# E-Shram and its utility

**(Mains GS 2 & 3 : Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources & Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.)**

**Context:**

The Ministry of Labour and Employment recently launched the e-Shram portal to develop a national database of unorganised workers.

**About E-shram portal:**

- The E-shram portal is for the unorganised sector workers to promote their social security.
- After registration on the portal, workers will receive an e-Shram card with a 12-digit unique number.
- A national toll-free number 14434 will also be launched to assist and address the queries of workers seeking registration on the portal.
- The immediate benefit an e-Shram cardholder will get is the accidental insurance of Rs 2 Lakh on death or permanent disability and Rs 1 Lakh on partial disability.
- Any worker, aged between 16 and 59 and working in an unorganised sector is eligible for the e-Shram card.
- However, the onus of registration on e-Shram lies with workers.

**Benefit in long run:**

- The novel coronavirus pandemic has pushed lakhs of workers into informality.

- It is estimated that around 380 million workers are needed to be registered as according to the Periodic force labour Survey(PLFS 2018-19) 90% workers are part of the unorganised workforce.
- Workers stand to gain by registration on the platform in the medium to long run.
- But the instant benefit of accident insurance upto ₹0.2 million on registration is not attractive.

**Issue of Data security:**

- Small employers are incentivised to ask their workers to register even though the government requires them mandatorily to register their workers.
- One of the vital concerns of e-portals is data security, including its potential abuse especially when it is a huge-sized database.
- The central government would share data with State governments whose data security capacities vary.

**Eligibility concerns:**

- There are various issues concerning the eligibility of persons to register.
- By excluding workers covered by EPF and ESI, lakhs of contract and fixed-term contract workers will be excluded.
- Under the Social Security Code (SSC), hazardous establishments employing even a single worker will have to be covered under the ESI, which means these workers also will be excluded.
- The NDUW excludes millions of workers aged over 59 from its ambit, which constitutes age discrimination.

**Procedural deficit:**

- In many ways, SSC is exclusionary as ESC and EPF benefits will be applicable only to those employed in establishments employing 10 or 20 workers, respectively.
- Huge number of workers also do not have an Aadhaar-seeded mobile or even a smartphone.
- The extent of definitional and systemic exclusions is vast and there may be other categories of exclusion due to possible procedural deficits.

**Identity challenge:**

- The very identity of unorganised workers presents problems due to complexity which is ever-changing.
- Many workers are circular migrants thus they quickly move from one trade to another.
- Many workers are part of the gig economy and perform both formal and informal work. They straddle formal and informal sectors.
- Thus the complex nature of gig workers identity creates problems as many social security laws do not recognise them as unorganised workers.

- Thus, there is a need for an all-inclusive miscellaneous category that will have to be intelligently used to expand the occupational categories.

**Trouble at regional level:**

- The central government hugely depends on the State governments for the success of this project.
- Thus helping stakeholders need to overcome the challenges of server weakness by providing multiple attempts for registration.
- The social dialogue with the stakeholders needs to improve through involvement of trade unions, multiple media outlets of various languages and holding of camps on demand.
- An efficient resolution of grievance redress mechanisms at micro-level will improve inclusiveness.

**Issue of corruption:**

- The success of the project depends on the involvement of a variety of stakeholders.
- There is concern of corruption as middle-service agencies such as Internet providers might charge exorbitant charges to register and print the E-Shram cards.
- Thus the government will be required to involve the surveillance agencies for proper implementation of the project.

**Conclusion:**

- Vitality of E-Shram is visible as it provides the Labour Market Citizenship Document to them.
- It also ensures triple linkage for efficient and leakage-less delivery of all kinds of benefits.
- Thus it is necessary to ensure registrations of workers properly and ensure non registration can not hamper their social assistance benefits.