Employment Data: Hard on Data Saving and Hardly on Saving the Workers

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Of late, in the deliberations, it has been heard a saying ‘informalities would disappear with a development agenda’ especially in the context of the demonetisation (Kanbur Ravi Dr, 2014). It would sense that all matters related to people of a country brings under records, bearing in mind to deliver the benefits and advantages in the process of progress (Kanbur Ravi Dr, 2014). However, being a developing country in India it has been witnessing a trend of coding the data and records of people’s identity documents. India so far 32 IDs have been recognized to transact and obtain government benefits (Press Information Bureau (PIB) Government of India, 2014).

According to official documents the recognized IDs in India are: Aadhaar card, Indian passport, Overseas Passport, Electoral Photo Identity Card, Overseas Citizenship of India document, Person of Indian Origin Card, PAN card, Driving licence, Ration card, Identity Certificate for non-citizens or stateless people, Birth certificate issued within the provisions of the RBD Act, Transfer/School leaving/Matriculation Certificate, Service Identity Card issued by State/Central Government, Public Sector Undertakings, local bodies or public Limited Companies, Copy of an extract of the service record of the applicant (only in respect of Government servants) or the Pay Pension Order (in respect of retired Government Servants), duly attested/certified by the officer/ in-charge of the Administration of the concerned Ministry/Department of the holder, Policy Bond issued by Public Life Insurance Corporations/Companies, Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe/Other Backward Classes Certificates, Freedom Fighter Identity Cards, Arms Licenses, Property Documents such as Pattas, Registered Deeds etc, Railway Identity Cards, Student Photo Identity Cards issued by Government Recognized Educational Institutions in respect of full time courses, Gas Connection Bill, Bank/ Kisan/ Post Office Passbooks, Photo Bank ATM Card, Photo Credit Card, Pensioner Photo Card, Certificate of Identify having photo issued by Gazetted Officer or Tehsildar on letterhead, Disability ID Card/handicapped medical certificate issued by the respective State/UT, Marriage Certificate, Proof of Marriage document issued by the Registrar, Gazette Notification and Legal Name Change Certificate. However, none of them is a single mandatory and effective document for all transactions and obtain government benefits. So each one is use full for its inherited purpose.

The propensity of making records of employments in the country for the sake of development has been suggested by concerned authorities like NITI Aayog seems to be in an elevation mode today. At the same time as ILO directed the captivating efforts of bringing all kinds of informal workers into a formal sphere by using right based tools like Acts, Institutionalisation and instrumental mechanism is very much missing, especially in the context of its report titled the World Employment, Social Outlook Trends 2018 has disclosed that about 77 per cent of Indian workers will be involved in vulnerable employment by 2019 (ILO, 2018)
Data Creation on Workers

Normally, employment and unemployment in the country were estimated from labourforce surveys conducted by the National Sample Survey Office. In addition to, since 2016 April a new series of employment survey system named the Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) started\(^2\). Its intention was to capture fully employment data from all the economic activities in the country, including in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) where having 10 or more workers. Through this survey the Labour Bureau has been calculating the relative changes of employment situation over successive quarters in the segment of 8 major sectors of Manufacturing, Construction, Trade, Transport, Education, Health, Accommodation & Restaurants and IT/BPO from which India constitute around 81 per cent employment.

In the series of the QES, the ninth round starts April 2018 with the new framework, added the enterprises with less than 10 workers; even those are deprived of social securities. For which seven members of high level committee had met on March 26 under the leadership of Labour Ministry to finalise the questionnaire as well as put down a training module for senior labour bureau officials to undertake the new Employment Survey (Government of Indian,2018). By this effort the government is aiming to come out with the first survey of unorganised workers in the country.

The reason behind this type of survey on workers in the country is, according to NITI Aayog at present in Indian formal work defined in a highly restraining manner wherein a large number of the workers who have decent and steady jobs were debarred in the entry of formal workers’ list due to they are working in small enterprises or do not have written contracts. Therefore the country need a ‘pragmatic’ definition of the formal workers, in which the Government planned to bring all workers, who come under the cover of the Employees’ State Insurance Act, 1948 or other parallel insurance, Employees’ Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provision Act, 1952 or other of the same kind social security schemes, the workers whose social security has covered by private insurance or pension schemes or provident funds and workers cause to undergo tax deduction at source on their income through submission of Form 16 or similar Income Tax form (NITIAayog,2017)

UWIN- Unorganized Workers’ Identity Number\(^3\)

In turn to long standing demand from the different corners like second labour commission, National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector, Trade Unions and Business and Industrial communities to simplify existing labour laws, the present Government wanted to consolidate the 44 labour laws into four codes - industrial relations, wages, social security, and occupational safety, health and working condition. Its effort started last year in 2017 when the Code on Wage Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha. As a part of these attempts second in line the Government has proposed the new social security or welfare code of workers. For that the Union Labour and Employment Ministry have drafted the Labour Code on Social Security, 2018 and has invited comments and suggestions on the labour ministry’s website. The proposed draft gives provision both organised and unorganised workers for social security registration in view of merging of existing social security schemes into one. However, since then there is no sign to amend the Unorganized Workers’ Social Security Act, 2008, wherein well defined the terms of unorganized worker and their social security programs -Social Assistance, Insurance Schemes and Welfare Funds - to have sufficient legal institutionalisation and coordinated efforts to protect unorganised workers of the country.

\(^2\) http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=177331
\(^3\) Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, NEW DELHI
Open Tender Notice: A-12014/1/2018-SS-3 Dated: 12-06-2018
Since the country has no centralised national database of unorganised workers, the UWIN documentation has been decided by the Labour Ministry to create a national platform for unorganised workers’ data with Unique ID i.e. Unorganized Workers Identification Number (UWIN). This project has been implemented as experiment bases in Hyderabad district of Telangana. According to draft proposal by this initiative the government envisages to implement UWIN program in linking to adhere without issuing any smart card within two years with a cost of 402.7 Crore, (Indian Express, December 28, 2017).

The UWIN initiative new scheme has mentioned to offer benefits to unorganised workers, however no specific mention on unorganised social securities like health insurance disability, and death and unemployment coverage or any frame work for that. Therefore the proposed registered ID of informal workers without specific social security or welfare schemes and undefined terms of the Employment Data Survey appear only as documentations rather than no leaving choice to enhance any social security benefits of informal sector workers. This suspicion becomes stronger on the ground that when the Government claims more than 70 lakh new employment being created based on the Employees’ Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) new accounts (Sharma, 2018). These kind of efforts, many leads into formalising the informal workers, who come 40 crore out of 46 crore in the work force of the country for the sake of the record and showcase country’s development pride without ground at grass root level.

“Lewisian Trap” of Workers

In the backdrops of trending of making record on workers rather than creation of decent work, it would be better to focus the ‘Lewisian Transformation’ which is too occurring in the labour market of India as if any other developing country (Ranade Ajit, 2018).

The positive side of developments is around the people, wherein could be infrastructures and facilities. The people migrate from the agrarian and rural area to towns for better jobs in which their productivity would increase and wage goes up. However it would only occur among very few employable people in the emerging positions. At the same time the downbeat reality of development is the fact that in the rural area the farm plots become smaller and the promising people become unviable for farming together as if they were subdivided. In this circumstance the city slums would be crowded with job seekers who were moved from villages into towns. Yet the new industries which are evolved by developments are not able to absorb them fully. It happens because of limited number of employment opportunities and people’s unskill nature. Consequently, these kinds of people had to end up with uncertain low-wage jobs. This type of trend where underemployed labour, moving out of agriculture into more productive jobs is called the “Lewisian Transformation” recent times after the name of economist Arthur Lewis and the “Lewisian Trap” is a reality of the labour market in which most of workers stuck in precarious low-wage employment. All those people displaced from agriculture and rural area, again end up in informal sectors like the construction, trade, transport, education and “other services” that too have very low productivity and low employment generation (Chakarvarty Manas, 2018 and Ranade Ajit, 2018).

The indications of unsecured workers in India have been given by many international and national research agencies. One of them is Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations’ (ICRIER), which has adopted the KLEMS (Capital (K) labor (L) energy (E), material (M) and services (S) inputs) methodology

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4. Meaning of “Lewisian Trap’ is workers stuck in precarious low-wage jobs
research, report showed that in recent years the employment falls not only in the agriculture sector, but also in industry sectors like textiles, leather, footwear, construction, paper, mining, public administration & defense, chemicals, post & telecom, wood products. It happens due to changing and more capital-demanding technology. As per this report the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of employments in India between 2008 and 2014 was 1.22 per cent where as it were 2.04 percent in 1991 to 2004 and 1.42 per cent in 2004 to 2008. And again the quality of jobs as well as productivity in manufacturing has improved, however the numbers of jobs have suffered, due to the more capital-intensive nature of organized manufacturing according to the data available still 2014, since then job situation has gotten worse (Ranade Ajit, 2018). The current demagnetisation and the goods and services tax have led to commotion in the informal sector and the performance of the industrial sector has been gloomy.

Besides record making on workers and their data coding, there is no trend to be seemed the phenomenon of creation of decent work and dignified workers as International Labor Organization intended. Most of the job creation has been happening in India either in the informal sector or self-employment sector, which is being called in new terms ‘entrepreneurs’ or ‘start-uppers’ recent days in the country.

Even in the matter of job creation, documentation of the employment data report draft had recognized the Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency (MUDRA) scheme is one of the important job creation sources. But then again the SKOCH Group on 6th of September 2017 study showed that wherein known MUDRA scheme claimed 54,479,763 jobs were being generated within two years but in which 37,753,217 jobs only direct one and 16,726,545 indicated as indirect jobs as ‘working poor’ (Chakarvarty Manas, 2018).

The labor bureau had reported, in 2016 year 2.31 lakh jobs being created out of which 1.22 lakh employments were in the informal sector. According to a World Employment and Social Outlook report that was recently released by the International Labor Organization (ILO), over the last 20 years, more of informal and vulnerable jobs have been created in India. In which more than 90 per cent of the employment is in the agricultural sector and close to 70 per cent in the non-agricultural sector (ILO, 2018).

The vulnerability in employment still in the formal sector leads into underemployment, job losses and unemployment again. As per report in 2016 it has been estimated 75,000 jobs were lost in the telecom sector due to financial stress in companies, and industry consolidations ended with layoffs.

In the informal sector the main four most labour intensive sectors are agriculture, including Agra processing; textiles especially garment making, construction and tourism. The latest example, two years before the Central government announced a special package for the textile sector, with an employment subsidy. The Centre has agreed to pick up the provident fund (PF) contribution of the employer, to incentivise hiring of workers. But the study (ILO, 2018) says the center failed, because most of employment creation happens in the informal (non-PF category) sector in wear making

**Pretext of the Development**

All these findings are signposts of unsecured workers, because today, in India what is happening in the labour market? Actually, it is not going on formalisation of workers in the name of developments, but only formalising the economy is taking place. Therefore making decent work is only a pretext of development, wherein the records of economic activities of the Nation would be corrected, including workers' documentation that may be benefited the situations to attract business. But it will also leave the space of labour market
where would happen the lack of proper implementation of labour regulations and non-extending legally enforceable rights of workers (India Today, 2018).

For instance, the current amendment of the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Central (Amendment) Rules, 2018's notification stipulates employers to permit contract workers, both in short and long terms works without a permanent period in all the industrial sectors of the economic activities. In this contextual the increase of unorganised workers in the country would be an open reality, thus a landscape changes are happening in the labour market of India today.

Thus only being formalisation in the form of data or economic is giving nothing to workers rather than deliberately providing hardships. The lack of good jobs and burden on informal sector workers have already fired disillusionment and social discontent among some sections of people in India like the Youth, Farmers and Dalit that has reflected in the forms of agitation and violation in the different parts of the country. In this context, let not forget the need of protecting workers than work that attitude is visible in the scheme of MGNREGA in which workers are protected by the Act than employment or work they engaged.

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