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Content

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Stefan Kühner *
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Abstract

This essay summarises the broad contours and key characteristics of the Indian government's social policy response to the global Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing nationwide lockdown. The principal strategy of the Indian government was to implement a large and at times bewildering array of temporary relief measures by ordinances after adjournment of the Indian parliament in March 2020. Not a single new piece of legislation was implemented in direct response to the Covid-19 crisis, although recent federal labour law reforms are likely to shape the Indian social and economic recovery. Collectively, the Indian government's relief measures have not been able to adequately alleviate the Covid-19-related social pressures and risks. While there is still a dearth of adequate statistical data to assess how well the relief measures were implemented, the initial picture suggests that the Indian government's response to the global Covid-19 pandemic prioritised economic and fiscal measures, relied on the existing inadequate safety net, and was not timely enough to support millions of inter-state migrants. The public health crisis and ensuing nationwide lockdown have not resulted in a path-breaking trajectory away from the entrenched Indian welfare paradigm.

Introduction

India's first Covid-19 infection was detected on 30 January 2020, in Thrissur, Kerala in a returnee from Wuhan (Rawat, 2020). Since then, the number of confirmed infections across India increased exponentially. By the beginning of May, all states and Indian Union territories (except for Sikkim and Dadar Nagar Haveli) were affected, reporting at least one Covid-19 case. The peak of the first wave of new infections was reached in mid-September and numbers have been slowly falling since. The major hotspot of the Covid-19 outbreak was centred in the south of India (including Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu). Until 6 October 2020, the country had experienced over 6.6 million Covid-19 cases according to official figures, which represented the second highest cumulative number of total instances worldwide after the United States (WHO, 2020). With over 103,000 deaths officially recorded at that point in time, India also had the third-highest number of Covid-19-related fatalities after the US and Brazil, despite a relatively low case-fatality ratio (Government of India, 2020; Johns Hopkins University, 2020).

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a strict nationwide lockdown on 25 March 2020, at a time when India only had 500 confirmed Covid-19 cases and fewer than ten deaths (Bharali, Kumar, and Selvaraj, 2020). This announcement occurred one day after the Ministry of Home Affairs invoked Section 6 (2) (i)

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of the Disaster Management Act 2005 (DMA). An order was issued directing all state and union territories to implement stringent measures resulting in the closure of all offices, factories, and shops, except those considered as providing essential goods and services (Chauhan, 2020). Following the nationwide lockdown, the Indian government passed no significant social policy legislation to protect the livelihoods of those in need as the Indian parliament was suspended for large parts of 2020. In fact, not one piece of legislation was passed between 23 March and 14 September 2020 (Government of India, 2020). Article 123 of the Constitution grants India's President certain law-making powers to promulgate ordinances under such circumstances. The bulk of the immediate social policy response for providing crisis relief was thus enacted by ordinances on the recommendation by the Indian Union cabinet, while state governments have similarly made use of executive orders for the same purpose (Joyita, 2020).

To summarise India's immediate response to Covid-19 and the nationwide lockdown, this essay focuses on a range of temporary relief measures that made use of various existing schemes and targeted various groups most in need. The measures adopted for employees in the organised sector mainly included provisions to facilitate early withdrawal of Employee Provident Fund (EPF) savings to help middle-class families absorb the Covid-19-related risks. Introduced in 1952, the EPF is today among the largest social security programmes worldwide with around 193 million active accounts (EPFO, 2020). Relieving employers from having to pay EPF contributions was in line with other economic measures and a fiscal stimulus package that centred on shielding the Indian economy from the negative consequences of the lockdown (Bajaj, Datt, Gangadharan, Islam, Jayasuriya, Maitra, Mishra, Parasnis, and Ray, 2020). We understand these as part of an 'immediate' crisis response to provide relief since we are merely covering the period between 23 March 2020 and 30 September 2020. Most Covid-19 relief measures were not renewed once their initial time period of implementation had expired (usually 3 months). Although intended to reach millions of beneficiaries, no statistical data was available at the time of writing to conclusively assess the success of the various relief measures, particularly in the context of the persisting urban-rural divide and regional diversity across the Indian Union territory.

Still, our analysis of policy documents suggests that the Indian government's Covid-19 crisis response has been merely incremental or "quantitative" rather than resulting in any radical or structural adjustments of the Indian social policy status quo (Yang and Kühner, 2020). The Indian government's crisis response relied entirely on the multitude of existing schemes at the federal and state level, all of which promised little remedy, but taken together added up to being fiscally quite expansive. Although garnering electoral support in several state-level elections, the surge of executive orders at the federal and state level resulted in a complicated landscape of new schemes that were difficult to navigate for citizens, businesses, and officials. While landmark legislation on social security, industrial relations, and occupational safety was passed after the resumption of parliamentary activity in September 2020, these changes were not motivated by the global Covid-19 pandemic and were criticised for potentially exacerbating the existing vulnerabilities of workers in the Indian cash economy, including inter-state migrants. From a more theoretical perspective, therefore, there is little evidence that India's crisis response has resulted in a path-breaking, structural change away from its entrenched "informal-insecurity" features (Kühner and Nakray, 2017).

Background: Social and economic losses amidst the global pandemic

Within existing welfare regime research, India has been characterised as a 'failing informal welfare regime' due to low social expenditure and poor social outcomes (Wood and Gough, 2006; Abu-Shark and Gough, 2010). On the surface, the social policy approach under the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) (2014–2019 and 2019–2024) initially appeared promising with a wide array of welfare measures being recalibrated from the previous United Progressive Alliance government headed by the Indian National Congress (2004–2009 and 2009–2014). However, emerging analysis suggests that the BJP has not managed to transform India's rigid welfare landscape, as social policy measures continue to closely align with electoral gains in national and sub-national elections (Deshpande, Tillin, and Kailash, 2019; Nakray, 2020). India is, therefore, not too dissimilar to other South Asian countries, as successive Modi governments failed to significantly build on the gains achieved during the 'social turn' of the mid-2000s to 2010s (Koehler, Kühner, Neff, 2021).

At the time of the lockdown, the government was already facing several economic and political challenges. Firstly, India was increasingly grappling with an employment crisis, as ongoing economic growth did not translate into sufficient decent jobs to accommodate the new rural entrants to the urban labour market (Mehrotra, 2020). Secondly, even before the global Covid-19 pandemic, India had seen a rise in unemployment, which could directly be attributed to the Indian government's demonetisation interventions (November 2016), which caused 86% of the entire value of all cash in circulation to be withdrawn overnight, and the introduction of a national Goods and Service Tax (July 2017) (The Economic Times, 2020a).[1] Thirdly, India was facing a looming banking crisis, as bad loans increasingly burdened the banks. This situation is likely to have worsened due to the lockdown and could result in a lower willingness of banks to provide loans and higher interest rates, thus hampering the economic recovery in the months ahead.

The earliest statistical figures on the social and economic losses due to the global Covid-19 pandemic and the nationwide lockdown paint a comparatively grim picture. According to official estimates, India's economy has been hit hard with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth contracting by 23.9% in the first quarter of 2020 (Ministry of Statistics, GOI, 2020). The International Monetary Fund in its annual World Economic Outlook has significantly downgraded India's growth forecast for the fiscal year 2020 to minus 10.3% (IMF, 2020). The unemployment rate currently stands at 6.8% (CMIE, 2020). However, it is believed that this figure significantly underrates the true extent of the current employment crisis. Many migrant workers returned to their native villages to engage in agricultural work through the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme (MGNREGS). This has left them strongly underemployed with much lower income than they could previously count on (ILO 2020a; Iqbal, 2020). Altogether, estimates suggest that around 21 million salaried jobs have been lost since the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis, which accounts for 21–22% of total employment in India (Vyas, 2020). It is further suggested that between 2 and 10 million inter-state migrant workers have been negatively impacted by Covid-19 (Bharali, Kumar and Selvaraj, 2020). The ILO (2020b) went even further by arguing that the 400 million Indian workers engaged in the informal economy are at risk of falling (deeper) into poverty.

Altogether, no less than 80–90% of the Indian workforce is paid in cash (Harris-White, 2020) and it is, therefore, no surprise that the announcement of the nationwide lockdown had a very serious immediate impact on large parts of the Indian workforce. Yet, the first measures aimed at protecting the livelihoods of inter-state migrant workers threatened by unemployment and loss of economic activity were only introduced 45 days after the nationwide lockdown. One potential reason why the rate of new Covid-19 infections across the country could not be slowed might have been that the day after the national lockdown was declared, caravans of inter-state migrants flocked to the streets to return to their native villages, in some cases walking hundreds of kilometres to reach their villages in poor states such as Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Uttar Pradesh. The sudden mass movement of inter-state migrants exacerbated the difficulties in implementing mandatory health measures prescribed by the World Health Organization (WHO), such as social distancing, wearing a facemask and regular handwashing, due to poor literacy, lack of water and other basic amenities.

Before summarising India's social policy measures to support inter-state migrants and other affected groups, we first need to take a short detour to discuss the constitutional role of ordinances in the Indian context. Due to closure of the Indian parliament for large parts of the year 2020, such ordinances play a major role in understanding the Covid-19 response by the Indian federal and state governments.

The constitutional role of ordinances in India's Covid-19 response

The Government of India used the existing Epidemic Diseases Act 1897, on 11 March 2020, to invoke social distancing and the voluntary public curfew norm in the country. However, quarantine enforcement under Sections 188, 269, 270, and 271 of the Indian Penal Code 1860, and Section 133 of the Criminal Procedure Code 1973 quickly came under scrutiny. The promises and pitfalls of the 160-year-old Indian Penal Code 1860, and the 123-year-old Epidemic Diseases Act 1897 in controlling the nationwide Covid-19 outbreak, were considered at great length and breadth (Nomani and Parveen, 2020). Finally, the Ministry of Home Affairs invoked Section 6

1 Demonetisation is the act of stripping a currency unit of its status as legal tender. In India, the government declared that the high-denomination INR 500 and 1,000 notes, which constituted around 86% of the currency in circulation, would be invalid as legal tender and could only be deposited into bank accounts until the end of the year (2016). The official aim was to address tax evasion and push digital transactions, but the announcement created a significant economic shock, with millions of people scrambling for cash.

(2) (i) of the Disaster Management Act 2005 and issued an order on 24 March 2020, directing all the state and union territories to implement stringent measures on people's mobility outside their homes. The lockdown order led to the immediate closure of all offices, factories, and shops, except those considered as providing essential goods and services.

Article 246 of the Indian constitution provides for the "Distribution of Legislative Subjects" between the central and state governments. It does so by creating three lists, enumerated in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, namely the Union List, State List, and Concurrent List (Vasani and Pednekar, 2020). The National Disaster Management Act 2005 (DMA) was first invoked for a three-week national lockdown. The DMA was enacted by invoking entry 23, namely, "Social Security and Social Insurance; Employment and Unemployment" in the Concurrent List of the Constitution of India (Alok, 2020). These provisions provided the federal and state governments with the power to frame rules and issue executive orders in direct response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The two laws within the Indian constitutional framework, the Epidemic Diseases Act 1897 (EDA) and the Disaster Management Act 2005 (DMA) have largely provided the statutory provisions for policy responses to Covid-19. The EDA is a colonial law which gives unlimited power to the government in the context of an epidemic. The DMA maps the role of the national, state and district levels to formulate a disaster plan (Ghose, 2020; Kaur, 2020). While the role of local authorities is superficially mentioned in Section 41, the DMA is unambiguous in assigning powers to the federal and state governments. Section 62 of the DMA stipulates extraordinary powers to the federal government and renders federal ministries, statutory bodies, and state governments liable to take direction from the nodal ministry of the central government. In addition, a national plan drawn up under Section 11, Penal provisions in Chapter 10 of the DMA paved the way for security personnel to take coercive measures against any offenders. Since medical professionals were not originally covered by the DMA, an additional ordinance was promulgated on 22 April in an attempt to maintain the morale of healthcare professionals and discipline any miscreants (Alok, 2020).

The Parliament of India was adjourned *sine die* after the passage of the Finance Bill in the Budget Session on 23 March (PRS Legislative Research, 2020b). Article 123 of the Constitution of India grants the president law-making powers to promulgate ordinances on the recommendation of the federal cabinet. Legally, the president can promulgate an ordinance when parliament is not in session or in situations which require immediate action. Yet, parliamentary approval is required within six weeks of reassembly, or the ordinances will cease to be in force. In India, social policy programmes for the rural poor and the informal sector have historically been designed as schemes and hence it has been a normal procedure to make changes to the schemes through ordinances/executive orders, as this would not require legislation. However, while there has been a general decline in the use of executive orders since the mid-1990s, the past year has seen a steep rise in the number of ordinances promulgated as part of the Indian federal and state governments' Covid-19 response (Joyita, 2020).

Since the start of the lockdown in March 2020, no less than 966 executive orders ('ordinances') have been issued by the federal state and over 6000 issued by all Indian states combined across all sectors, resulting in a sense of chaos amongst businesses and the general public (The Print, 2020a). More than 200 such 'major notifications' were issued in relation to existing social assistance, food distribution, health, and labour and employment policies between January and September 2020 (PRS Legislative Research, 2020a). Neither the Epidemic Diseases Act of 1897 (EDA) or the DMA are 'emergency laws' in a traditional sense. Yet, they enabled the Government of India to suspend certain civil liberties. Both the federal parliament and state legislatures were bypassed and there was no oversight of executive actions apart from a few exceptions such as when the High Court of Odisha invalidated a state government decision to disallow private transport. In this particular case, the court upheld that this restriction had adverse effects on elderly people and people with disabilities. At the time of writing, the Winter Session of the Parliament 2020 has been called off without any consultation with the opposition party.

Looking back: India's immediate social policy response

The Indian government has responded to the global Covid-19 pandemic and the nationwide lockdown with a set of temporary relief measures which broadly focused on food security and income subsidies, as well as some housing-related measures for the unorganised sector.[2] All these measures made use of the existing welfare provision infrastructure, such as the Public Distribution System (PDS), the bank accounts which were opened up for the poor under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) scheme. For the organised sector, changes in employer and employee contribution rates, as well as new rules facilitating the withdrawal of Employment Provident Fund (EPF) savings, were intended to ensure systemic economic security by stabilising purchasing power and helping businesses to bridge the crisis. In addition, several Indian states implemented *ad hoc* measures providing, for instance, additional compensation to poor workers (Uttar Pradesh, Odisha), social pensions (Delhi), food programmes at schools (Kerala), night shelters (Delhi), or for transient inter-state migrants (West Bengal) (see Part IIIb below).

One day after the nationwide lockdown on 25 March, the Indian government announced a relief package worth INR 1,700 billion including the provision of free rice/wheat and pulses for three months under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY – translates into Prime Minister's Food Security Scheme for the Poor).[3] Since 2019, eligible farmers received INR 6,000 every year through the PM-KISAN scheme (minimum income support scheme) in three equal instalments. With the relief package, starting in the first week of April 2020, the government provided the first instalment of the PM-KISAN scheme up front for the fiscal year 2020 – a move that was expected to benefit around 86.9 million farmers immediately (ILO, 2020c, ILO, 2020d; ISSA, 2020). Under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), every rural household in India has the right to 100 days of paid work, when requested. The Indian government implemented a wage increase from INR 182 to INR 202 (applicable from 1 April) amounting to an additional income of INR 2,000 per worker and benefitting around 50 million families (ILO, 2020c; OECD, 2020). As inter-state migrant workers returned to their native villages in the rural areas, this measure was supposed to provide them with a much-needed source of income. Also included in the relief package was a series of temporary cash transfers provided to female Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) users through existing bank accounts, including widows, disabled and the elderly. Starting from April 2020, around 30 million senior citizens, widows, and disabled received one-time *ex gratia* payments of INR 1,000 in two instalments over a three month period (ACAPS, 2020).

Other notable financial relief measures in response to the global Covid-19 pandemic included a directive to state governments to use the welfare fund to support building and construction workers (ILO, 2020c; OECD, 2020). The Indian Finance Minister announced a doubling of collateral-free loans to INR 200,000 for 630,000 Self-help Groups (SHGs), which has since benefited around 70 million households (OECD, 2020). The District Mineral Fund, worth about INR 310 billion, was used to help those who are facing economic disruption because of the lockdown. In a further addition to the earlier relief package, on 31 March 2020, the government announced that 200 million female Jan Dhan account holders (bank accounts) would be given *ex gratia* sums of INR 500 per month also for a three month period from April to June 2020 to support the running of their households (ISSA, 2020; OECD, 2020). Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY, translates into Prime Minister's Lighting Scheme) is a scheme that since 2016 has provided women in families below the poverty line access to Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) connections. A decision by the Indian government ensured that under the scheme around 83 million women were given free LPG (cooking) cylinders for a period of three months from 1 May onwards (OECD, 2020). Women's Self-help Groups were supported by the Government of India's National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) across the country.

For the organised sector, on 26 March 2020 the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) announced that employees could withdraw up to 75 % of their account balance or three months' basic salary and dearness allowance, whichever is lower (ACAPS, 2020). Billed as an emergency measure to tide employees over any difficulties arising from the global Covid-19 pandemic, this change was intended to benefit around 60 million active contributors to the EPF (ISSA, 2020). In addition to the changes of the EPF, the Indian government announced via a circular to all stakeholders and subscribers that the National Pension System (NPS) withdrawal rules would be altered to allow partial withdrawals to fulfil financial obligations towards treatment of Covid-19-related illnesses of family members (ACAPS, 2020). In addition, for companies employing up to 100 employees and where 90% of workers earn up to INR 15,000 per month, the Indian government announced that it would pay

2 The categorisation of the "unorganised" labour force in India includes attached agricultural labourers, bonded labourers, migrant workers as well as contract and casual workers.

3 INR 1000 equalled USD 13.5 and € 11 on 1 October 2020.

the employee provident fund contribution for both the employer and the employee (12% each) from March 2020 to May 2020. This support covered around 1.8 million workers in 400,000 firms and was later extended for an additional three months to cover the period from June to August 2020 (ISSA, 2020; OECD, 2020). EPFO also extended the due date for the payment of contributions for the wage month of March 2020 from 15 April 2020 to 15 May 2020 (30 days grace period) and granted non-refundable advances to EPF members subject to certain conditions.

As part of the list of measures to provide relief and credit support to businesses, the Indian government finally announced on 13 May 2020 that EPF contributions were to be reduced from 12 to 10% each for all employers and employees for three months (i.e. May, June and July 2020). One day later, the Indian government announced a new Affordable Rental Housing Complex (ARHC) Scheme as part of a wider relief package for supporting the poor, including migrants, farmers, tiny businesses and street vendors. The goal of ARHC was to provide access to decent affordable rental housing for urban migrants, including workers in industry, health institutions, street vendors, students, etc. under two separate models. First, around 100,000 vacant houses built under JnNURM and Rajiv Awas Yojana would be repurposed as rental houses; and second, public and private entities would be incentivised to develop rental housing on their vacant land. The scheme will target urban migrants in the economically weaker sections and low-income groups. The ARHC is a significant development since it presented the first – and so far only – major introduction of a new scheme that specifically responded to mass movements of inter-state migrants returning to their villages after the nationwide lockdown. Finally, as part of the social policy measures announced in March 2020, the Finance Minister announced medical insurance cover of INR 5 million per frontline healthcare worker, such as sanitation staff, paramedics and nurses, Accredited Health Social Activist (ASHA) workers and doctors. About 2 million health service and ancillary workers were intended to benefit from this insurance scheme for a period of three months (The Economic Times, 2020b). The third stimulus package worth INR 2.65 trillion was announced on 14 November 2020. To boost employment, the Central Government committed to pay the EPF contributions for employees engaged on or after 1 October 2020 and earning up to INR 15,000 a month for two years. It has also been decided to provide an additional outlay of INR 100 billion for the PM Garib Kalyan Rozgar Yojana to boost employment in rural areas (The Hindu, 2020).

At the time of the global Covid-19 pandemic, India has experienced major elections to state assemblies, by-elections and elections to local bodies. Although the relief measures and laws introduced by the government were critically received by opposition parties, unions, industry and parts of the media, state elections show that the general public seems to have appreciated the initiatives taken by the Modi-led Indian government. Although the ruling BJP party could not replicate the results from previous elections, it is suggested that the greater centralisation of welfare schemes and their attribution to the ruling party has played a critical role in securing electoral dividends. For instance, some early analyses shows that particularly constituencies in districts with higher proportions of male inter-state migrants who returned due to the lockdown voted heavily in favour of the BJP (Sircar, 2020).

Looking ahead: The significance of recent federal legislation

The BJP-led Indian government passed three major labour law reforms in September 2020, including the Code on Social Security, the Occupational Safety, Health & Working Conditions Code, and the Industrial Relations Code (The Lok Sabha, 2020a; b; c). The discussions surrounding labour law reform started as early as 2003, and it took 17 years and a strong majority party BJP, to push the changes through parliament by ordinance despite a boycott of the proceedings by the opposition beginning from 14 September 2020 (Khan, 2020). The substantive content of the reforms was not directly motivated by the global Covid-19 pandemic, but should be analysed in the context of the special political circumstances – i.e. the adjournment of both houses of the Indian parliament and the general increase in executive orders – in its wake. Not least, the controversial bills are likely to shape India's social and economic recovery.

According to the Indian government, the new laws are aimed at reducing complexities, improving ease of compliance, bringing in more transparency and accountability to labour regulations, and would, therefore, be in the interest of both employers and workers. Among other things, the bills explicitly state that the central government will set up social security funds for unorganised, gig and platform workers through the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) and Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EFPO) as well as establishing a

National Social Security Board to administer the schemes for unorganised sector workers (Bordoloi et al., 2020; PRS Legislative Research, 2020c; The Print, 2020b). The new legislation also provides the basis for implementing a minimum wage for up to 500 million workers and includes provisions that allow industries to employ workers on fixed-term contracts for short-term projects (Jha, 2020; Mehrotra, 2020).

Although the respective social schemes have yet to be implemented, critics fear that the bills have the objective to dismantle existing labour rights and employment protection in order to make the labour market more flexible, potentially leading to a further decline in the number of permanent workers (Ventkatesan, 2020). A further point of contention has been that the new social security benefits are not universal and, therefore, will still exclude millions of workers from basic social protection (Khan, 2020). Other issues are that the social security funds are corporatised and that the bills allow for considerable government discretion in applying the laws (Economic and Political Weekly, 2020). Moreover, the work of unions and the ability to engage in strike action is believed to become even more difficult after the passing of the bills.

The global Covid-19 pandemic and the nationwide lockdown led many Indian states, including Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Haryana, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh, to dilute or suspend labour laws unilaterally. The space for such retrenchment reforms has opened up, particularly in those cases where the institutional basis of social dialogue has been weak or non-existent. India's labour laws needed reforming to keep up with the emerging gig economy. Yet, there is a sense among the opposition that the Modi-led government has chosen to place brute power into the hands of the employers – a strategy that, however, will be unlikely to lead to improved social or economic development in the context of the major losses experienced due to the global Covid-19 pandemic and the nationwide lockdown.

Conclusion

So far, the Indian government's Covid-19 relief measures have not been able to adequately address the social and economic grief in the country, as there were no adequate safety nets in place to counter immediate social emergencies to begin with. In the absence of new legislative initiatives, the Indian government's strategy was to implement a large array of temporary relief measures by ordinances specifically targeting distinct groups, for example "the poorest of the poor", elderly, widows, disabled, farmers, construction workers, unorganised sector workers, and fishermen. Apart from the housing scheme (ARHC), no new longer-term schemes have been developed directly in response to the global pandemic.

The bulk of food- and income-transfer-related Covid-19 measures relied on the requirement of recipients to prove their neediness, thus leading to further exclusion. Moreover, the local and international analysis pointed out that the benefit levels granted fall far short of the sums needed to compensate for Covid-19-related income losses (UN ESCAP, 2020). Maybe most importantly, the relief was not timely enough to support inter-state migrants immediately after the lockdown and there has been relatively little activity to renew the various forms of financial support after the initial period of implementation had expired. Instead, India has witnessed the passing of a controversial set of labour law reforms, which critics have argued may further undermine labour protections and threaten to fall short of reducing vulnerabilities in the Indian cash economy. An estimated 93% of the Indian workforce has no access to a written contract or to formal labour rights, ranging not only across the informal workers and inter-state migrants toiling in small firms, but also to the labour force in the corporate sector and even those workers subcontracted to the state itself (Harris-White, 2020).

Historically, India's categorisation as a failing 'informal-insecurity' regime can be partially explained by the near absence of workers' voices in shaping policies related to social welfare and employment-orientated productive skills (Kühner and Nakray, 2017). The informal labour movement has focused on the expansion of social assistance with a limited focus on the implementation of a universal social insurance system. Having long been characterised by its residualist, non-redistributive social transfers, the global Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing nationwide lockdown have not resulted in a path-breaking trajectory away from the entrenched Indian welfare landscape. Judging from the controversial passing of the labour law reform bills in September 2020, although unrelated to Covid-19, and the overall emphasis of economic and fiscal measures over transformative social rights, it is likely that no such paradigmatic shift will be forthcoming at least in the short- and medium-term.

The theoretical literature in the field of comparative social policy analysis typically suggests that challenging times or moments of deep crisis either present a window of opportunity for structural change or motivate institutionally bounded, rule satisficing policymakers to revert back to 'old habits' (Chung and Thewissen, 2012). While the bulk of the temporary relief measures were implemented by executive orders, the Indian social policy response to the global Covid-19 pandemic and the nationwide lockdown – at least at the time of writing – is best described by the latter rather than the former notion.

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Appendix 1: Social Policy Developments in Response to Covid-19 by Policy Area (India, January–September 2020)

Note: The summary below does not include temporary relief measures announced by ordinances (see *Appendix 4 below*).

	Policy Area	Pensions	Healthcare	Long-term care and disability	Labour market	Education
(1)	Have there been any significant legislative reforms in the indicated policy area during the indicated time period?	No	No	No	Yes	No
(2)	If (1) yes, have any of these reforms been explicit responses to the Covid-19 pandemic?	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	N/A
(3)	If (2) yes, has there been significant regional variation in the implementation of these reforms?	N/A	N/A	N/A	Don't know	N/A
(4)	Have subnational governments enacted any significant legislative reforms in the indicated policy area during the indicated time period?	No	No	No	Don't know	No
	Policy Area	**Family benefits**	**Housing**	**Social assistance**	**Other***	
(1)	Have there been any significant legislative reforms in the indicated policy area during the indicated time period?	No	No	No	No	
(2)	If (1) yes, have any of these reforms been explicit responses to the Covid-19 pandemic?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
(3)	If (2) yes, has there been significant regional variation in the implementation of these reforms?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
(4)	Have subnational governments enacted any significant legislative reforms in the indicated policy area during the indicated time period?	No	No	No	No	

**Legislative* reforms in other policy areas explicitly aimed at social protection, e.g. food subsidies or tax cuts aimed at social protection.

APPENDIX 2: SOCIAL POLICY LEGISLATION IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 (INDIA, JANUARY–SEPTEMBER 2020)

Note: This appendix covers all major national social policy legislation published between 1 January 2020 and 30 September 2020.

Law 1		
(1)	Number of law	No 36 of 2020
(2)	Name of law (original language)	The Code on Social Security 2020
(3)	Name of law (English)	The Code on Social Security 2020
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	19 September 2020
(5)	Date of law's enactment	22 September 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	23 September 2020
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	No
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	No
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	No
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	The Code was introduced to Parliament in 2020 with the goal of consolidating the law on social security in India. Since India has over 40 separate pieces of legislation on labour law, the government has tried to amalgamate them in order to simplify labour law regulations and thus encourage industrial growth in the country. The Code seeks to amalgamate nine pieces of labour law legislation, namely: 1. The Employees' Compensation Act 1923; 2. The Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act 2008; 3. The Payment of Gratuity Act 1972; 4. The Employees' State Insurance Act 1948; 5. The Cine Workers Welfare Fund Act 1981; 6. The Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1952; 7. The Employment Exchanges (Compulsory Notification of Vacancies) Act 1959; 8. The Maternity Benefit Act 1961; and 9. The Building and Other Construction Workers Cess Act 1996. Much of the Code 2019 was replicated in the Code 2020, with only some notable differences. The revisions include but are not limited to: 1. An option to opt in and out of voluntary coverage; 2. Inclusion of contract labour in the definition of 'employee'; 3. Changes in definition of building or other construction work; 4. Changes in the definition of inter-state migrant worker; and 5. Clarifications regarding the payment of gratuities to working journalists. In addition, the Code on Social Security includes, for the first time, workers in the gig economy, platform workers and unorganised workers. The Bill mandates an employee or a worker (including an unorganised worker) to provide their Aadhaar number to receive social security benefits. This may violate the Supreme Court's Puttaswamy-II judgement. Note that the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) made Aadhaar linking with PF accounts mandatory in 2015. After the judgement, the EPFO issued orders against the enforcement of these provisions. In the context of mandatory linking of Aadhaar for registration of unorganised workers, the Standing Committee on Labour (2020) noted the government's assurance that this provision will be re-examined.

Law 1		
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	Not Applicable
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 1: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Labor market
(14)	Brief description of reform component	Not Applicable
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Not Applicable
(17)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	Not Applicable
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	Not Applicable
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	Not Applicable
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(28)	Note on (27)	Not Applicable
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	Not Applicable
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Not Applicable
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	Not Applicable
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	Not Applicable

Law 2		
(1)	Number of law	No 37 of 2020
(2)	Name of law (original language)	The Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions 2020
(3)	Name of law (English)	The Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions 2020
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	19 September 2020
(5)	Date of law's enactment	22 September 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	23 September 2020
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	No
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	No
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	No

Law 2		
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	Factory: The 2019 bill defined a factory as any premises where a manufacturing process is carried out and employs more than: » 10 workers, if the process is carried out using power, or » 20 workers, if it is carried out without using power. This was the same categorisation as was included in the Factories Act 1948, which is being subsumed by the bill. The 2020 code increases the threshold to: » 20 workers for premises where the manufacturing process is carried out using power, and » 40 workers for premises where it is carried out without using power. It further stipulates the daily work hour limit. The 2019 bill allowed the government to stipulate the maximum daily work hours for workers. The 2020 bill fixes the maximum limit at eight hours per day. Employment of women: The 2019 bill allowed the government to prohibit employment of women for undertaking dangerous operations. The 2020 bill provides that women will be entitled to be employed in all establishments for all types of work under the bill. It also provides that in cases where they are required to work in hazardous or dangerous operations, the government may require the employer to provide adequate safeguards prior to their employment. The law includes in its scope the inter-state migrant workers and unorganised workers. The benefits provided include access to the Public Distribution System either in the native state or the state of employment, and access to insurance and provident fund benefits. Benefits for inter-state migrant workers: An inter-state migrant worker can register on the portal on the basis of self-declaration and Aadhaar. The 2020 bill provides for the establishment of a social security fund for the welfare of unorganised workers. The amount collected from certain penalties under the code (including the amount collected through compounding) will be credited to the fund. The government may prescribe other sources as well for transferring money to the fund.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 2: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Labor market
(14)	Brief description of reform component	Not Applicable
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Not Applicable
(17)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	Not Applicable
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	Not Applicable
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	Not Applicable
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(28)	Note on (27)	Not Applicable
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Not Applicable

Law 2: Component 1		
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	Not Applicable
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Not Applicable
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	Not Applicable
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	Not Applicable

Law 3		
(1)	Number of law	No 35 of 2020
(2)	Name of law (original language)	The Industrial Relations Code 2020
(3)	Name of law (English)	The Industrial Relations Code 2020
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	19 September 2020
(5)	Date of law's enactment	22 September 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	23 September 2020
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	No
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	No
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	No
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	The Industrial Relations Code 2020 consolidates the trade union laws in India. State-related specific laws will be drafted by March 2021. The new code stipulates that workers cannot go on strike without giving a notice period of 60 days. Under the IR code, if over 50% of a company's workers take concerted casual leave, it will be treated as a strike. The IR code also allows companies with up to 300 workers to lay off workers without having to gain government approval. Currently, only industrial establishments with under 100 workers can do so.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 3: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Labor market
(14)	Brief description of reform component	
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Not Applicable
(17)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	Not Applicable
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	Not Applicable
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable

Law 3: Component 1		
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	Not Applicable
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(28)	Note on (27)	Not Applicable
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	Not Applicable
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Not Applicable
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	Not Applicable
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	Not Applicable

Appendix 3: Major Social Policy Relief Measures in Response to Covid-19 (India, January–September 2020)

Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) https://www.india.gov.in/spotlight/pradhan-mantri-jan-dhan-yojana-pmjdy	
Policy Area	Social assistance
Brief description	26 March 2020: 200 million female Jan Dhan bank account holders were provided an *ex gratia* payment of INR 500 per month for the next 3 months.
Duration in months	Fix-term: 3 months

Antyodaya Anna Yojana https://dfpd.gov.in/pds-aay.htm	
Policy Area	Other (Legislative reforms in other policy areas explicitly aimed at social protection (e.g. food subsidies or tax cuts aimed at social protection)
Brief description	26 March 2020: Government announced the provision of free rice/wheat and pulses (5 kg wheat or rice and 1kg preferred pulses) for three months.
Duration in months	Fix-term: 3 months

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi https://pmkisan.gov.in/	
Policy Area	Social assistance
Brief description	26 March 2020: Eligible farmers receive INR 6,000 every year through the PM-KISAN scheme (minimum income support scheme) in three equal instalments since 2019. The government announced that it would provide the first instalment upfront for the fiscal year starting in April 2020. About 86.9 million farmers were expected to benefit from this front-loading of income support immediately.
Duration in months	Not Applicable

National Social Assistance Programme https://nsap.nic.in/	
Policy Area	Social assistance
Brief description	26 March 2020: Federal government provided an *ex gratia* payment of INR 1,000 to 30 million poor senior citizens, widows and persons with disabilities in the first week of April.
Duration in months	Not Applicable

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) https://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx	
Policy Area	Labor market
Brief description	26 March 2020: Under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) every rural household in India has the right to 100 days of paid work, when requested. Wages were increased from INR 182 to INR 202 per day. The increase will benefit 50 million families. The wage increase will amount into an additional income of up to INR 2,000 per worker.
Duration in months	Indefinite

Employee Provident Fund https://www.epfindia.gov.in/	
Policy Area	Pensions
Brief description	27 March 2020: The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has announced that employees who contribute to EPF can withdraw up to 75% of their account balance or 3 months' basic salary and dearness allowance, whichever is lower.
Duration in months	Fix-term: 3 months

Employee Provident Fund https://www.epfindia.gov.in/	
Policy Area	Pensions
Brief description	15 May 2020: Employer and employee contributions reduced to 10% each from 12% each for the next 3 months (i.e. May, June and July 2020). This was applicable to all employers (other than government companies and companies covered in bullet point no. 2 above).
Duration in months	Fix-term: 3 months

Self-help Groups	
Policy Area	Other (Legislative reforms in other policy areas explicitly aimed at social protection (e.g. food subsidies or tax cuts aimed at social protection)
Brief description	15 May 2020: For 630,000 Self-help Groups (SHGs), which help 70 million households, the government doubled collateral-free loans to INR 200,000.
Duration in months	Not Applicable

Affordable Rental Housing Complex (ARHC) Scheme http://arhc.mohua.gov.in/	
Policy Area	Housing
Brief description	14 May 2020: The Government of India launched the Affordable Rental Housing Complex (ARHC) Scheme to provide access to decent affordable rental housing to urban migrants, including workers in industry, health institutions, street vendors, students, etc. under two separate models. One, 108,000 vacant houses built under JnNURM and Rajiv Awas Yojana will be repurposed as rental houses. Two, public and private entities will be incentivised to develop rental housing on their vacant land. The scheme will target urban migrants in economically weaker sections/low income groups.
Duration in months	Indefinite

Appendix 4: Social Policy Relief Measures in Selected States in Response to Covid-19 (India, January–September 2020)

Andhra Pradesh
Ration card holders were provided an additional cash transfer of INR 1,000 with the provision of red gram dal for free in April 2020. Home delivery options were provided to all beneficiaries. As many as 14.7 million ration card holders benefitted from the scheme. Pensions were home delivered, an exercise which covered over 5.9 million beneficiaries (Pandey, 2020). Permanent and contractual employees of the government and private sector were provided full salaries. Permanent employees with government and private sector establishments were paid partial salaries for the period of lockdown. Contractual employees in government and private sector establishments were provided full salaries for the period of lockdown (News 18 India, 2020). Unorganised workers from other states/ regions who stayed back were given shelter and food. Labourers in the unorganised sector in Andhra Pradesh were issued smart cards under the accident insurance scheme. Migrants who returned from other states were provided quarantine facilities and APSRTC buses free of cost to return home. 79 food counters were set up along the national highways for inter-state migrants *en route* to other states to provide food and water (Dvara Research, 2020).
Bihar
Direct Benefit Transfer: During the lockdown, the Indian economy was grounded, which had disastrous impacts on inter-state migrants. The majority of these migrants came from the impoverished North Indian State of Bihar. On 7 April 2020, the State Government of Bihar launched the "Corona Sahayata (Assistance)" scheme to provide cash assistance through payments into bank accounts to tide them over the immediate crisis. All Bihari migrant workers stranded in other states received the transfer of INR 1,000 to their bank accounts. The registered beneficiaries were able to return to Bihar on a priority basis when special migrant trains (Shramik Specials) were operated from large urban centres all over India to Bihar. Registration was possible with an Android application (Corona Sahayata App). People without smartphones could register through the website of the Bihar State Disaster Management Agency which required possession or access to a mobile phone to receive a one-time password, without which they would not be able to complete the application process. The Bihar Government received 2.9 million applications, of which 2.03 million were successful and paid by 24 May 2020 (Mukherjee, 2020).
Chhattisgarh
Food Security: The Chhattisgarh government has provided rice free of cost (Business Standard, 2020). Under the Public Distribution System in the state, instructions had already been given by the state government to make lump-sum distribution of rice in April and May 2020 to ration card holders of Antyodaya, priority, disabled, single destitute and Annapurna category (The Pioneer, 2020). Padhadyee Tunwar Dwar (Education at your doorstep) – the flagship programme of the Chhattisgarh government – ensured that Chhattisgarh emerged as the best-performing state with over 90% of children having access to the Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) programme. The State Government of Chhattisgarh was the best-performing state for the provision of employment under the MNREGA. According to Rural Development Ministry data, Chhattisgarh accounts for nearly one-fourth of the total MGNREGS jobs. Despite the lockdown, 18,51,536 workers carried out MNREGS day jobs in 9,883 *gram panchayats* in the central state. The Chhattisgarh's Bhupesh Baghel government also launched the Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana (RGKNY), which is meant to provide a minimum income to farmers through direct bank transfers. It is in line with the Indian National Congress manifesto promise of 2019, to introduce a universal basic income if victorious in the general elections of 2019. However, the scheme has fallen short of introducing INR 72,000 per annum as promised originally in the election manifesto. It also set up 355 relief camps for migrant workers from outside the state (Dvara Research, 2020).
Delhi Government
Delhi is providing two in-kind measures: first, free rations, with 50% more quantity than standard entitlements, to 7.2 million beneficiaries; second, lunch and dinner will be served free to every person at all Delhi government night shelters. The Delhi government decided to double the pensions payable under the widow pension scheme for 250,000 beneficiaries, an old-age pension scheme for 500,000 beneficiaries, and disability pension scheme for 100,000 beneficiaries. By 7 April 2020, the Delhi government provided INR 4,000–5,000 financial assistance to 850,000 beneficiaries.

Karnataka
Free treatment was offered by the state government for Covid-19 patients referred by the PHIs to private healthcare providers (Poovanna, 2020). Free food rations for the next two months will be given in one go (The Hindu, 2020). Payment of two months of social security pension were provided in advance, alongside the release of INR 1,000 per person to about 2.1 million construction workers and waiving of INR 132 million loans under the Badavara Bandhu scheme. Unorganised workers in the building and construction industry received cash assistance of INR 49.57 billion during the nationwide lockdown via direct benefit transfer (Decan Herald, 2020). MNREGA wages were paid two months in advance, while the state government planned to increase the workdays for which it allocated INR 63 billion. Also, the state government planned to deliver essentials to people's doorsteps at the *gram panchayat* level to contain the spread of Covid-19 in villages. An additional cash transfer of INR 2,000 was given to artists and writers who have been active in their field. Frontline Anganwadi (early childhood centre) workers, helpers, and police personnel were provided with a compensation of *ex gratia* INR 3 million. Accredited Health Social Activist (ASHA) workers received an incentive of INR 3,000 through cooperative institutions. Insurance cover for the Karnataka State Regional Transport Corporation bus drivers and their families was expanded if they died on duty.
Kerala
The Kerala state government delivered food ingredients for mid-day meals to over 300,000 children studying in 33,115 Anganwadis (rural child care centre) closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. At the moment, they are delivering such food items required for ten days. Before the end of each period, the food required for the next ten days will be packed and delivered. The food items are being packed and distributed by the teachers themselves. Trichy district, India. The folk artists have welcomed state government's decision to provide INR 1,000 as Covid-19 relief to them. According to data, a total of 1,999 artists have been registered with the welfare board of folk artists (ISSA, 2020)
Maharastra
The Maharastra Government has permitted the extension of free treatment for Covid-19 and related ailments until 31 October 2020, under the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Jan Arogya Yojana (MJPJAY) (Mumbai Live, 2020). The Maharastra government provided almost 100,000 plates of subsidised meals at reduced rates of INR 5–10 which benefitted 20 million people. Through the Public Distribution System, one-month rations were provided at subsidized rates for orange ration card holders (above poverty line category). They received 3 kilograms wheat and 2 kilograms rice at INR and INR 12 per kilogram in May and June, respectively. Primary and upper primary school students received cash transfers in place of mid-day meals. Beneficiaries of Bharat Ratna Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Amrut Aahar Yojana Food were provided food at home (Dvara Research, 2020).
Odisha
Free treatment is provided to Covid-19 positive patients in government hospitals with caps on treatment prices in private hospitals. In terms of food security, the Odisha government added 51,766 new beneficiaries under the State Food Security Scheme (SFSS) during the lockdown (Barik, 2020), alongside other provisions such as additional cash transfers, home delivery of rations, and other in-kind transfers. Under the Food Security Cover, about 1.9 million families have been distributed INR 1.85 billion in cash transfers at the rate of INR 1,000 per ration card, including 36,000 eligible new beneficiaries through active inclusion. The mid-day meal kitchens of the state have been engaged in supplying dry ration and cooked food (where required) to children in their houses (Patnaik, 2020). During the pandemic, Odisha has made Aadhaar mandatory, which implies that 1,100,000 pensioners could lose their benefits under the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) and Madhu Babu Pension Yojana (MBPY) (National Herald, 2020). Informal workers were provided with additional cash transfers, whereas migrant workers were provided with shelter. The Odisha government introduced financial assistance (monthly pension) for Anganwadi and ASHA workers who have died due to Covid-19-related duty: the spouses of the frontline workers receive INR 7,500 until the age of 60. An INR 2,200 million support package was announced for the welfare of economically weaker sections of society to deal with the coronavirus-related impact. The measures include: 4 months advance pension for the 4.8 million beneficiaries under the Odisha Social Security Scheme; 2.2 million construction workers will receive INR 1,500 each; 9.4 million beneficiaries under the FSCW Department will get financial assistance of INR 1,000 each (ISSA, 2020).
Uttar Pradesh
The Government of Uttar Pradesh released INR 8.71 billion into the accounts of 8.67 million beneficiaries of old age, disability and widow pensions. The government paid pensions in advance for two months, along with 396,540 tonnes of food grains through PDS shops to 16 million ration card holders since 1 April 2020 (The Times of India, 2020). The State of Uttar Pradesh provided compensation to poor workers via online payments if they lost their job due to the pandemic. This measure targeted vegetable vendors, construction workers, rickshaw pullers, autorickshaw drivers, and temporary staff at shops. PDS allocations for all AAY priority households were scaled up for three months (1kg pulses per household, 5kg wheat or rice per individual) The State of Uttar Pradesh transferred INR 6.11 billion in cash transfers directly to 27.5 million workers in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

Uttarakhand
Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat announced that INR 1,000 will be credited to the accounts of each Anganwadi and ASHA worker in the state. This will benefit about 50,000 Anganwadi and ASHA workers.
West Bengal
After the announcement of the Covid-19 lockdown, a ration of 5 kilograms and 1 kilogram of pulses was distributed amongst people under the Public Distribution Scheme for the next three months, under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana. Unorganised workers from other states/regions remaining in the state were provided with shelter. One-off cash transfers were made to migrant workers stranded in other states (Nabazza and Bareddy, 2020).

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