


Language hurdle: Awareness progs on helpline for migrant labourers begin

By Rajitha S | Express News Service | Published: 18th December 2017 01:46 AM |

Last Updated: 18th December 2017 07:22 AM | A+ A A- | 



A migrant labourer carries her children while working at a brick kiln on the outskirts of Hyderabad | r satish babu

HYDERABAD: The single biggest hurdle for the 11 lakh migrant labourers (approximately) who come to work at the brick kilns in various districts in Telangana is language. For years now, these migrant labourers have not been able to access any provisions, government schemes, education and health services or even emergency services for the sole reason that they cannot communicate.

To tackle this, the governments of Odisha and Telangana signed an MoU in May this year to create a helpline which would ease this problem. Fully functional for a few months now, this helpline set up by the Tata Trust in collaboration with both the governments will help these migrant labourers seek any kind of assistance they need. “Any call received by the toll free number will be directed to the help desk in Odisha and will be answered in Odiya. Once the caller shares the problem, the concerned department will be alerted and help will be provided,” informed Sarah Khosla, project manager for the help desk.

The inflow of labourers has been delayed by a good two months this year as the effect of demonetisation is still something the owners are coping with. Unable to pay their small weekly earnings in cash, which is around `300, the population has just started to trickle in. They are also paid an amount as advance and this has also been delayed this year.

Officials are expecting them to come and settle down by the end of December and around this time, they will also begin with workshops and awareness programmes regarding the helpline, informed Khosla.

The first workshop with officials from various departments, district administration, owners and Vidya volunteers from Odisha will be held on December 16 in Karimnagar district. Apart from this, posters about the helpline will also be put up across various brick kilns in the state.

The helpline will also educate the labourers about the schemes that they can avail after getting registered under the Building and Other Construction Workers Act (BOCWA) which has a number of provisions for migrant labour which include death, emergency and medical compensation apart from education facilities for children. Schooling too has been a major hassle in the past where children of these labourers would spend their time in the hazardous conditions.

This too will be addressed this time, as Vidya volunteers from Odisha under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan will be appointed here. They will be paid on honorarium basis by SSA and also the brick kiln employers. Learning centres have already been set up in 51 brick kilns which have been divided into 20 clusters called as work site schools.

“This migrant labour generally doesn’t stick to one line of work. So in order to access the benefits under the Act, they need to renew their registration. Once they come in, we will do a survey and accordingly help them,” added Khosla.

The helpline number is 1800 345 6703

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