DOMESTIC WORKERS AND SOCIAL PROTECTION IN BIHAR STATE

This policy brief aims to provide a descriptive picture of the condition of domestic workers in the city of Patna in Bihar state. The study is based on interviews with domestic workers and their organizations, as well as a survey of 70 domestic workers.

RESPONSES TO COVID-19

In Bihar, 85 percent of domestic workers have not received salaries from their employers during the first lockdown, according to an official survey. BDWU has been calling for domestic workers to be categorised as essential workers, like healthcare workers, so they are prioritised in the national vaccination programme. During the second wave of the pandemic in early 2021, relief measures provided by non-governmental organisations are more limited. As a result, rations distributed by BDWU during the second wave were smaller and reached fewer members.

LONGER-TERM RISKS TO INCOME SECURITY

- **RS 8,379 (US$ 89) / month**
  - Domestic Worker Minimum Wage [8-HOUR WORKDAY]
- **10%** earn RS 2,000+ (USD 28) / week
- **30%** earn RS 500 – 1000 (USD 7 – 14) / week
- **50%** earn RS 1,050– 2,000 (USD 15 – 28) / week
- 57% work more than 40 hours / week

- **40%** work missed due to illness or accident
- **56%** due to an injury/illness resulting from their work
- **82%** missed work as a result
- **30%** had to take between 1-2+ weeks of leave
- **50%** received their salaries during their sick leave

**Occupational safety and health**

- reported leaving children with a family member whilst at work
- On average, weekly childcare costs are at 1,082 rupees (US$ 15) or equivalent to nearly a week’s average wages of 1,325 rupees (US$ 19).

**Care responsibilities**

- brought their children with them to work
- reported leaving children unattended at home
- 27% 50%
- 7% 11%
**Access to Healthcare**

- **91%** do not have access to a contributory state health care benefit.
- **100%** visited a health care facility in the last 12 months.
- **98%** went to a public hospital or clinic.
- **77%** said they could access medication.
- **46%** delayed a health care visit; could not afford it.
- **12%** had to wait between 1-2 hours to see a healthcare professional.
- **had to travel between 1-2 hours to reach healthcare facilities.**
- **93%** took time off to access health care.
- **96%** lost more than a day’s wages.

**Access to Social Protection**

- **45%** paid Rs 500-2,300 (USD7-32) or more on tests during last health care visit.
- **20%** paid Rs 3,000 (USD42) or more on tests during last health care visit.
- **21%** paid Rs 1,000-1,200 (USD14-16) for medication.
- **20%** paid Rs 1,500-2,000 (USD21-28) for medication.
- **30%** paid Rs 3,000+ (USD42) for medication.
- **47%** spent at least Rs 100 (USD1) on applications.
- **57%** paid Rs. 100-200 (USD 1-3).
- **43%** paid Rs. 300-500 (USD 4-7).

**Recommendations**

- **Registration of Domestic Workers:** Significantly increase efforts by District Authorities to register domestic workers so they receive an identity card and can access social security benefits as well as relief efforts during the pandemic.
- **Stipulating a living wage for domestic workers:** The state needs to calculate a living wage that is based on the living costs of domestic workers and not a minimum wage calculated with respect to the lowest amount employers can pay. The minimum wage currently is a disadvantage for domestic workers as it is set at a very low scale.
- **Supporting domestic workers during and after the pandemic:** Domestic workers should be paid compensation equivalent to Rs 10,000 due to loss during the lockdown periods. Registration and recognition as essential workers would greatly improve domestic workers’ access to vaccines.
- **Legislation:** Bihar state must develop and adopt separate legislation for domestic workers that includes social security provisions, drawing on the example of Kerala. Any legislation and corresponding social security scheme must include inter-state migrant workers who constitute a large share of live-in domestic workers.

**Cost of Healthcare Access**

- **Rs 1,283 (USD17)**
- **40 Hour Work Week**
- **Healthcare costs more than two weeks salary**
- **Rs 2,550 (USD35)** typical direct cost of one healthcare visit

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| All respondents hired a Middleman to help them apply | 57% paid Rs. 100-200 (USD 1-3) |
| 47% spent at least Rs 100 (USD 1) on applications | 43% paid Rs. 300-500 (USD 4-7) |
| 73% spent between Rs 100 – 500 (USD 1-7) on transport to access their benefit | 73% spent between Rs 100 – 500 (USD 1-7) on transport to access their benefit |