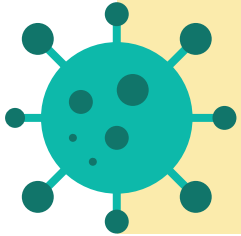




# DOMESTIC WORKERS AND SOCIAL PROTECTION IN BIHAR STATE

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.

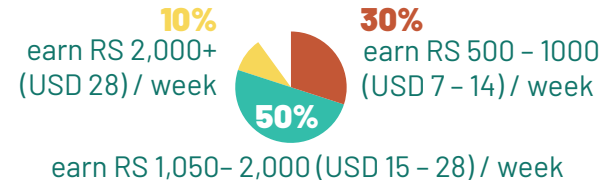
## POLICY CONTEXT

Registration of domestic workers by the state, though mandated under the Unorganised Sector Social Security Act, does not lead to any clear benefits. The Labour Department recognises the lack of a clear social protection policy for domestic workers as more attention is currently given to registration, mainly because of the limitation that they faced in reaching out to the workers and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, according to officials.

The new labour and social security code adopted by the Central Government in 2020 is now being adapted to state level legislations which may open up new policy opportunities to include domestic workers. Currently, the only scheme providing social protection provisions for domestic workers is the Bihar Shatabdi Asangathit Karyakshetra Samajik Suraksha Yojna Board 2011.

## LONGER-TERM RISKS TO INCOME SECURITY

**RS 6,379 (US\$ 89) / month**  
DOMESTIC WORKER MINIMUM WAGE  
[8-HOUR WORKDAY]



## Occupational safety and health



**40%**  
work missed due to illness or accident

**56%**  
due to an injury/illness resulting from their work

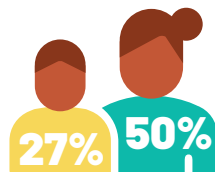
**82%**  
missed work as a result

**30%**  
had to take between 1-2+ weeks of leave

**50%**  
received their salaries during their sick leave

## Care responsibilities

brought their children with them to work



reported leaving children with a family member whilst at work

**7%** reported leaving children unattended at home  
**11%** reported leaving children at a childcare facility



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).

## ACCESS TO SOCIAL PROTECTION

### Access to healthcare

do not have access to a contributory state health care benefit



100% visited a health care facility in the last 12 months



77% said they could access medication

98% went to a public hospital or clinic

## 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

46% delayed a health care visit; could not afford it



12% delayed a health care visit due to cost of transportation

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

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



medication

21% paid RS 1,000-1,200 (USD14-16)  
20% paid RS 1,500-2,000 (USD21-28)  
30% paid RS 3,000+ (USD42)

73% spent between RS 100 - 500 (USD 1-7) on transport to access their benefit

47% spent at least RS 100 (USD 1) on applications

All respondents hired a Middleman to help them apply



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.