NEXT IAS

DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

ENHANCING SOCIAL SECURITY FOR UNORGANISED WORKERS: ROLE OF E-SHRAM

ENHANCING SOCIAL SECURITY FOR UNORGANISED WORKERS: ROLE OF E-SHRAM

In Context

- The **Ministry of Labour & Employment (MoL&E)** recently claimed that, with over 300 million workers registered, the **e-Shram portal** is the largest database of unorganised workers in the world.

Background

- In view of the pathetic condition and exodus of migrant workers during the pandemic, the Supreme Court of India had directed the Union government to **build a national database of workers.**

- Subsequently, the **e-Shram Portal was started by the MoL&E in May 2021** with the objective of creating a national database of this labour force.

- The registration in the **portal is fully Aadhaar verified and Aadhaar seeded**. Any unorganised worker can register himself or herself on the portal on a self-declaration basis.

- It allows an **unorganised worker to register himself or herself on the portal** on self-declaration basis, under 400 occupations in 30 broad occupation sectors.

Current Challenges

- **Eligibility Exclusion:** Many migrant workers lack necessary documentation (e.g., Aadhaar, ration card).
  - Issues with mobile numbers not linked to Aadhaar, or absence of a permanent mobile number.
  - Inadequate documentation excludes these workers from e-Shram registration and associated benefits.
- **Functionality of the e-Shram Portal:** Operates primarily as a registration drive, with limited focus on ensuring access to social security benefits.
  - Many registered workers remain excluded from entitlements like ration cards and food security.
- **Vulnerability of Migrant Workers:** High mobility leads to disenfranchisement, stigma, trafficking, and poor access to public services.
  - Migrant workers, especially seasonal and circular migrants, are among the most vulnerable segments of the unorganised workforce.
- **Gender Disparities:** Despite a 53.59% female worker registration rate, structural inequalities persist.
  - Women workers face additional challenges, necessitating gender-sensitive approaches in social security schemes.
- **Data Disaggregation:** The need for detailed data disaggregation based on factors like gender, region, and migration patterns is not adequately addressed.

Significance of e-Shram Portal

- **Social Security:** To provide a platform for unorganized workers to access social security schemes like pensions, insurance, healthcare, and other welfare benefits.
- **Data-Driven Interventions:** The database will enable the government to understand the needs and challenges faced by unorganized workers, leading to more targeted and effective policies.
- **Empowerment:** By providing a unique identity and access to social security, the portal aims to empower unorganized workers and improve their quality of life.
- **Disaster Relief:** In times of crisis, the database can be used to quickly identify and provide assistance to affected workers.
- **Policy Formulation:** The data collected through the portal can be used to inform and refine labor policies, including minimum wages, working conditions, and occupational safety.

One-Stop Solution (OSS) Initiative

- The recently launched **OSS aims to address these challenges** by integrating welfare schemes like **One Nation One Ration Card, MGNREGA, and PM Shram Yogi Maandhan** into the e-Shram portal.
- The initiative focuses on linking domains like pensions, insurance, housing, and skill development, creating a more comprehensive safety net for workers.

Recommendations

- **Address Documentation Issues:** Simplify registration procedures and provide assistance to workers who lack necessary documents.
- **Prioritize Social Security:** Shift focus from mere registration to ensuring access to social security benefits for all registered workers.
- **Data Disaggregation:** Collect and analyze data on migrant workers based on various factors to better understand their needs and tailor policies accordingly.
- **Promote Portability of Benefits:** Facilitate the transfer of social security benefits across states to ensure seamless access for inter-state migrants.
- **Gender-Sensitive Approach:** Implement gender-sensitive policies and programs to address the specific needs and challenges faced by women workers.
- **Focus on Human Development:** Shift focus from viewing migrants as a burden to recognizing them as assets and prioritizing their human development.

Conclusion

- The e-Shram portal has the potential to be a valuable tool for improving the lives of unorganized workers and migrants in India.
- However, addressing the challenges and implementing the recommendations is crucial to ensure its success and achieve the goal of a more inclusive and equitable society.

Source: IE

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Mains Practice Question
The portability of welfare schemes is critical for the inclusion of interstate migrant workers. Discuss the need and challenges for achieving this through initiatives like the e-Shram portal.