020). The study tries to analyze the provisions under the scheme. The objective of the paper is to capacitate some sectors to achieve self-reliance and to find out the problems in implementing the Atmanirbhar Bharat scheme. The author extracted various themes under the Atmanirbhar Bharat and the top five themes are related to defence and products. The majority of the tweets are on the positive side, as shown by the sentiment analysis. (Rajat Sharma and Dr. Sahil Gupta) 2021). Atmanirbhar Bharat encourages expansion and boosts a self-reliant India.

Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan on five pillars shall be treated not as a gradual reform but as a quantum leap so that we can convert the current adversity into an advantage. (Asok Kr Bose, 2022) The primary objective of the study is to identify various challenges and solutions for the supply chain amidst the COVID pandemic and to determine Atmanirbhar as one of the possible solutions. The study adopts both primary and secondary data to substantiate the concept of Atmanirbhar Bharat. The survey collects data from middle and upper-level managers across industries through the questionnaire method and uses multiple regression techniques for analysis. The study finds a substantial reduction in imports, delays, affected logistics, and an impact on investment returns as significant supply chain challenges to industries. (Dr. Ranjith P.V. and Dr. Ajay Massand, 2021).

RESEARCH GAP

Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan is the new version of 'Make in India' which was announced by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on May 12th, 2020, with a new vision. The detailed announcements were made in a five-day relief package by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman to mitigate the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many studies have been done on the provisions under the scheme and the problems with the effective implementation of the scheme. A few studies have been done on the impact of the program on the different sectors, but no studies have been done on the impact of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan on MSMEs and migrant workers. The present study tries to analyse the impact of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan on MSMEs and migrant workers.

OBJECTIVE

- To study the impact of COVID-19 on the MSME sector in India
- To analyse the measures taken to protect the migrants under Athmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan during COVID-19

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on secondary data, secondary data collected from census reports, newspapers, journals, and other publications. The study is descriptive.

ATMA NIRBHAR BHARAT SCHEME FOR MIGRANTS

Amidst the outbreak of a novel coronavirus crisis in the country, the union government announced various economic measures under the Atma Nirbhar Bharat Package (ANBP) in the middle of May 2020 for migrant workers across the country. Under the scheme, the Department of Food and Public Distribution has allocated a total quantity of about 8 lakh MT of food grains to all states and UTs to mitigate the food security requirements of migrants across the country. This scheme covers those people who were neither covered under the national food security (NFSA) nor under any other state public distribution system scheme or were not able to access PDS food grains for any reason during the unprecedented COVID-19 situation. The number of inter-state migrants was not documented anywhere, but as a matter of abundant precaution and taking into account the extensive media coverage, a very liberal estimate of about 8 crore migrants across the country was made. The intention was to provide adequately for all eventualities so that the allocation did not fall short of the requirement. It needs to be emphasized that no data on the estimated or actual number of such people across the country was available from either the central government or states. In fact, the scale of the problem, as not highlighted in the media, was such that it required a compassionate and generous response from the government so that no one was left out. The Department of food and public distribution had liberally allocated a quantum of food grains to cover the maximum number of

migrants and stranded migrants in the country. The department has allocated an additional 10% of food grains to states for uniform availability of food grains. During the implementation of the scheme, the food and civil supplies departments in all states and UTs made rigorous efforts to identify the maximum number of migrants and stranded migrants in their respective states, such as people in transit, quarantine centers, labour camps, construction sites, etc., and took support from their counterparts in labour departments, district administration, civil society, NGOs, etc., and thus, based on the identification and surveys, the states and UTs combined indicated an estimated figure of about 2.8 crore migrants and stranded migrants who could be potentially benefitted from the distribution of free food grains under the scheme and mobilized all the resources on a war footing to distribute the free food grains to all such people, not only through the Fair Price Shops but also through special distribution centers across major roads and highways; and through the use of mobile vans to reach out to the maximum number of such people wherever they were. The states lifted 6.38 LMT of food grains that could not be completely utilized or distributed. The reports confirm the lower utilization of and the actual number of migrants was much lower, and if they had returned to their home states, then they were already covered either under NFSA or the State Ration Card scheme. Some states and UTs have drawn subsidized food grains from the Open Market Sales Schemes (OMSS) and have provided the same to various civil societies, NGOs, and district administrations to deliver food grains, etc. States have also used SDRF resources in the initial period to cater to the food requirements of migrant/stranded migrants, which is an indication that all migrant/stranded migrants have been covered and the Atmanirbhar Bharath scheme has served the purpose for which it was brought out. It should, therefore, be seen as the success of this timely intervention rather than otherwise.

According to India's spending analysis, informal and migrant workers who are working in medium and small industries (MSMEs) are one of the worst affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and government support for smaller enterprises and informal workers during a pandemic is crucial. The government is trying to register informal workers to make it easier for them to access benefits. Somehow it is successful. While programs for migrant workers in the state they come from were only pilots and did not help migrants in the long term, the major drawback is that the criteria for relief packages for the MSME sector excluded over 90% of MSMEs, and there are few programs in urban areas to help migrants return to work.

The majority of them are migrant workers, and the majority are informal. According to the RBI September 2020 report, as employment hubs in urban India shut down abruptly with the imposition of a nationwide COVID-19 lockdown, the largely informal workforce lost work overnight, prompting a mass exodus of migrant workers to their villages. About 40 million migrant workers returned home. The return of migration disrupted labor supply in urban areas, impacting MASES productivity. Production in the sector fell from an average of 75% of capacity to just 13% in May 2020, two months into the lockdown.

COVID-19'S IMPACT ON MSMEs

The MSME sector contributes around 30% of the gross value added. Just 13% of India's 63 million MSMEs were registered by August 2021, meaning that the majority of the workers in the sector are informal workers, who do not have employment, job, or social security afforded to employees of informal sector enterprises. About 73% of rural and 67% of urban female workers in the construction sector and 59% of rural and 51% of urban laborers in manufacturing are migrants. Besides the disruption in material and labour supply, MSMEs also suffered shocks from a fall in external and domestic demand. According to the All India Manufacturers' Organisation, 35% of MSMEs and 37% of self-employed persons began shutting down operations during the pandemic in June 2020. The

survey further revealed that MSMEs retained only 44% of the labor force and 69% reported an inability to survive longer than three months. The second wave of coronavirus was another jolt to the MSME sector, which had only begun to pick up in the aftermath of the first wave. Migrants who had returned to work found themselves out of work again.

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES TO HELP MSMEs

The central government announced a number of relief packages under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan (ABA), including support to the MSME sector in May 2020. The scheme provides Rs 3 lakh crore of collateral-free loans to assist 4.5 million MSME units to increase production and operational capacity. An additional Rs 4,000 crore was provided to the credit guarantee fund trust for micro and small enterprises to encourage banks to lend loans to stressed units. However, only borrowers with an annual turnover of Rs 100 crore were eligible for these schemes. As many as 99% of MSMEs are micro-enterprises with an annual turnover of less than Rs 5 crore, as per MSME ministry data. Only 1% of MSMEs were eligible for the ABA relief packages.

States like Uttarakhand launched the Mukhyamantri Swarozgar Yojana (MSY) to disburse loans and grants to MSME units, and one of the key criteria is to avail the scheme, deterring returnees. Different state governments also amended labor laws, some of which are expected to help MSMEs ease constraints and increase production. But these alone could not mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on MSMEs' production capacity and their ability to absorb labor, given the decline in demand and their large outstanding dues (RBI Report). Furthermore, there are some bottlenecks for MSME growth, such as infrastructure, logistics, and investment in the sector.

GOVERNMENT AID FOR MIGRANTS

The government takes measures to mitigate the livelihood crisis and absorb this workforce in their source states. The government expanded the Gram Udyog Vikas Yojana (a program under the Ministry of MSME to develop village industries) to include Agarbatti-making, beekeeping, and pottery, but on a pilot basis. The union government launched the e-SHRAM portal. On August 26, 2021, register workers in the unorganized sector as a step towards the delivery of welfare benefits to them. Over 84 million workers have been registered, per the e-SHRAM dashboard. Poor registration. Mandatory use of Aadhaar, server problems, inadequate information on the scheme, and social security are some of the reasons for poor registration. In addition, marginal self-employed laborers, who work in micro-units, especially in the manufacturing sector, and are often migrants themselves, do not meet all the criteria to get subsidized loans. These units do not have the necessary details required to make a company profile, such as properly written orders, advanced work orders from vendors, etc., to avail of loans.

URBAN MSMEs IGNORED

According to the national sample survey 2015-16, nearly 49% of the MSMEs are in urban areas and employ 55% of the urban workforce. Some schemes, namely the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme, implemented by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), try to "arrest the migration" of youth from rural to urban localities. (Annual Report of the MSME Ministry 2020–21)

The majority of migrants are located in the urban periphery, where access to crucial services is limited. Yet there are very few schemes in receiving states for labourers to secure employment through the MSME sector for returning migrants. Instead, schemes such as Gram Udyog Vikas

Yojana try to absorb the return migrants and discourage them from migrating again, even as migration is one of the livelihood strategies of low-income households.

Another scheme The PM Svanidhi Scheme was launched on June 1, 2020, as a part of Atmanirbhar Bharat. It aims to encourage self-employment to sustain the livelihoods of those who lost work because of the pandemic. The scheme provides affordable working capital loans of up to Rs 10,000 to street vendors to enable them to resume their business. But only 11% benefited from the scheme. (India Spend report)

Further, the working conditions of migrants within some of the states with major MSEM clusters have worsened. There have been some programs to help MSMEs and migrants, but there have been no significant structural developments to include migrants within the social protection ecosystem, such as through e-Shram. The government has ensured the portability of benefits from government programs such as the PDS for food grains, even when people change states, but its implementation is not easy. It has several issues. For example, access to the PDS in India assumes that people have ration cards and that shops have access to technology to verify the person's identity. Some states were successful in identifying 100 PDS beneficiaries.

LOW MSME REGISTRATION AND ACCESS TO RELIEF PROGRAMS

The MSME ministry's Udyam registration portal, launched in July 2020, had registered 5.91 million MSMEs by December 8, 2021. Of the registered enterprises, micro-enterprises stood at 5.59 million, followed by small enterprises at 298,621 and middle-sized enterprises at 33,243. But the registration of the unit on this site does not make it a separate entity, as with an incorporated company's informal sector. While the government has said that registration will be established to receive benefits, such as the ability to participate in government procurement and access credit, the portal has been described as compliance and data-gathering exercise. The registration of MSME in the Udyam portal and its impact on informal migrant workers is unclear. But formalization may be more accommodating towards the idea of registering their migrants, especially if they are able to benefit from the formalization, such as through Udyam. It could act as a soft nudge for companies to register migrants.

MGNREGS SUPPORT RETURNING MIGRANTS

- 14.62 crore person-days of work generated till 13th May 2020
- Actual Expenditure till date is around Rs. 10,000 Cr
- Work offered to 2.33 Crore wage seekers yesterday in 1.87 Lakh Gram Panchayats
- 40-50% more persons enrolled, compared to May last year
- The average wage rate rose to Rs. 202 from Rs. 182 in the last FY
- Drive being undertaken to enroll returning migrants
- States are advised to provide work to migrant workers as per the provisions of the Act
- Planning for continuing MNREGA works in Monsoon as well: plantations, horticulture, livestock-related sheds

AFFORDABLE RENTAL HOUSING COMPLEXES (ARHC) FOR MIGRANT WORKERS / URBAN POOR

Migrant labour/urban poor face challenges in getting houses at affordable rent. The government will launch a scheme under PMAY for migrant labour/urban poor to provide ease of living at affordable rent by,

- i. Converting government-funded housing in the cities into Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHC) under PPP mode through concessional rate.
- ii. ii. Incentivizing manufacturing units, industries, institutions, and associations to develop Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHC) on their private land and operate; and
- iii. iii. Incentivizing State Government Agencies / Central Government Organizations on similar lines to develop Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHC) and operate. Ministry will issue detailed guidelines.

LABOUR CODES - BENEFITS FOR WORKERS

The definition of the inter-state migrant worker was modified to include migrant workers employed directly by the employer, workers directly coming to a destination state of their own besides migrant workers employed through a contractor.

- **Portability of welfare benefits** for migrant workers.
- **Extension of ESIC coverage pan-India to all districts** and all establishments employing 10 or more employees as against those in notified districts/areas only.
- Extension of ESIC coverage to employees working in establishments with fewer than 10 employees voluntarily
- Mandatory ESIC coverage through notification by the Central Government for employees in hazardous industries with less than 10 employees.
- Social Security Scheme for Gig workers and Platform workers.
- Re-skilling fund introduced for retrenched employees.
- All occupations were opened for women and permitted to work at night with safeguards.
- Provision of Social Security Fund for unorganized workers.
- Gratuity for Fixed Term Employment - Provision of gratuity on completion of one year of service as against 5 years.

CONCLUSION

Atmanirbhar Bharat plays a pivotal role in the self-reliance of the Indian economy. It helps to achieve self-reliance in many products, especially those needed by the health sector. The scheme provides different relief packages for different sectors. MSMEs are one of the major sectors to receive packages under the scheme. A major reason for its importance to MSMEs is that these units employ migrant and informal sector workers. These workers are major victims of the pandemic. Due to the pandemic, these workers lost their jobs and livelihood. To employ these workers, the government injects investment into MSMEs and distributes the food grains to the eligible population, housing the urban poor and creating employment through MGNREGA and health facilities for workers.

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