

Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan and its Role during Covid-19

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Abstract

The world today has been severely affected by the covid-19 pandemic and India is no exception. Amid this crisis, the most affected have been the labor class. The internal migrant workers in India, despite being highly vulnerable in terms of physical and mental health, have remained the backbone of the Indian economy². In this paper, the impact of Covid-19 on migrant workers, the struggles faced by them, and how 'Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan' has helped the workers to fight with the situation. This article also depicts the views of different authors on the pandemic and also shows some statistics of the proposed scheme 'Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan' to get a clear picture of its functionality and its impact in various states of India. Apart from depicting the views of different authors, some interpretations of their views and proposed solutions.

Keywords: Covid-19; Migrant labourers; GKRA; Livelihood.

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused many dramatic changes in social and economic life of humans all over the world. This outbreak has not only affected the lives of people but also the economy of nations adversely. After COVID lockdown, many migrant workers made a move to their villages in search of employment opportunities. This led to the outbreak of many unemployment problems in India. The returning migrants significantly faced many adversities and there was a necessity to produce employment and support to such workers. Government of India realized that these migrant

workers need focused and constant support for converging and receiving resources of different schemes of central government focusing on specific actions. Keeping this in mind, our honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched 'Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan' on 20th June 2020. This scheme was operational for next 125 days and covered 116 districts across six states namely Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh¹¹.

The Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan is a new initiative from government to address the core issues for the next few months. This is an important program launched on 20 June by Prime minister which is cru-

cial for many reasons. First, this program main target is to uplift the governments ambitious Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. This program focusses on Twenty-five core works of the government in realizing the "Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan" involving projects like Jal Jeevan Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana etc. will help migrants in making them experienced with the help of skill mapping. Second, the program makes sure 125 days of employment to 67 lakhs migrant workers in states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha and Jharkhand which helps for around two-third of the migrated labours. Third, this program has an estimated budget of 50000 crores across 14 existing schemes which will ensure the funded amount serves the neediest and support rural demand which saw a steep decline after lockdown¹⁰.

This Scheme has many significant objectives. The major objective includes providing employment to all the migrants workers who returned to their villages and also for affected rural people. Other major objectives include developing villages with better infrastructure and other facilities, to provide long term livelihood opportunities and to meet the economic necessities of migrants. Since the problems faced by these migrants were very much adverse and made a significant change in their social lives, it is necessary to gain awareness about the government action during that period of time and to gain knowledge on Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan scheme and its operations to overcome the pandemic. This scheme played a major role in supporting migrant labourers and has done its part during the difficult times. So, this forced us to work on this scheme and its role during COVID.

This scheme also has some long-term measures in order to provide some benefits in the future also. The first long-term measure includes creating a unified economy which offers free movement of labourers and capital between states. For example, the states having older populations would require younger populations, the states having younger population could supply it. The second long-term measure includes establishing a migration commission. According to this scheme, it should be given the mandate to prepare a proper social protection and welfare system for workers. The third moto is to strengthen the existing schemes such as MGNREGA by adequately funding in order to provide employment to migrants for at least the rest of the months of this year.

Literature Review

Dr Navaneeta Bhuyan (2020)¹ focused on the impacts of Covid-19 on migrant labourers in India and how Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan has played its role

during the covid crisis. The author made a study on government policies that were targeted to help the migrant labourers. He also gave an overview of how the sudden lockdown impacted the life of rural people, reasons for the largescale migration of during lockdown and measures taken by the state and the central government to help the migrants. Apart from these, the author gave a brief description of how Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan was implemented and also made an analysis on whether government has taken sufficient measures to support their livelihood.

Sangeeta Yadav and Kumar Ravi Priya (2020)² shows an ethnographic research on the status of migrant workers during the lockdown and also suggested some strategies and activities that may help them in an effective manner. The authors also explored the future actions that can improve the status of migrant workers. They also mentioned how the lockdown has changed the social and mental status of workers. They also gave a brief explanation on mitigating the crisis and challenges and mentioned various actions taken by the government such as arranging special buses and trains for migrants, arrangement of medical facilities, temporary shelters, food and water to the migrants during the crisis.

Pearl Monteiro (2021)³ mainly focuses on impact of Covid-19 on migrant workers. The lockdown caused a lot of adversities to labourers especially to the one who are migrated due to lack of employment opportunities. The author focused on the fundamental right to health of the migrant worker. Author described a conceptual and legal view of Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan, introduced by government of India to support migrant workers. The paper focuses on the 'Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979', discusses on the requirements for migrant workers. The paper traces the constitutional and legislative frameworks related to migration labourers. And also, author tried to analyse precedents and made some guidelines on Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan.

Rituparna Bhattacharyya, Pranjit Kumar Sarmab, Mr Manjit Nath (2020)⁴, Based on secondary literature and GIS techniques, the authors made the D-series census analysis on labour migrants during the covid-19 pandemic. The author mentioned the role of Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan during this period and provided some information such as 500 billion rupees of package has been provided to help more than 670 thousand of migrants under this Abhiyaan. The author also made a statistical interpretation on the movement of migrants of India such as depicting graphs among intra-district, inter-district and inter-state migrants which provide us some additional information.

Ranjana choudhari (2020)⁵ discussed many issues such as economic constraints due to loss of jobs, psychological distress during the pandemic and adverse occupational health scenario during lockdown. And she made some conclusions such as migrants are important for the development of acute, chronic and adverse health consequences due to covid-19 pandemic. She also illustrated some consequences of these adverse effects such as economic and social impact on our country. Therefore, these impacts needed to be taken into consideration and must be overcome by taking proper steps and protocols. The government must also take some initiatives to overcome these problems as soon as possible.

Anoop Satpathy, Xavier Estupiñan and Bikash Kumar Malick (2021)⁶ mainly focus on how Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan (GKRA) benefits the employment and livelihood opportunities for migrant workers returning to villages and rural labours due to lockdown. The research study states that undeveloped countries are badly affected due to lockdown enforced by pandemic. The authors stated that GKRA itself offers some money and also utilizes the fund money that has been collected. They also focused on poverty and inequality of migrant workers and rural citizens. This strengthened wage policy is a main component of fiscal policy to improve economic growth at the crisis levels. The paper effectively discusses the framework of Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan by setting and maintaining wages at the sufficient level and also provides the livelihood security to the labours who are migrated.

Adeel Ahmad Khan (2020)⁷ shows the struggle faced by millions of Indian laborers during the pandemic to access aid to survive during the lockdown. The author described various scenarios such as Manoj Ahiwar, twenty-five-year-old migrant who rushed to Delhi to work and this struggles during the lockdown and also gave attention to the incident where 16 migrant workers were killed on a railway track in their sleep. He also mentioned various actions taken by the government to help these migrants including Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan. He also suggested some steps and solutions to overcome these kinds of issues. The main concern was to portray the struggles faced by the Indian migrant workers during covid-19 and how the workers has fought those difficult situations.

S. Irudaya Rajan, P. Sivakumar & Aditya Srinivasan (2020)⁸ described the impact of Covid-19 on migration and adversities faced by migrant workers. The authors focused on five critical areas by dividing the paper into five sections. First section gives information about the characteristics of migrant work-

ers. Second section discusses about gendered aspects of pandemic. The third section gives a brief description of mental health issues of migrant workers. Fourth section says about the limitations of schemes introduced by government to support migrant workers. The final section provides guidelines for including migrant policies. This paper accounts the crisis of migrant workers by overviewing the internal migrant workers condition in accordance to gender, mental health and security provisions.

Mohd Salman Kavish (2020)⁹ covered various areas such as India's initial response to COVID-19 before the lockdown, the Reverse Migration, Migration and the loss of livelihood and impact of COVID-19 lockdown on Migrant labourers. The author also depicted the social and economic status of people in India. He also suggested some actions which could help the migrants during the lockdown. He also the interpreted the success rate of the proposed solutions in order to gain a clear vision of the future struggles. He also mentioned that inclusion of migrant labourers in the official statistics and access could help to formulate some policies and programmes in our country since the process of migration has affected both the rural and urban community.

Madhunika Iyer (2020)¹⁰ initially discusses some of the activities that were suspended. And also, the author stated the activities that caused decline in production. In this paper the author highlighted about some of the facts of migrant workers and also mentioned the relief measures introduced by government of India like Garib Kalyan Rojgaar Abhiyaan. She also presented the directives issued by Supreme Court on migrant workers associated with lockdown. She also mentioned the various reasons for migration and briefly described about size of migrant labour force. The paper also contains various steps taken by government towards migrant workers during pandemic. The author also provided some statistics related to migrant workers. The statistic showed the data related to number of months in which workers struggled in various states and how the government responded to the situation. She also suggested some solutions to overcome these problems but they may take more time to get implemented and followed by all people in all states.

Methodology

The background and the objectives of Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan Scheme are collected from the official website (<http://gkra.nic.in/>). The Literature Review is based on the struggles and problems faced by the migrant workers in India during Covid-19 pandemic and the Role of Garib Kalyan Rojgar

Abhiyaan. The data for this literature review is collected from various research papers and some online websites. Some statistics are used to depict the progress and functionality of Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan and also used to display some information regarding the migrant workers and their movement within states. The objectives of this paper are to depict the functionality and progress of Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan and to depict the statistics on migrant workers and the scheme.

Data Analysis

In Data Analysis, we would like to portray the statistics of Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan (GKRA) in accordance to various aspects and parameters. The data includes the expenditure information, the implementation strategies, the progress of this scheme in various parts of India and how the government is going to improve its functionality in the future. This analysis could be beneficial to gain a clear picture of this scheme's functionality in India and helps us to understand the flaws where we need to concentrate in order to make this scheme better and viable.

Table 1: List of State, where the GKRA will be undertaken.

State Name	Districts	Aspirational Districts
Bihar	32	12
Uttar Pradesh	31	5
Madhya Pradesh	24	4
Rajasthan	22	2
Odisha	4	1
Jharkhand	3	3
Total Districts	116	27

Source: Districts for Implementation of GKRA¹²

The table 1 mainly focuses upon the districts which are chosen for implementation of GKRA. A total of 116 districts of 6 states are taken into consideration under this Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan considering that concentration of the maximum number of migrant workers and labourers in the concerned districts. The above graph shows that 32 districts from Bihar, 31 from Uttar Pradesh, 24 from Madhya Pradesh 22 from Rajasthan, 4 from Odisha and 3 from Jharkhand were under taken within the umbrella of GKRA scheme. The other interesting fact is that the GKRA has extended to 116 districts in India including more than 20 Aspirational districts. The highest number of aspirational districts are accounted in Bihar i.e., 12 districts followed by 5 districts in Uttar Pradesh, 4 in Madhya Pradesh and 3 in Jharkhand. The districts having 25000 or more migrant labourers are taken for addressing the difficulty of large number of migrant workers.

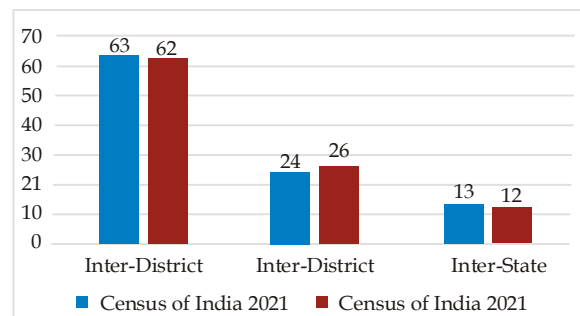


Fig. 1: Number of Internal Migrants in India.

Source: Census of India^{13 & 14}

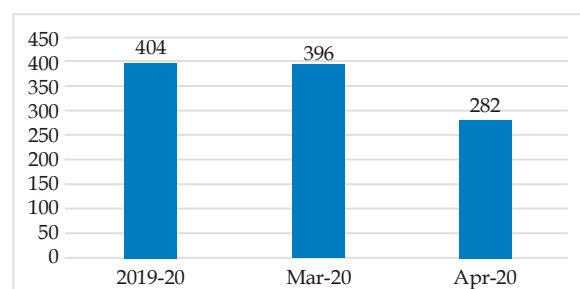


Fig. 2: Loss of Employment during the Covid-19 pandemic period.

Source: Unemployment Rate in India, CIME¹⁵

Figure 2, as per the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CIME), in India during the first phase of the lockdown, a total of 122 million people became unemployed, which consists 75% of daily wage earners and small traders. The present unemployment percentage of the country as of CIME is 8.2% (urban areas includes 9.5% while rural is of 7.6%). During the initial stages of lockdown there are about 404 million employed people. In March, 2020 there is a decrease in percentage of employed people about 8 million. There is a sharp decrease in percentage of employed people in April, 2020 which was about just 282 million.

Estimates of unemployment showed that 80 per cent jobs were affected in urban economy, of which most were self-employed. 54 per cent jobs were affected in rural economy, most of which were casual employment. Most of the labourers migrated from urban areas to rural areas due to unemployment. And after coming from urban areas they were unable to find their jobs which further increased unemployment. This happened during the April, 2020 which made the employed people very less. Interestingly, during the second phase of the lockdown April 2020, the small traders, labours, entrepreneurs, salaried persons, most percentage of faced unemployment issues. Instead, there has been a rise in percentage of farm-

ers, which is the result of some of the returned migrants taking up farming practices.

Table 2: State-wise employment generated in persondays and quantum of amount spent so far under Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan.

State	Mandays Employment	Expenditure (Rs. in Crore)
	Generated	
Bihar	4,24,61,946	6712.82
Jharkhand	40,10,287	662.24
Madhya Pradesh	4,77,87,323	4233.49
Odisha	74,42,323	1000.84
Rajasthan	11,13,43,237	6044.25
Uttar Pradesh	5,90,72,124	4905.56
Total	27,21,17,240	23559.20

Source: Ministry of Rural Development, GKRA¹⁶

Table 2 shows that, the State-wise employment generated in persondays and quantum of amount spent so far under Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan. Till now GKRA has been successful in meeting its objectives. The main objectives of this program are to provide livelihood, employment to the migrant labourers and harshly affected people of rural areas. So far 27.21 crore man-days employment has been provided under this program with an expenditure of about 23559.3 crores. Under this program Rajasthan has been benefited the most while Jharkhand is the one that is benefited least compared to remaining 5 states. In Uttar Pradesh, the person day's employment generation rate is adequately high and nearly more than five crore people were benefited under this scheme. On the other hand, the expenditure spent on this state was about four hundred crores. While other states like Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and have a moderate rate of employment generation rate and the expenditure lies between 1000 to 7000 crores. While so, Jharkhand has least employment generation rate in comparison to other states.

Table 3: List of Beneficiaries and their budget details

Scheme	Number of Beneficiaries	Amount In Crore
Support to PMJDY women account holders	19.86 Cr (97%)	9930
Support to NSAP (Aged Widows, Divvying, Senior Citizens)	2.82 Cr (100%)	1405
Front-loaded payments to farmers under PM-KISAN	6.93 Cr (out of 8 Cr)	13,855
Support to Building & Other Construction Workers.	2.16 Cr	3066
Total	31.77 Cr	28,256

Image source: Finance Ministry, GoI/Twitter: @FinMinIndia.

Source: Financial assistance under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Abhiyan¹⁷.

Table 3 shows that the list of beneficiaries and their budget details. According to the collected data, more than 35 crore poor people in India have received financial help of Rs 28,256 crore under the scheme called Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Abhiyan which was announced by our Finance Minister in the last month to protect poor people and migrant workers from the impact and adverse effects of 21-day nationwide lockdown. Apart from this, the government also announced free food grains to women, backward senior citizens and farmers to overcome the hardship faced due to the lockdown in the pandemic.

According to the latest data, more than 30 crores beneficiaries have been directly supported by providing Direct Benefit Transfer amounting to an average of Rs 28,256 crores under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package which was implemented by the government. And also, Rs 13,855 crore have gone to the payment of first installment of PM-KISAN. As of now, 19.86 crore women Jan Dhan account holders received an amount of Rs 500 each in their account. The total distributed amount under the head was 9,930 crores. The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) distributed about Rs 1400 crore to about 2.82 crore for old age person, widow and also disabled person. Each beneficiary account had received an ex-gratia cash of Rs 1,000 under this Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan scheme.

Impact and Role of Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan Finance Minister has announced a package of Rs.1.70 lakh crore under this scheme after the announcement and implementation of national lockdown in India. Under this package, the government of India has announced some medical insurance coverage of Rs.50 lakh per person to approximately more than 20 lakh COVID-19 warriors in our country. The benefits of this package were broadly divided into two major parts. They are:

- Food security: As part of this scheme, the government has announced that more than 70 crore people will be getting a quantity of 5 kg of rice and wheat. And also, one kg of pulses each and every month till the end of November in 2020.
- Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT): Under DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer), Finance Minister made some specific announcements.
- Benefit to farmers: Farmers will be given an extra amount of Rs. 2,000 by the government in the form of front-load under the program of

Kisan Samman Nidhi.

- Increase in daily wage: The daily wage of workers has been increased to Rs. 202 for the next 100 days under MNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act). It is expected to benefit over 5 crore families.
- Ex-gratia of Rs. 1,000: The government will provide 3 crore poor senior citizens, disabled persons and widows ex-gratia of Rs. 1,000 over three months.
- Free LPG cylinders: Under the Ujjwala scheme free LPG cylinders will be provided for the next three months to 8.3 crore BPL families.
- Ex-gratia for women account holders: 20 crore women account holders will be receiving ex-gratia amount of Rs. 500 for the next three months under the Jan Dhan Yojana Scheme.
- Avail collateral-free loans: Under National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), 63 lakh women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) will be able to get loans up to an amount Rs.20 lakh.

Findings

The Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Abhiyaan encompasses a range of various other schemes within it which has a worth of Rs. 1.70 lakh crore. Under this package, a 50-lakh insurance has been declared for Corona warriors. Apart from this, as a part of the PM Kisan Yojana, the registered farmers were provided with a financial assistance of Rs. 2000 each in the starting week of April month. Under the Jan Dhan Yojana scheme which is a part of PMGKY, more than 22 crore women were paid with the amount of Rs. 500 for a period of three months and also widows, disabled pensioner, poor senior citizens were aided with Rs 1000 for three months. Free cylinders were provided for a time period of three months under the Ujjwala scheme which again falls under PMGKY package.

Self Help Group's workers were offered with an extra benefit of more than 10 lakh loan if necessary. And also, the government has released a 30000-crore fund to NBFCs to fasten and improve the construction work. This helped many construction workers. The Finance Ministry has offered some financial assistance for the employers who has a monthly income of less than Rs. 15000 for a span of three months under this scheme. The scheme also helped to increase the wages under MGNREGA. There was an increase from Rs. 180 to Rs. 200.

Summary

During the pandemic period, the migrant workers have faced many crisis and difficulties. They faced many issues like food crisis, unemployment, shelter

crisis and many more. The population of these migrants was very huge and the situation was also out of control. Government of India realized that these migrant workers need focused and constant support for converging and receiving resources of different schemes of central government focusing on specific actions. Keeping this in mind, our honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched 'Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan' on 20th June 2020. This scheme was operational for next 125 days and covered 116 districts across six states namely Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. This scheme has not only concentrated on the problems of migrant workers but also played an important role in providing various facilities to more than 30 crores beneficiaries in India. They have been directly supported by providing Direct Benefit Transfer amounting to an average of Rs 28,256 crores under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package which was implemented by the government. And also, Rs. 13,855 crore have gone to the payment of first instalment of PM-Kisan. The Ministry of Finance has announced that more than 40 crore people have received ₹68,820 crore financial aid under this scheme to save poor and vulnerable from the impact and severity of coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis. As part of the Rs. 1.70 lakh crore PMGKY package, which was announced by Finance Minister on March 26 in 2020, the government has also announced free food grains and cash payment to poor women, senior citizens and farmers who are in need. The implementation of this program is continuously monitored by Central and State governments.

This scheme also has some long-term measures in order to provide some benefits in the future also. The first long-term measure includes creating a unified economy which offers free movement of labourers and capital between states. For example, the states having older populations would require younger populations, the states having younger population could supply it. The second long-term measure includes establishing a migration commission. According to this scheme, it should be given the mandate to prepare a proper social protection and welfare system for workers. The third moto is to strengthen the existing schemes such as MGNREGA by adequately funding in order to provide employment to migrants for at least the rest of the months of this year.

Conclusion

Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan scheme does solve the employment issues in urban and rural India and moreover it does not even offer any permanent relief to the migrant labours. Under this Garib Kalyan

Rojgar Abhiyan scheme, migrant workers will get only one-time employment for 125 days in only six states but what about the migrant workers in other states. There is no information on current unemployed people who are seeking for help from the government. GKRA scheme basically overlooks the need for employment of only 100 million workers. But as per record, this figure is 60-65 million. Even if we consider only the migrant labours, that number is very large. The scheme declared by the government does not solve the issue of whole unemployment. This is done not in focus of unemployment but to revive the economy of India. The unemployed migrants are unable to increase their demand. The GKRA scheme declare by the government is not to address the serious issue but to create a small relief among the migrant workers which can also be a plan for the coming elections. These limitations may act as huddles to this scheme. Therefore, overcoming these limitations may make this scheme more powerful and beneficial.

The scheme has played an important role in many states during the pandemic but the reach of this scheme has been limited to these states only. Proper awareness among people could help to overcome this issue. The government should also consider all the unemployment issues under this scheme rather than only concentrating on the issues of migrant workers. Proper budgeting and planning could even help this scheme to function properly. These suggestions could be incorporated by the government in order to enrich this scheme.

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