

POLICY
BRIEF

Ensuring revival of the Maharashtra Domestic Workers Welfare Board (MDWWB)

Strengthening social security and protection for domestic workers

ABSTRACT

This policy brief draws from findings on the status of domestic 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 domestic workers in the cities of the MMR, specifically 2,253 households surveyed where the head of the household is a domestic worker and in-depth interviews with 20 domestic workers.

BACKGROUND

Domestic workers are a crucial part of the urban economy, yet their contribution as workers and need for social security remains unrecognised. Maharashtra remains one of the few states that legally recognises domestic work through the Maharashtra Domestic Workers Welfare Board Act, 2008 and has a welfare board, i.e., Maharashtra Domestic Workers Welfare Board (MDWWB) formed in 2011. The Board consists of members nominated, from time to time, by the State Government, representing employers, domestic workers and the State Government. The Board is also supposed to have an advisory committee with representation of the State, employers and domestic workers.

The MDWWB is mandated to ensure registration of domestic workers and provide social security. The Board has been non-functional since 2014 and has a one-person Board representative. Currently, it only enables registrations and provides identity cards that need to be renewed annually. Registration is poor—the major reason includes the lack of social security and welfare benefits, coupled with an annual registration renewal cost. From 4,73,571 in 2011 when the Board was formed, the number of registrations have fallen down to almost 1,00,000 in 2017–2018. The number of schemes that were delivered during the period of the first Welfare Board has drastically fallen to a mere 2 or 3 welfare schemes today. The Board had ample funds to deliver the various schemes comfortably as State grants have built its resource base (Jyoti, 2019). However, domestic workers have remained largely invisible as a workforce and the lockdown highlighted the glaring need for their social security.

Reena, a domestic worker from Belapur in Navi Mumbai who is registered in the MDWWB said that she had not received her salary for March and April. She had not collected her dues as yet but mentioned that she would most likely get it for March, not for the months she has not worked. She believed her job would remain secure. For women like Reena, being registered with the MDWWB doesn't hold any meaning.

Neeta's mother, a domestic worker in Navi Mumbai, was previously registered with the MDWWB but did not renew the registration. Her mother works in 2

houses. During the lockdown, she has received financial assistance from one employer, the other doesn't even pick up her mother's calls.

FINDINGS FROM THE REPORT

- 14.80 per cent households were dependent on domestic workers, making domestic work the second highest employment category among those surveyed.
- Most domestic workers spoke of non-payment of wages due to their inability to go to their places of work and experienced job insecurity.
- Some domestic workers reported searching for alternative sources of employment.
- Only 152 (11.89 per cent) domestic workers reported being registered with the Maharashtra Domestic Workers Welfare Board (MDWWB).
- The Board has been unsuccessful in ensuring registration of domestic workers and providing welfare and social security. In the current situation, it has also not made sure that employers are held accountable to pay wages of domestic workers.

Area	Total number of domestic workers	Total number of households	Percentage
Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (Island City)	201	1,244	16.16%
Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (Western Suburbs)	721	3,424	21.06%
Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (Eastern Suburbs)	257	1,215	21.15%
Vasai-Virar Municipal Corporation	299	4,243	7.05%
Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation and Panvel Municipal Corporation	609	3,913	15.56%
Thane Municipal Corporation	18	367	4.90%
Ulhasnagar Municipal Corporation	141	535	26.36%
Ambarnath Municipal Council	0	169	0%
Kalyan-Dombivali Municipal Corporation	7	30	23.33%
Alibaug Municipal Council	0	71	0%
Pen Municipal Council	0	15	0%
Total	2,253	15,226*	14.80%

Percentage of households with domestic workers

*Total number of households where data regarding domestic workers was collected, N=15,226

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Maharashtra Domestic Workers Welfare Board (MDWWB) needs to be made functional with the appointment of members and an advisory committee, with representation as outlined in the law.

Social security benefits, outlined in the Act, must be provided immediately with funds available to the Board

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

A Government Resolution (GR) holding employers accountable for payment of wages during the lockdown must be released.

REFERENCES

Government of Maharashtra. (2008). Maharashtra Domestic Workers Welfare Board Act, 2008
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Jyoti, Vindhya. (2019). Study on the functioning of the Domestic Workers' Welfare Board, Maharashtra. Unpublished M.A Thesis. Azim Premji University.



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