



Dattopant Thengadi Foundation

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Securing Labour through e-Shram Portal

The government of India launched the [e-Shram Portal](#) on August 26, 2021 and with this the digitized registration of unorganized workers began across the country. There are more than 38 crore unorganised workers in India; hardly a fraction is registered with the worker associations, unions or the labour departments in states, or nationally. Attempts to create similar national databases under provisions of the Interstate Migrant Workmen Act, 1979 and the Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, 2008 had been unsuccessful. Under the UWSSA 2008, only 120 millions workers were registered. Before E-Shram, the unorganised workers were registered under different welfare boards, or not at all. Of the 50 million workforce of construction workers, it is estimated that at least 15 million are not registered. In the absence of a national database of these workers, especially migrant workers, they were left in lurch without much support following the COVID-19 outbreak. Earlier the Labour Bureau, an attached office of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, initiated conducting the five “paperless” [All India Surveys](#) which were the All India Survey of Migrant Workers, All India Survey of Domestic Workers, All India Survey of Employment Generated by Professionals, All India Survey of Employment Generated in the Transport Sector, and the All-India Quarterly Establishment Based Employment Survey. These surveys were suspended due to COVID-19 onslaught. Later this year the [Supreme Court](#) directed the Central Government to complete the registration process of unorganised workers so that they can avail the welfare benefits given under various government schemes. Following this the portal has been launched which will help build a comprehensive National Database of Unorganized Workers (NDUW) in the country and will prove to be a huge boost towards last mile delivery of the welfare schemes for crores of unorganized workers as it will work with the objective of integration of Social Security Schemes e.g. PM-SYM, PMJJBY, PM-SBY, PMJAY. It will be seeded with Aadhar and will have details of name, occupation, address, educational qualification, skill types and family details etc. for optimum realization of their employability and extend the benefits of the social security schemes to them. According to Shri Bhupender Yadav, the Union minister for labour and employment, it will be a game changer in the history of the country as more than 38 Crore workers would register themselves under one portal. The categories of unorganised workers that will be covered includes Construction Workers, Migrant Workers, Street Vendors, Domestic Workers, Milkmen, Truck Drivers, Fishermen, Agricultural Workers, and similar other unorganised workers.

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The Union Minister said that "[targeted delivery](#)" and "[last-mile delivery](#)" had both been a major focus of the central government's schemes introduced in accordance with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision so this portal will not only register them but would also be helpful in delivering of various social security schemes being implemented by the Central and State Governments.

Any worker who is unorganised and aged between 16-59 and should not be an income tax payee is eligible and can undergo self registration **free of cost** through the link of the portal <https://register.eshram.gov.in/#/user/self> and it requires an Aadhar number, Bank Account Details and Mobile number linked with Aadhaar. The workers also need to fill in other important information such as date of birth, hometown and social category, etc.

Apart from self registration workers can also register themselves through Common Service Centres (which are over 4 lakh across the country) and Selected Post Offices.

After registering on the e-SHRAM portal, unorganized workers will get an e-SHRAM card containing a 12-digit UAN which will be valid throughout the country and that worker need not to register separately for Govt's Social Security Schemes.

All registered unorganised workers will be provided Accidental Insurance Coverage through PMSBY for a year. The workers will be paid Rs2 lakh for accidental death and permanent disability and Rs1 lakh for partial disability. The portal will provide social security benefits and will assist the Central and state governments to help all the eligible unorganised workers in case of pandemic or calamities. The E-SHRAM portal will also help to keep a track record of the migrant labour workforce and will pave a path for more job opportunities.

After the completion of one month of launch of e-shram portal, over [1.71 crore](#) unorganised workers have registered themselves including migrant workers, construction workers, gig and platform workers, with Odisha and Bihar topping the list. The data of workers who have registered on the portal has crossed 3.83 crore as on October 14, 2021. The portal has come into existence more than a decade after the passage of the Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act in 2008 and all the leaders of Central Trade Unions welcomed this initiative and expressed that this will be a [game changer](#) for the well-being of unorganized workers who are the nation builders of the country and told in clear terms that all the Central Trade Unions and their field formations in the States will give its unflinching support to the honorable cause of registering unorganized workers in the e-SHRAM portal. A large-scale campaign is underway to make workers aware of this. A national toll-free number - 14434 also launched to assist and address the queries of workers seeking registration on the portal. There is also the provision of setting up a State Level Monitoring Committee and District Level Implementation Committees. The state level monitoring committee will overall supervise and monitor the progress in the State and take appropriate action for achieving the target and district level implementation committee will implement the registration process within the district and achieve the target as set by SLMC. The union government has constantly been [spreading awareness](#) about the benefits of registration as the Chief Labour Commissioner D.P.S. Negi also met the top-brass of companies as Indian Oil, GAIL, SBI and several trade unions in a bid to sensitise them about the e-SHRAM portal.

Although the process of registration of workers in the e-Shram portal is in full swing, there are problems with the portal being very slow across the state. Due to [technical snag](#) many Workers at common service centres and secretariats often have to stand in queues for hours. On

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e-Shram, the onus of registration lies with workers. From the labour administration perspective, the State is providing the framework for registration but the initiative's success depends on whether an unorganised worker comes forward to register or not. Employers have no role to play in this framework. Since Employer-employee relation is a primary requirement for protection under labour laws and access to institutional social security, Employers could also be involved in the process. There are some other limitations which include the lack of awareness among the unorganised sector workers about the unveiling of such a facility and the majority of unorganised workers are incapable of registering online. They simply don't have the know-how and many of them do not have an Aadhaar-seeded mobile or even a smartphone. The very identity of unorganised workers poses problems due to its complex nature and ever-changing identities. Many are circular migrant workers and they quickly, even unpredictably, move from one trade to another. One of the [major concerns](#) of this portal is data security, including its potential misuse, particularly when it is a big chunk of database. Lastly, the central government will have to depend on the State governments for this project to be successful. Given political issues between different parties ruling states, this can be challenging.

In many States, the social dialogue with the stakeholders especially is rather weak or non-existent. There is a need to adopt a multi-pronged approach. The success of the project depends on the involvement of a variety of stakeholders apart from trade unions. It includes massive and innovative dissemination exercises involving multiple media outlets of various languages, holding of camps by the government for registration, improving the efficiency of the resolution of grievance redress mechanisms and conducting micro-level operations.

Given the size of the Indian labour force, it is going to be a long-drawn process but the government should advertise and educate the masses and social partners need to come forward to spread awareness and keep a check on corruption practices for printing e-shram cards. There is a need for proactive and effective collaboration between employers, workers collectives, and civil society organisations for effective delivery of benefits. [E-Shram registration](#), if implemented well, can enhance social security cover for the unorganised sector.

Overall, registration on e-Shram is a welcome move as this portal opens the avenue to realise the dream of every worker to get dignified social security as per the ILO convention on Social Security Convention, 1952 of which India is signatory and moves a step further to formalise work arrangements.

Our Publications:

- 1) Democracy, Capitalism, Labour Movement: In Quest of Decent Work:
<https://www.suruchiprakashan.com/democracy-capitalism-labour-movement> 2) Decent Wage : It's not Just About Workers :
<https://www.suruchiprakashan.com/decent-wage>
- 3) Industry 4.0 and the Future of Work(er) :
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