

POLICY
BRIEF

Ensuring access to relief through the Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board (BOCW-WB)

Strengthening social security and protection of construction workers

ABSTRACT

This policy brief draws from findings on the status of construction workers in the report '[Living with Multiple Vulnerabilities: Impact of COVID-19 on the Urban Poor in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region](#)'. It is based on data from construction workers in the 10 cities and 1 tehsil in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), specifically:

6,937 households where construction work is undertaken by the head of the household

4,805 construction workers on 16 construction sites

21 in-depth interviews with construction workers

BACKGROUND

According to the National Sample Survey (2011–2012), there are about 5.02 crore construction workers in the country out of which approximately 2.86 crore or 56 per cent of the total workers were registered with various Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Welfare Boards till 31 December 2017 (YUVA, 2018).

The Maharashtra Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board (BOCW-WB) provides various welfare schemes and ensures social security to construction workers. Registration of a worker in the BOCW-WB is the first step to access this. This registration is challenging and needs to be renewed annually.

In Maharashtra there are 18,75,510 workers registered with the Maharashtra BOCW-WB out of which 11,92,474 were active (live) workers till March 2019 (Maharashtra BOCW Welfare Board, 2020). The Maharashtra (BOCW-WB) has currently over INR 7,482.33 crores collected through building cesses.

The Ministry of Labour and Employment estimated that around INR 31,000 crore was lying unspent as cess funds with BOCW-WBs across all states. In the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Centre on 24 March 2020 advised states to transfer money directly into the accounts of registered workers. Acting on the advisory issued by the Centre, 18 states have transferred amounts ranging from INR 1,000 to INR 5,000 to the bank accounts of construction workers. The Maharashtra BOCW-WB made a one-time cash transfer of INR 2,000 (Ray, 2020).

Shamsu and his wife, a naka worker couple from Koparkhairane in Navi Mumbai who sustain a family of eight members, struggled for years to get themselves registered at the BOCW-WB. Shamsu says, 'The lockdown has only been imposed now, we have been trying to get the government to hear us for the past five years. If we go to a ward office, we are chased away. If we give a request, there is no enquiry on it for months or even a year'. They were finally registered through a camp organized by L&T in Navi Mumbai.

However, that did not help them much. 'We haven't benefited from it at all. When we go to inquire, we are only told to come the next day, or the day after that, or the day after that. We are only given dates. We are only told that this or that officer is not present.

This is what has been going on. Nothing ever proceeds,' narrated Shamsu. He and his wife live in a rented house and did not even have enough money to travel to their native village during the lockdown.

FINDINGS FROM THE REPORT

- Our data revealed that the highest number of households were reliant on construction work—in nearly 46 per cent of the households, the head of the household was a construction worker.
- The lockdown caused a sudden halt in construction work. With a fall in work available, most workers reported being unable to find work while some were working at much lower rates or reported shifting to unskilled work in an attempt to earn daily wages.
- Registration in the Maharashtra Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board (BOCW-WB) was challenging for multiple reasons. The biggest challenge lay in furnishing a certificate that proves employment for 90 days from a single employer. This was especially challenging for those who worked independently or were dependent on *nakas* (daily-wage workers).
- Furnishing this certificate is more likely for those working on a single construction site for an extended period. Among the 4,805 workers working on 16 construction sites in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), 963 workers (24.64 per cent) are registered with the BOCW-WB as compared to 87 workers (3.32 per cent) who worked independently or were dependent on *nakas*¹.
- Being registered, however, has not meant access to relief, i.e., the INR 2,000 one-time cash transfer announced by the Maharashtra BOCW-WB. Among the 963 workers who reported being registered, only 284 workers (29.49 per cent) received the cash transfer even though 87.64 per cent of the registered workers reported having a bank account.

Overall Analysis - Construction Workers on 16 Construction Sites			
	Number of respondents	Total number of respondents	Percentage
Number of women workers	475	4,085	11.63%
Workers registered with BOCW-WB	963	3,908	24.64%
Bank account in registered worker's name (Percentage out of total registered workers)	844	963	87.64%
Received the INR 2000 relief benefit from BOCW-WB (Percentage out of total registered workers)	284	963	29.49%
Bank account in worker's name	1,900	4,085	46.51%
Ration card holder in Mumbai	424	4,085	10.38%

Details of construction workers working on 16 construction sites (Source: Mumbai Mobile Creches)

1 | A place where workers assemble in the mornings to seek employment

RECOMMENDATIONS

Workers who are unregistered or new to renew registration must be encouraged to do so through a simple non-bureaucratic process. It will be of enormous support to construction workers if there is a fast-track enrollment and renewal of workers, done online preferably. Unions, NGOs and voluntary groups can be brought in to support this.

Currently, workers who have failed to register themselves in the BOCW-WB due to the inability to produce a 90-day work certificate need to be verified by the local ward office. This has not been implemented effectively either.

The 90-day work certificate as eligibility for registration should be reassessed. Given the current situation, more people may take to construction work and for those who were engaged prior to the lockdown there has been a gap of nearly 4 months with no work.

Proof can be based on parameters such as places of work in the last 12 months or current place of work (for those who have taken to construction work post the lockdown) but not the 90-day work criteria.

REFERENCES

Ray, Surya Sarathi. (2020, April 8). Relief to construction workers: 18 states transfer Rs 1,000-5,000 each in 1.8 crore beneficiary A/Cs. *Financial Express*. Retrieved from <https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/relief-to-construction-workers-18-states-transfer-rs-1000-5000-each-in-1-8-crore-beneficiary-a-cs/1921743/>

Maharashtra BOCW Welfare Board. (2020). <https://mahabocw.in/dashboard/>

Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action. (2019). Implementation of the Building and Other Construction Workers Act, 1996: A Case Study of Maharashtra. Mumbai: India. Retrieved from <https://yuvaindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/BOCW-Policy-Brief-Web.pdf>



Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA)
YUVA Centre, Sector 7, Plot 23, Kharghar,
Navi Mumbai – 410210 (India)
www.yuvaindia.org | info@yuvaindia.org

officialyuva officialyuva yuvaindia84
 yuvaonline /company/officialyuva