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Reforms in the Indian extension system must factor in the structural problems due to the top-down communication and a one-size-fits-all approach applied irrespective of technologies, agroclimatic variations, and socio-economic conditions. [page 37](#)

**Exploitation of Small Tea Growers**

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**Volga to Ganga**

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# INDIRA GANDHI INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH

## Visiting Scholars Program 2022

**Overview:** The Visiting Scholar Programme (VScP) has been instituted at the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGIDR) as one of its outreach activities with the objective of supporting research being conducted by Ph.D scholars and junior faculty members of Colleges and Universities in India. The scholarship will enable up to five selected scholars to spend three months at a stretch at IGIDR anytime **during 1st November, 2022 to 31st March 2023** to work on a proposal that can be satisfactorily completed during their stay.

**Eligibility:** At the time of application, applicants should possess a Master's degree in any field and be registered for Ph.D on a topic broadly involving any area of economics, including energy and environmental policy. Candidates should clearly mention in the application the preferred three-month period of stay at IGIDR. Applicants could select either of the following two periods: (1) November 1, 2022 to January 31, 2023 or (2) January 1, 2023 to March 31, 2023. The final period of stay could change depending on the availability of accommodation.

**Application:** Completed application should include:

Annexure-1:	Curriculum vitae, including the list of publications, if any.
Annexure-2:	Document regarding Date of Birth.
Annexure-3:	Master's Degree Certificate.
Annexure-4:	<b>Research Proposal:</b> The proposal should be related to the PhD thesis topic (certified by the PhD thesis supervisor in his recommendation letter). It could involve issues in Economics and Development Studies including Energy and Environment. It should be strictly within 1500 words, and its scope should be such that the project can be completed in three months. Proposals in both theoretical and empirical issues will be considered. The research proposal should be accompanied by a signed certification by the applicant as well as by the concerned thesis Supervisor/Principal, stating that the research proposal is original work of the applicant, and has not been submitted to any journal for publication.
Annexure-5:	Two recommendation of which one should be from the concerned Ph.D supervisor in the case of a Ph.D student, and the principal of the College/University in the case of a junior faculty member. Recommendation letters should clearly give the contact details of the Referee.

**Selection** will be based on a joint evaluation of the CV, letters of recommendation and the quality of the research proposal submitted at the time of application.

**Emoluments:** Selected scholars will be paid Rs.17,000/- per month to meet incidental expenses, to and fro three-tier AC train fare, and provided free accommodation (on sharing basis) on campus for their duration of stay.

**Requirements:** Selected scholars will be required to submit a progress report at the end of every month and a complete research report along with a seminar presentation of the research finding at the end of the three-month stay. Failure to submit a progress report on time may lead to the termination of the scholarship programme. Once the research project is completed and published, the scholar should acknowledge IGIDR in an appropriate way.

**Application Deadline & Notification:** Applicants have to apply online via the IGIDR website <http://www.igidr.ac.in/academic-programmes/visiting-scholars-program-2/> by **19th September, 2022**. Selected applicants will be notified via email by **15th October 2022**. Those selected will have to accept the offer latest by **26th October, 2022**.

**Address for Communication:**

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# Examining the Effectiveness of the ‘One Nation, One Ration Card’ Scheme

VAMAKSHI

This article studies the “One Nation, One Ration Card” scheme highlighting its ground-level ineffectiveness among the migrant workers. The possible reasons responsible for the ineffectiveness of the scheme are discussed with a special focus on the soft factors, that is, the mindset of the targeted group. It also details some recommendation measures that policymakers should adopt to improve last-mile delivery and make this scheme more effective.

The new scheme of the Government of India named “One Nation, One Ration Card” (ONORC) is supposed to be the solution to the challenges faced by not only migrant workers, but it also aims to curb corruption and allow portability of food security benefits. That means a ration cardholder from Bihar can buy their stock from any of the ration shops in their state and the destination state as well. This has been made possible by a single digital card linked to the beneficiary’s Aadhaar card and enabling electronic point of sale (E-POS) for biometric authentications at the ration shops. The scheme will give significant relief for the migrant labourers, urban poor and the daily wagers.

However, the challenges need to be overcome. Most of the migrants are not educated and have little to no financial literacy, due to which they do not trust any of the digital platforms.

There is a lack of clarity on operating procedures and beneficiary entitlements about prices and food habits in different states. The items and the quantity supplied at the public distribution system (PDS) shops differ from state to state. For instance, in Tamil Nadu, one family receives 20 kilograms (kg) of rice, whereas in Karnataka, a family receives only 5 kg of rice. Then in Tamil Nadu, 20 kg of rice is given free of cost, but in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, ₹3 is charged. Furthermore, some states supply both rice and wheat, whereas states like Maharashtra provide only wheat. So, the migrant workers should be clarified about the items included in their ration through the ONORC scheme.

Most people are not aware of the benefits they are entitled to. A system needs to be designed so that a typical illiterate person can also understand a scheme’s

benefits without much cognitive load. Such welfare schemes have to be made more inclusive. The ONORC scheme intended to benefit the migrant workers is not effective on the ground level. The ground-level reality is very different.

Some migrants are hesitant to use the scheme altogether. They have no intention of using the scheme even if all the benefits are accessible to them because they want their families in the village to consume ration as there is no flow of income there while they can earn and buy ration in cities.

## Methodology

The article is based on primary and secondary research. It is based on a field study conducted in different areas, including a slum area containing 400 construction workers in Ahmedabad, multiple construction sites at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay and one slum area behind Dr L H Hiranandani Hospital, Mumbai. The Aajeevika Bureau helped in coordinating the fieldwork at Ahmedabad. The field study was conducted in August 2021 in Ahmedabad and in October and November 2021 in Mumbai. The age of the respondents was between 18 and 60 years. The sample size was 25. The total number of variables is 625, with 25 sample sizes and 25 questions each. Data has been analysed using cross-tabulation in the traditional excel method.

## Findings

After the field study, it was realised that the migrant workers do not prefer to carry their ration cards to the cities, which leads to the underutilisation of the ONORC scheme. Most of the families in the slum area of Ahmedabad were from Madhya Pradesh or Dahod district of Gujarat and those from Gujarat travel once a month to their villages to collect the ration by using their ration card.

The PDS shops in Gujarat do not accept ration cards from interstate migrants despite the ONORC scheme. Also, migrants do not prefer to buy their ration in cities because they want their families to buy their share of ration in their respective villages. There are different reasons for it.

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First, migrants are not aware of the kinds of benefits they are entitled to. Second, a ration card is a household-based card and is yet to be delinked from all the people in a household and transferred into an individual-based card.

Another interesting point that could be realised from the Gujarat field study is that most migrants do not bring their ration cards to cities because they are afraid that their ration card will be lost. Given that they do not have much security in the slum area and there are difficulties in obtaining a new ration card, this fear is justifiable. They trust their village and have no trust in city residents.

When migrants in the cities, who have ration cards but do make use of it, go back to their hometown after a few months, they do not get the ration at their respective hometown for the months that they missed. However, according to the law, they should get the remaining ration for the unavailed months as well. On being asked if they get a sufficient amount of ration from the PDS shops, they answered that the shopkeepers do not allow them to measure the food. They do not give all the food that is supposed to be delivered. Few PDS shopkeepers are supportive, however. But then, there is always an issue of servers being down and inoperative internet. Sometimes fingerprints do not match.

The problems on the side of the PDS shopkeepers are that they also have some procurement issues. They have to get their supply from higher groups, and face significant problems in procurement. Even though the ONORC scheme provides for migrants to buy their food from any place, it has not facilitated the PDS shops to have that much supply to provide ration to a large number of migrant workers in the city. PDS shops are in the habit of delivering to a fixed number of people every month, and accordingly, they maintain their supply.

Every month, the migrants in Ahmedabad spend more than 50% of their earnings on purchasing food. They do not buy ration because they have the problem of storage. They buy their ration every day before cooking their meals. It is because of the fear of theft. They do not even buy a packet of flour or a bottle

of oil. Before every meal, they buy their groceries from a store that is located in their slum.

The field study was also conducted at three different construction sites at the IIT Bombay, and the response varied across all three locations. In one construction site, migrants from Jharkhand, Bihar, and West Bengal agreed not to make use of the ONORC scheme even if they were given its benefits. The reason is that they work in the city for three–four months on a contractual basis and then go back to their hometown, and as a part of that contract, they are provided three meals a day from the contractor, so they do not need ration in cities. So even if all the facilities are provided to them to make use of the scheme, they would choose not to do so.

In one of the construction sites where the workers were migrants and contractual labourers, and food was not part of their contract, one worker agreed to make use of the ONORC scheme if all the things were facilitated to him. So out of 25 people who were interviewed, only one person agreed to make use of the ONORC scheme.

The findings based on the interviews conducted at multiple construction sites in the IIT Bombay campus reflects that the migrants do not carry their ration cards with them. Even though a few migrants from West Bengal had their ration cards delinked from families, they did not choose to bring their ration cards to the cities. They wanted their families to have their share of ration since there was no flow of income in their hometown, and they could buy their ration in the cities to which they have migrated.

Another reason that they do not use their ration cards in cities is that they feel the opportunity cost is higher. Since most migrants are daily wage labourers, they earn around ₹400 daily, and if they go to buy ration from the PDS shops, their one day's wage would be wasted, and the cost of the ration they receive is around ₹125–₹200. So they prefer to buy their ration themselves rather than through the PDS shops.

Similarly, in the slum area in Hiranandani, Mumbai, where most respondents were intra-state migrants and had their ration cards with them, they did not face

any hurdles in getting their ration every month. They had no complaints and were unaware of the ONORC scheme. They buy their ration from the PDS shops near them. But few interstate migrants from Karnataka did not have their ration card and were in a difficult situation compared to the intra-state migrants.

Based on the data, around 92% of the migrants had a ration card, including those who did not carry it with them to the cities. Moreover, all of the people covered in the survey agreed to have paid heavy bribes to get their ration cards made.

**Table 1: Demography of the Respondents**

Gender	Temporary	Permanent	Average Age
Male	14	4	30.55
Female	2	5	40.71
Total	16	9	

The total number of respondents is 25, out of which 18 were male, and seven were female. Table 1 reflects that out of 25 migrants, nine were permanent workers, and 16 were temporary workers. According to the data, the average age of permanent migrant workers is 44.55 and of temporary workers, 27.12 years. The average age of migrant female workers is 40.71 years and is higher than the males, that is, 30.55 years.

**Table 2: Did You Bring Your Ration Card to the City?**

Migration Pattern	Yes	No	No Card	Total
Permanent	6	3	0	9
Temporary	0	14	2	16
Total	6	17	2	25

The data in Table 2 also show that 68% of the migrants do not carry their ration cards with them to cities, out of which 82% of migrants are temporary migrants and travel to cities for contractual work.

**Table 3: Do You Perceive That the Government in the City Will be Supportive in Times of Need?**

Gender	Yes	No	Total
Male	8	10	18
Female	3	4	7
Total	11	14	25

The data provided in Table 3 suggest that 42% of females and 44% of males trust the city government. They feel that the government will be there for them in times of any crisis or need.

There are two types of migrants—temporary and permanent. Temporary migrants are circular migrants with no intention of staying for long in the city.

**Table 4: Nature of Migration**

Gender	Temporary	Permanent	Total
Male	14	4	18
Female	2	5	7
Total	16	9	25

They are the contractual workers. Permanent migrants are the ones who want to be part of the city and stay for more than a year. Table 4 shows that 71% of female migrants are permanent migrants, while only 22% of males are permanent migrants. Hence, around 78% of male migrants are contractual workers and are temporary migrants.

**Table 5: Ration Card in the City**

Delinked	Yes	No	Total
Yes	0	6	6
No	6	11	17
Total	6	17	23

The data given in Table 5 conclude that only 26% had their ration cards delinked from their families, and even those 26% did not prefer to carry their ration card to the cities. And two respondents did not have ration cards.

**Table 6: Do You Get the Full Amount of Ration from the PDS Shops?**

Did You Pay Extra to Get the Ration Card?	Yes	No	Total
Yes	22	3	25
No	0	0	0
Total	22	3	25

Table 6 shows that 100% of the migrants agreed to have paid bribes or extra charges to get their ration card and around 12% of the migrants complained of not getting the full units of grains from the PDS shops through their ration cards.

**Table 7: Dependence on PDS**

Are Families Back Home Taking Ration Regularly?	Yes	No	Total
Yes	1	17	18
No	5	2 (No card)	7
Total	6	19	25

Table 7 shows that only 24% migrants brought their ration card to the cities and these were permanent migrants. One important point to note is that around 72% of the migrants' families take ration in their hometowns and these are temporary migrants who do not carry

**Table 8: Extent of Awareness about ONORC Scheme**

Are You Aware of the ONORC Scheme?	Yes	No	Total
Yes	1	1	2
No	5	18	23
Total	6	19	25

their ration cards to the cities and leave it for their families for use.

Table 8 shows that only 8% of the migrants knew about the ONORC scheme and still 50% out of that 8% did not bring the ration card to the city to take the benefit of the scheme.

**Table 9: Educational Levels of the Respondents**

Level of Education	Yes	No	Total
1	5	7	12
2	5	6	11
3	2	0	2
Total	12	13	25

The level of education is divided into three categories, with "1" indicating primary education, "2" indicating middle school, and "3" indicating secondary education. The data in Table 9 further show that around 52% of the migrants did not perceive that the government will be there for them in times of crisis, out of which 54% had done primary education and 46% were middle-school graduates.

**Table 10: Is the Ration Card Delinked from Families?**

Is Your Family Living with You?	Yes	No	Total
Yes	0	6	6
No	6	13	19
Total	6	19	25

Table 10 reflects that 24% of migrants lived with their families and these were mostly permanent migrants, out of which none had their card delinked. And around 32% out of the 76% of migrants who did not live with families had their ration cards delinked.

## Discussion

The government needs to understand how the groups of migrant workers function in the cities and how their behaviour changes with time and migration. If the government gets an idea about the mindset of the ONORC scheme's target population, then they could design policies that are more effective. The policy-makers can follow an action-based approach and see how different elements of the target population interact with it.

The government should try to address the psychological fears of the migrants regarding the ONORC scheme. They should require an effort to make them feel secure in cities and spread awareness about the benefits they are entitled to. These are the people who are left out in their towns and villages because they do not have voting

rights in their city of residence. The government should do some ground-level work regarding the fears and apprehensions of the migrant workers. Frequent interactions with them can be a helpful step in removing their psychological fears. It is crucial for the ONORC scheme to be successful in actuality and not just in policy manuals.

During such interaction, the government should take into account the linguistic barriers as well. The government representatives should be able to speak the language of the migrants. It would make them feel more secure, and they will trust the government more.

## Conclusions

This article tried to analyse the ground-level situation of the ONORC scheme. From the data, it could be observed that around 68% of migrants do not carry their ration cards to cities, the majority of whom are contractual workers. And approximately 74% still have a household-based ration card, which strengthens the desire to not carry their card to the cities. Therefore, even if the scheme is well-intentioned and seeks to address the migrants' problems, it is bound to remain underutilised because of the mindset of the migrants and the inefficacies of the PDS. Hence, the findings of this article make it essential that the government focuses on the social factors and not just on the technical and logistical barriers in order to make the scheme effective.

The article also highlighted the importance of using psychological insights and not being limited to fulfilling the Pareto-efficiency criteria. The findings based on the field study show how ineffective the ONORC scheme is in practice and the lack of awareness among the migrant workers about it. The findings strengthen the argument of focusing on factors such as corruption, lack of awareness, interstate migrants' rights in their cities of residence for the effective implementation of this scheme.

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## An Appeal

For more than half a century, the **Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)** has been a major presence in India's intellectual space. It has been a crucible for ideas and a forum for debate, which has created a journal of international repute that has become a virtual institution. EPW provides a multi-disciplinary platform for academics and practitioners, researchers and students, as well as concerned citizens, for critical engagement with economy, polity and society in contemporary India.

It has always been a struggle to ensure EPW's financial viability and sustainability. The resource constraint has been exacerbated by our conscious decision to abstain from receiving direct government grants and donations from abroad, to preserve the autonomy and independence of the journal.

With the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent nationwide lockdown, EPW is now experiencing an unexpected and drastic drop in revenue from retail sales (as most of the newsstands are still closed) and advertisement income (as advertising has contracted sharply with the crisis in the economy), resulting in an acute financial crisis. This is not unique. Most of India's print media organizations are going through a similar predicament leading to closures, large-scale retrenchment of staff, and salary-cuts.

It was our endeavour not to resort to such drastic measures in EPW. In the first two months of the lockdown, full salaries were paid to all EPW staff. The Editor and his team adopted drastic austerity measures and cut expenditure to the bone. In spite of this, there was a large operational deficit every month, which could aggravate further if the problems associated with the lockdown persist. If this excess of expenditure over income had gone unchecked, a stage would have come when we would no longer be able to keep EPW alive.

The situation became so critical in the month of June 2020 that there was no other choice but to implement a temporary measure of reducing staff salaries from July 2020. The financial situation of EPW is being reviewed periodically and the salary cut is being reduced gradually. The situation, however, still continues to look grim.

In these difficult and troubled times, an institution of EPW's stature and credibility is needed more than ever before. Well-wishers of EPW have been reaching out and urging us to do whatever necessary to ensure EPW's sustainability.

We therefore appeal to the community of readers, contributors, subscribers and well-wishers of EPW to come forward and make donations to the extent each one can so as to ensure that EPW continues to perform its historic role. This is urgent. And it is of utmost importance. We hope you will join us in supporting EPW.

**Trustees, Sameeksha Trust and Editor, EPW**

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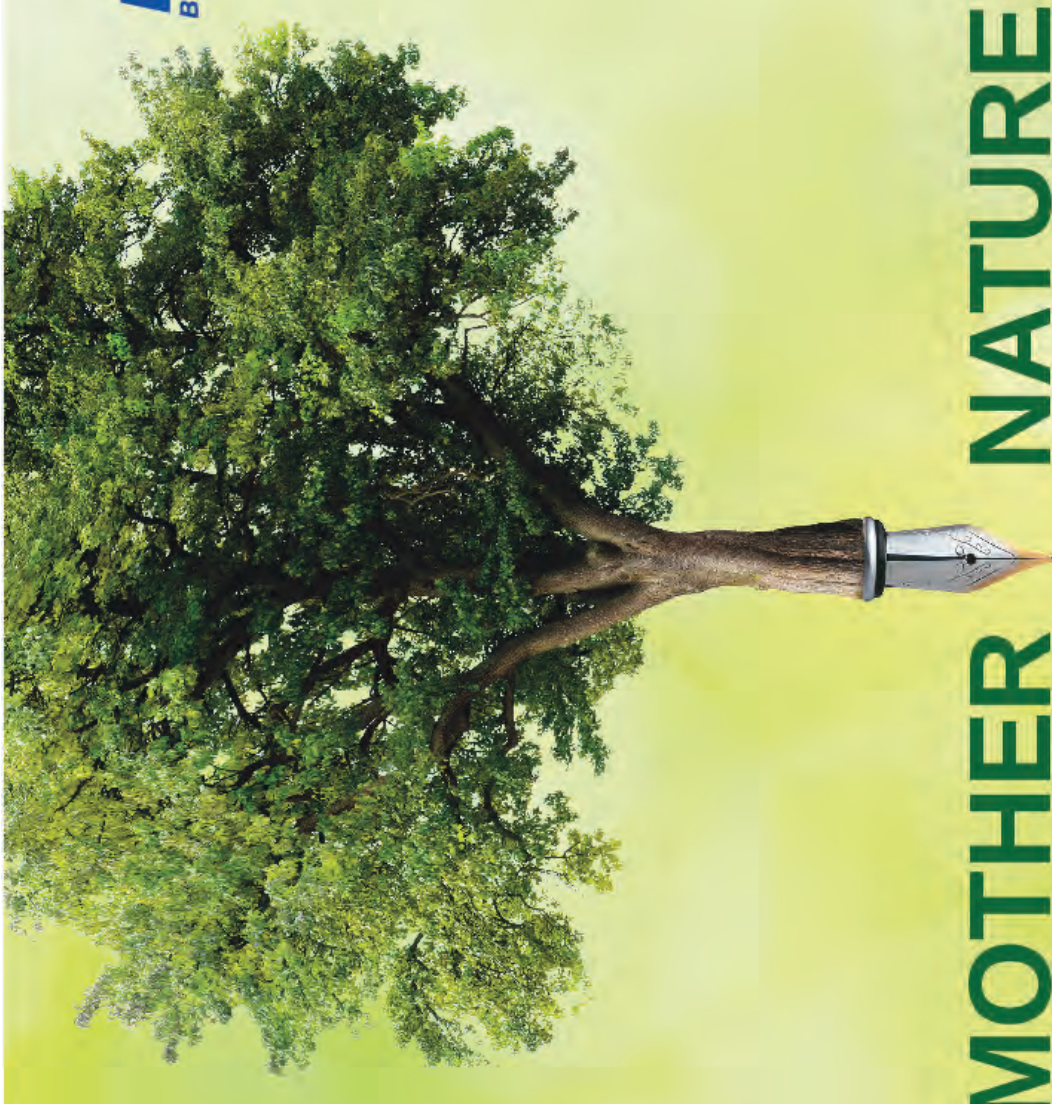
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