Ministry of Labour & Employment Kick-Starts India's Social Protection Data Pooling Exercise

Ministry collaborates with States and International Labour Organization (ILO) for accurate portrayal of social protection coverage in India

Phase I of the Data Pooling Exercise to include 10 States: Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, and Gujarat

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India has made significant strides in enhancing its social protection coverage through a comprehensive data-pooling exercise led by the Ministry in collaboration with ILO. By utilizing encrypted **Aadhaar** as a unique identifier across **34 major Central schemes** such as MGNREGA, EPFO, ESIC, APY, and PM-POSHAN, over **200 crore** records were processed to identify unique beneficiaries.

This exercise revealed that **65% of** India's population (**92 crore** people) is covered by at least one social protection benefit (cash and in-kind both), with 48.8% receiving cash benefits. India's social protection coverage, thus, **doubled** from 24.4% in 2021 to **48.8%** in 2024 as per ILO's World Social Protection Report (WSPR) 2024-26, by acknowledging existing Central social protection schemes which hadn't been considered earlier.

India's present social protection coverage assessment by ILO i.e., 48.8% is still an underestimation, as it does not account for (a) **in-kind** benefits provided to the citizens of the country, such as food security and housing benefits; and (b) **social protection schemes** administered by the **States**. The actual social protection coverage of India is expected to be much higher after this data is taken into account.

In this context, the Ministry has been consistently following up with ILO Headquarters on this matter through a focussed high-level dialogue. In a bilateral discussion held between the Secretary (L&E) and DG, ILO during the **353rd ILO Governing Body meeting** in Geneva last week with India, ILO shared that housing and food security are part of a set of extended indicators (based on United Nations-Sustainable Development Goals) adopted by them. Therefore, such schemes and related data will also be considered by ILO.

The Ministry of Labour & Employment is actively collaborating with State Governments and ILO for a national social protection data pooling exercise to obtain a holistic picture of social protection coverage in India. Labour Departments of State Governments are playing the nodal role in compilation of respective State specific data and sharing the same with the Central Government for further consolidation, verification and de-duplication.

The Ministry of Labour & Employment kick-started Phase 01 of India's Social Protection Data Pooling

Exercise on 19.03.2025 in a hybrid meeting organised by Ministry of Labour and Employment. For Phase 01, Ministry has identified selected states i.e. Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, and Gujarat for data consolidation at the Central level.

This data pooling exercise will not only strengthen India's global reputation as a social protection pioneer but also facilitate the Central Government, States and UTs to optimize welfare spending and move closer towards sustainable financing of social protection. It will help the States in identifying unique beneficiaries under state-specific social protection schemes.

The exercise will also reinforce India's position in negotiating trade and social security agreements with other countries, and reflect India's commitment to promoting decent work in global value chains.

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