SKILLING FOR WHOM?

Effectiveness of the skill recognition regime for informal workers in India

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<u>Abstract</u>

The informal migrant workers in India face a skills mismatch, which has exacerbated in the face of Covid-19. These workers have acquired skills that are primarily useful in urban or peri-urban centres, but are not finding jobs that match their skill levels. For many workers in their home states, there is lack of any certification (or proof) of skills acquired by them. To empower informal workers and ensure their employability in jobs commensurate to their competence, a different outlook to skilling is necessary. This paper offers one such fresh perspective of recognising prior learning and skills, upgrading skills and developing new skills built on the principles of adult education and lifelong learning. Such a holistic perspective needs to be supported by a participatory learning environment that organically integrates head, heart and hands – in learning, being and acting.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is critical for those who have acquired and honed their skills while working a job, but lack formal educational and technical qualifications. An effective scheme for recognition and certification of existing skills of informal workers will improve their chances at finding more remunerative employment and engage in labour market mobility. Beginning with a review of the current skills accreditation and upgradation regime in India, this paper offers an evaluation of how effective it has been in supporting skill building and employability of informal workers. In conclusion, it offers some principles of learning and adult education that can create a supportive skilling regime that is equitable and inclusive. Only then can sustainable livelihoods be created in a post COVID world.

INTRODUCTION

Over 80 per cent of India's workforce is employed in the informal sector. The "informalisation" of employment in India though is much larger. Relying on International Labour Organisation's (ILO) definition of Informal Employment (17th ICLS), this paper treats all unprotected workers in the formal sector as well as those who earn a livelihood from the informal economy as "informal workers". Workers in these jobs are largely illiterate or simply high school graduates, bulk of whom migrate to urban centres because there are no jobs in the rural economy, especially in agriculture. We see these workers all around us – as landless agricultural farm labourers in rural areas, and in India's cities as illiterate women who sell vegetables at a street corner or carry brick loads on a construction site; women domestic workers in middle class homes; male high school graduates who work as plumbers, electricians, and masons on job sites, as cleaning staff in plush office buildings and gated communities; and those engaged in occupations such as tailoring and sanitation work.

The entry barrier of education and skills training for informal work is quite low. Skills qualifications for most jobs and occupations are not strictly laid out; neither is any formal on-the-job skills training provided. The workers usually learn from experience by working on-the-job over time. Basic labour rights comprising of minimum wage and social security benefits are very often not accessible to them.

A bulk of these informal workers in India comprise of intra-state and inter-state migrants. Emergence of Covid-19 and the nation-wide lockdown in early 2020 in India exacerbated the hardships of informal migrant workers, both for those who stayed back in the cities as well as for those who chose to go back home. As the economy 'unlocked', these migrant workers faced a further dilemma – to stay home, find gainful employment in the rural and semi-urban economy, or to migrate back to the large cities, where there is livelihood, with limited security and often no dignity.

The state governments too are confronted with challenges. Destination states (that is, those states which receive large number of inter-state migrants) need to streamline their registration process to enable workers' access to welfare benefits, safe housing, ensure minimum wages are paid, and a dignified, safe working environment is provided. For workers in their home states, new livelihood opportunities must be created that tap into workers' skills and experience learned in their prior jobs.

The lockdown in India highlighted the skills mismatch – migrant workers have acquired skills that are primarily useful in urban or peri-urban centres, and could not find any jobs that matched their skills. The only jobs available in their home villagers were the ones under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) which mostly involved physical labour, which these workers

were not equipped to do. For many workers in their home states, there is lack of any certification (or proof) of skills acquired by them.

To empower informal workers and ensure their employability in jobs commensurate to their competence, a different outlook to skilling is necessary. This paper offers one such fresh perspective of recognising prior learning and skills, upgrading skills and developing new skills built on the principles of adult education and lifelong learning. Such a holistic perspective needs to be supported by a participatory learning environment that organically integrates head, heart and hands – in learning, being and acting.

In this fresh perspective, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is critical for those who have acquired and honed their skills while working a job, but lack formal educational and technical qualifications. An effective scheme for recognition and certification of existing skills of informal workers will improve their chances at finding more remunerative employment and engage in labour market mobility. RPL must bridge the skills gap and provide better wages and working conditions for workers, giving dignity to their labour. It must empower illiterate and non-formal workers to gain confidence in their abilities to perform a job, demand wages commensurate with their skills, and avoid exploitation at the hands of petty contractors.

Beginning with a review of the current skills accreditation and upgradation regime in India, this paper offers an evaluation of how effective it has been in supporting skill building and employability of informal workers. In conclusion, it offers some principles of learning and adult education that can create a supportive skilling regime that is equitable and inclusive. Only then can sustainable livelihoods be created in a post COVID world.

SKILLING REGIME IN INDIA

The development of the current vocational training system in India dates back to the Apprenticeship Act of 1961 and the consequent setting up of the first Industrial Training Institute (ITI) in 1969. The opening up of the economy in 1991 saw a dramatic shift of labour force from agriculture, which meant a majority of workers began moving out of traditional occupations into manufacturing and service jobs. This built the momentum for vocational training and ultimately the creation of the National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC) in 2009, set up to facilitate a vocational skill development ecosystem in the country. Vocational training comprises of imparting professional training to learners to help them develop industry-specific skills. For instance, to become a 'Driver-Cum-Mechanic', the learner will be taught how to drive a Light Motor Vehicle safely on public and private roads, preventing accidents, and to operate and maintain the vehicles. Similarly a vocational training course on 'Machine

Embroidery' will teach learners how to use a sewing machine (threading the needle and passing the yarn through carrier of the machine), how to embroider various designs on fabrics, change the thread, adjust for thread tension, and clean and oil the sewing machine.

The primary department at the Central level for vocational training is the Director General of Employment and Training (DGET) under the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MOLE). The DGET formulates policies, grants affiliations, certification, and deals with matters connected to vocational training and providing employment services. Some of the major channels for imparting formal vocational training include the government-run Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), privately operated Industrial Training Centres (ITCs) and vocational schools. The enabling agency is the NSDC, under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. Its main aim is to facilitate capacity building measures through training and infrastructural investment. The National Skill Development Policy of 2009 mandated the NSDC to setup Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) to bridge the gap between key stakeholders, i.e., industry, workforce and academia. SSCs are also bound to set up a National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) for various levels of jobs in order to maintain a standardised skill qualification framework. The NSQF is a framework within which qualifications are classified based on levels of knowledge, skills and aptitude. SSCs formulate certification norms, develop a knowledge database, evaluate the gap between demand and supply for labour, and how to cover this gap through various skilling programs.

Elements of a skills accreditation system were seen in 2008 when the Government of India launched the Skills Development Initiative (SDI) scheme, to support skills training, certification and upgradation in the informal sector, aiming to train 1 million persons on demand-driven vocational skills over five years. Under this initiative, the MOLE/DGET undertook implementation of a strategic training framework known as Modular Employable Skills (MES) to cater to school drop outs and informal sector workers. It included testing of acquired skills of an individual, and SFP certification on successful assessment. Promotional campaigns to publicise the scheme were carried out to meet the increased target each year for "skilled workers". There remained a gap between completion of training and assessment, owing to unavailability of assessors. This required increasing the quantity and quality of assessors by defining clear eligibility requirements. Another major lacunae was that the scheme did not draw any clear link between the training provided, assessment received, and employment. Given these gaps, there was a need for the SDI-MES scheme to adapt to the evolving labour market and the requirement of skilled workers to match demand from different sectors of the formal economy. Developing a comprehensive and separate skill recognition and certification scheme for informal workers would have been an ideal mechanism for dealing with the aforesaid challenges.

In 2013, the Ministry of Human Resource Development via the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) designed a national RPL framework to assess the competencies acquired through prior formal and informal experiences, culminating in certification of skills. However, the NIOS did not account for varying socio-economic backgrounds of learners in its curriculum; nor did it provide credible self-learning and evaluation methods.

In the same year, STAR (Skill Training Assessment and Reward) scheme was launched. The objective of this scheme was to encourage skill assessment and skill development for youth by providing monetary rewards for successful completion of approved training programs. Once again, this scheme targeted only formal sector employment. Additionally, requirement of Aadhaar number delayed the process of opening bank accounts and transfer of money. Quality of instruction, curriculum and training methodologies varied in quality in different areas. The scheme mandated assessment and certification bodies be separate from training providers. The assessment and certification happened through the respective SSCs or SSC-approved assessment agencies. However, in the absence of direct intervention by SSCs, the training providers often manipulated the assessment results.

In order to converge existing skilling initiatives, the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna (PMKVY), a flagship skill certification scheme under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, was launched in 2015. The scheme, which is still operational, aims to assess and certify prior skills of learners based on the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) and industry led standards.

In the government sponsored skill training ecosystem of the country, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojna (DDU-GKY) is one of the bigger programs. The DDU-GKY skilling ecosystem combines industry partnerships and partnerships with employers to provide training and employment for a candidate. Under DDU-GKY, states like Rajasthan, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh have set up skill development bodies to implement RPL in their respective states. However, the biggest barriers confronting the successful implementation of the scheme is reaching out to the most marginalised informal migrant worker and guaranteeing employment opportunities after completion of training.

CHALLENGES IN THE CURRENT RPL REGIME IN INDIA

The current RPL regime in India is a five-step process, involving mobilisation, pre-screening and counselling, orientation of the learner, her assessment and final certification. Under the current system, prior experience and skills can be assessed and certified by project implementing agencies. These agencies can certify skills in

several locations ranging from RPL camps, employer's premises RPL centres, and collaboration with best-in class employers.
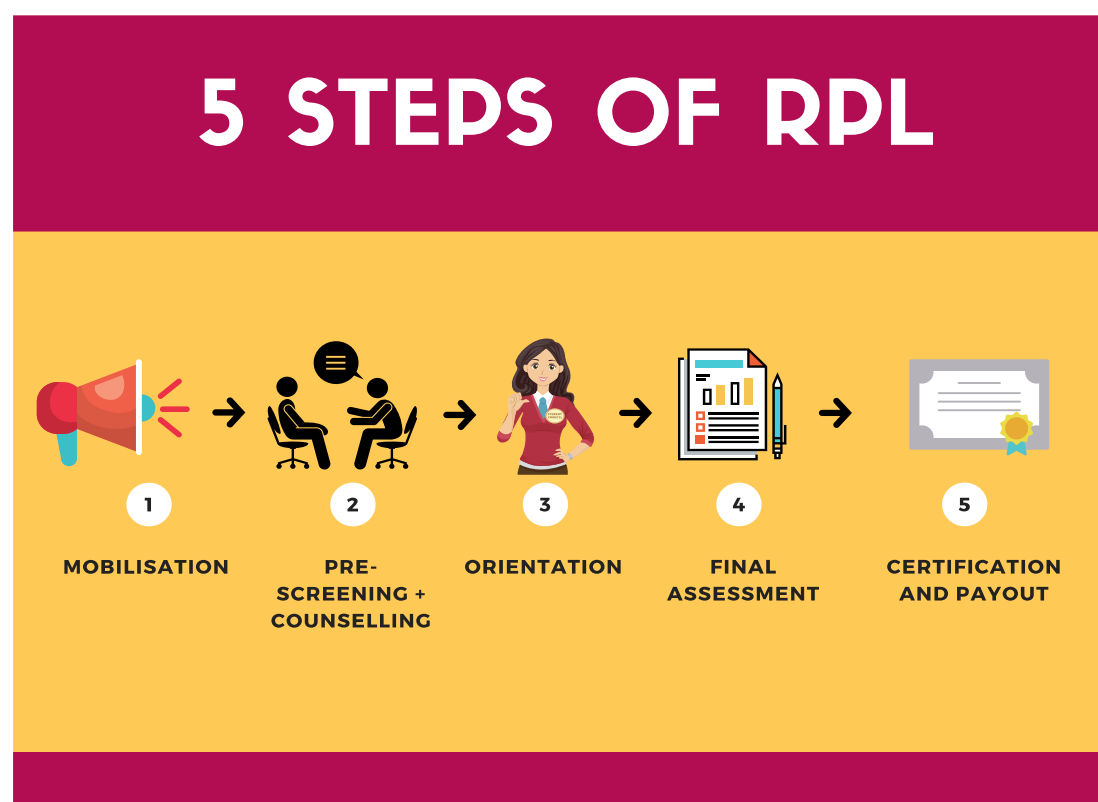
RPL in India caters to industry specific needs and takes a "top-down approach" in doing so, by focussing on the formal workforce, thereby leaving out a bulk of informal workers, especially migrant workers, from its purview. Many workers get trained in one job but get placed in another sector or field altogether; many who get trained do not receive any job offers at all. Some workers who get trained and get jobs cannot hold on to their jobs because the remuneration does not cover high cost of living and lack of adequate housing in larger cities. Migrants also face stigmatization for not being "locals", for not speaking the local language and for using up local resources. The PMKVY requires learners to pay the entire fees and get it reimbursed based on assessment success. This places an economic burden on marginalised informal workers. Job linkages are not attached to the fee structure. The Sector Skill Councils do not allocate programs in such a way that there is a demand for those roles in areas contiguous to the candidates' home towns.

It is worth examining the existing RPL scheme through an example of masons who may choose to enrol under the program. The qualification standards against which their skills assessment will be conducted is based on four parameters –

1. Professional knowledge
2. Professional skill
3. Core skill, and
4. Responsibility

While "professional knowledge" at level 1 includes familiarity with common trade terminology, instructional words, etc, "core skills" includes conditions such as reading, writing, familiarity with hygiene, and environment. These are arguably very inflexible, unrealistic set of criteria which do not account for the nature of experience and skills gathered by those who have for years been working as masons and who may or may not have basic educational qualifications. Interviews, written tests and some practical assessments are used as tools of assessment. For a mason who has used different kinds of tools to lay bricks of different sizes in different alignments at a certain speed, oral and written tests would not successfully capture his skill sets accurately. For the practical assessments to be conducted, there is no clarity given by the government on what kinds of situational assessment tools can be used, nor has the quality standard been delineated. Assessors who are meant to conduct the assessment are expected to have standard qualifications; however, no emphasis is given to an assessor's capability to relate to the learner's contextual reality.

There are several other lacunae, which include:

Archaic approach to skilling
There are two broad categories of vocational training. On the one hand, there is the formal learning method, wherein learners are trained in a classroom setting through lectures and tested through written or oral assessments. The less common approach is the participatory approach to learning. This approach is learner-centric and recognises that no one is "unskilled", because experience is the teacher. India's RPL system uses the formal training approach. This paper proposes that a shift in pedagogy must take place with adoption of participatory learning methods.

Overemphasis on formal education
The qualification framework in India over-emphasises the importance of formal education and technical qualifications. Learning from experience in life and work is devalued in this approach. Therefore, those who have received formal education receive greater value and reward while those who have gained skills through experience are devalued and under-recognised. For instance, a domestic maid who has years of experience and performs her tasks of cleaning, cooking and washing clothes with speed and quality is considered "unskilled" under the current RPL system, because it has a very rigid criteria for determining qualification and skill level before certification. For assessing her "professional knowledge" at level 1, the domestic worker would have to be accustomed to "common trade terminology". So, even though she is a great cleaner but does not know the common phrases for a "broom stick" or "dusting", she will be marked negatively. Similarly, core skills include

requirements such as "reading", "writing", and "familiarity with hygiene". These requirements do not leave any space for appreciating a domestic worker's capabilities in a real work setting, where "how" she cleans should matter more that her ability to read or write.

Informal workers require a flexible, nuanced skilling ecosystem to accurately evaluate their skills. The nature of the workers' jobs in the informal economy is more likely to be correctly assessed through practical assessments, group discussions, and comprehensive simulation-based tools. Additionally, the present RPL scheme is designed to assess workers on the basis of their job profiles. Many workers who do not have specific job profiles that fit industry nomenclature and employment structures are excluded from the pool of workers who can get certification.

The values embedded in the skilling system in the Netherlands is an example that India can learn from, even though the labour force and demographics of the two countries are different. The principles underlying the skilling regime in the Netherlands encompass the idea of making learning systems more accessible to its citizens. Dutch society is considered a "learning society", and lifelong learning is a primary objective of the RPL system. This approach can make all the difference in India where vocational education is not valued as much as formal education. In South Africa, which has a similar informal workforce to India, candidates' skills, knowledge and experience are matched to the specific standards of each individual qualification. Prior skills gained from experience in formal and informal environments are acknowledged and credited accordingly. By additional emphasis on alternative modes of learning and investment in self-learning, the RPL system in India can become a valuable contributor to education of adults, with assured quality for both employers and job seekers.

Employer driven instead of employee driven
The RPL regime in India is employer-driven, structured to cater to employers' demands. The large scale reliance by state governments on Recruit-Train-Deploy (RTD) model for skilling serves a limited purpose. The model is industry-focused and necessitates that industry partners set up training centres to recruit, train and certify workers' skills at different stages. Training is conducted according to the specific industry partner's needs. Most informal migrant workers do not have permanent employers; many do temporary jobs and shift from one job to another seasonally. Therefore, providing employer-centric skill certification does not equip seasonal workers with the ability to swap between temporary jobs with ease.

Formal methods of assessment
Assessment tools used under the RPL scheme are not flexible enough to cater to the informal nature of work of a large mass of workers. Assessment tools currently used are written examinations, vivas or structured interviews, and self-assessment forms.

These tools discount workers who have, for instance, worked in an urban kirana (grocery) store as a cleaner and delivery person. The kirana store cleaner would have acquired her skills through sheer practical experience of working there, which cannot be assessed through a written examination.

Skilling programs for informal migrant workers in India have to design assessment tools from the perspective of the worker and train the trainers accordingly. Jordan's outcome-based approach, which has proved to be useful for skilling workers, can be adopted in the Indian context. Emphasis in Jordan's RPL approach is given to defining standard test circumstances, as closely as possible to the reality of the workplace; authenticity, which involves practical demonstration of skills that the learner states to have; accessibility, wherein the skilling program must provide equal access to all workers; effectiveness, which means avoiding redundancy between various components of assessment and unnecessarily long assessment periods; and cost efficiency of the skilling program.

In Kerala, Additional Skill Acquisition Programme (ASAP) is an ADB funded project which offers training in foundational skills, domain skills and industry internships to engineering students connected to Skill Development Centres in the state. In contrast to conventional teaching methods, ASAP developed an outcome-centric, learner-focused, activity-based program using experiential methodology. The program is unique because students in the ASAP undergo training on technologies and tools similar to the potential trainee. This prepares the trainers to teach students according to the learner's requirements. This methodology can be applied for skilling programs for the informal workforce as well, keeping the realities of the workers' occupational dynamics in mind.

In a training conducted in China under a Sino-Zambia partnership, new trainers are required to undergo six-months pre-service training which teaches them how to operate relevant machinery and equipment, how to offer practical training to students, new teaching methods such as digital media tools, and rudiments of the Chinese language. Visits to partner industries are arranged for teachers during their time in China and, upon their return home, they visit Chinese industries in Zambia to gain an understanding of the context in which their programs are going to be delivered.

<u>Evaluation of training partners</u>

National Skills Development Council should conduct a thorough evaluation of the performance of approved training institutes and partners. This will build accountability for providing quality training to learners. Evaluation is also critical for self-improvement of skilling programs; only if how skilling programs fared for learners are evaluated, can they be fixed and reinvented to best cater to the needs of all learners.

<u>Lack of awareness and incentivising of skill training schemes</u>

Lack of outreach and advocacy campaigns in peri-urban and rural areas, often due to inadequacy of funds allocated to outreach programs and lack of perspective on how to reach the most marginalised workers, leaves out the most precarious informal migrant worker.

In India, most informal migrant workers have no knowledge or access to information about RPL schemes in their district or state. Examples from Sri Lanka, Ghana and South Africa can be adopted to make information about RPL known to the poorest, disadvantaged workers. In Sri Lanka, three steps were crucial for creating a successful RPL process: (i) providing adequate information on skilling programs before migrant workers depart for work; (ii) linking vocational training institutions with divisional level and village level officers; and (iii) providing returning migrant workers information on skilling and re-employment opportunities. South Africa has adopted innovative techniques for awareness generation including hosting roadshows in different provinces, developing informational websites, hosting exhibitions and generating printed material. In Ghana, awareness on RPL is supported through meetings, workshops, stakeholder consultations, exhibitions, trade fairs and participation in graduation ceremonies for the recognition of competencies of graduating apprentices.

ROADMAP FOR WORKER-DRIVEN RPL SYSTEM

The failings of the RPL system, ranging from a non-contexualised and formalised approach to learning, being industry driven, to lack of incentives to get certified must be revisited and rectified in order to realise better livelihoods for the informal workforce in India. For any skilling framework to be successful, it must be formed keeping the most vulnerable group at the centre, which in India's case would be the informal migrant worker. The design, implementation, infrastructural investment, training of trainers and mobilisation of workers must cater to the most marginalised among them, especially the women workers.

<u>Adopt flexible skill qualification and assessment approach</u>

RPL schemes in India must be planned with a flexible approach to assess the needs of workers by taking into account the labour market situation. The curriculum and assessment strategies must entail practical learning experiences. There must be less reliance on formal education and job-profile oriented learning. The qualification framework must be outcome-based, which is appropriate for assessing skills of informal workers. The issue of pre-defining outcomes against specific standards tends to restrict the assessors' judgement of routine practices in the workplace. When outcomes of learning are tied to descriptions of work or specific workplace activity, it discourages the development of innovative knowledge and new forms of practice, and supplies workers trained for mostly routine and restricted tasks.

For RPL assessment to enhance employability, performance indicators must cover situational contexts that promote flexibility and can help the labour force adapt to uncertain futures. Some key factors for developing worker-centric skill certification and upgradation programs include:

    i.   shared control over assessment;

    ii.   use of language which learners are comfortable with;

    iii.   building local capacity by involving local stakeholders in surveying their own situation;

    iv.   professionals and administrators seeing themselves as enablers, helping local people achieve their goals rather than acting as providers of solutions;

    v.   incorporating a gender and disability lens in RPL programs, in which requirements of women and LGBTQAI+ workers are strongly emphasised and differently-abled workers are reached out to ensure that their physical or mental impairment is not viewed as a barrier when seeking employment.

Use of innovative training methods for trainers and learners

Training of trainers programs must be ramped up in order to provide quality training and sensitivity towards informal workers who participate in the RPL skilling programs. Future-focused vocational education and training systems ensure that trainers receive the training and learners the support they need with skills for the future. RPL training modules must be developed to provide quality training tools which can be used by trainers.

Adopt experiential learning methods

An innovative way in which skill assessment and training can cater more effectively to informal workers is by adopting experiential learning techniques. Experiential learning theory offers the foundation for an approach which considers learning as a life-long process. Experiential learning rests on the premise that people learn from their experience, and the results of that learning can be reliably assessed and certified. Experiential learning uses role plays, gaming simulations and experience-based education tools to learn. Such learning provides the critical linkage between the classroom and the "real world".

There are several experiential learning methods that can be adopted. These include:

- **Simulation:** Simulation is used to act out a real event or activity, helping both participants and observers gain information and insights prior to formulating plans. Once the purpose of the simulation is discussed with the learners, groups are made to discuss and prepare their roles. In the short dramas performed by the different groups, there is a review of issues and concerns relevant to their skilling process.

- **Participatory assessment:** This form of assessment allows learners to shape their own assessment through active discussions with the assessor. The idea is that once the assessment is complete, the learner gets a chance to contribute to the assessment as well as clarify underlying misconceptions about her skills. The structure can be simple, concise, accurate, and audio-visually engaging by using pictures/videos/ short quotes or sound bites from earlier learners. This form of participatory assessment uses learners' voices to assess their own capabilities and proves to be much more useful.

Supportive ecosystem to mobilise learners

Outreach to potential learners should be integral to the RPL system. The critical focus of the outreach strategy has to be setting out the goal. Outreach and advocacy strategies must consider two important factors – what will motivate the most marginalised worker to get higher order skill certification; and how can skill certification translate into higher compensation commensurate to the level of the skill acquired and cash benefits for the worker? The present regime keeps employers at the centre of the skills training as well as outreach program. This goal must be switched around to keep the workers/learners at the centre.

For RPL outreach programs/campaigns conducted or funded by the central or state governments, it is essential that an ecosystem where skills are valued is created. In India, as a first step to enhancing the RPL system, the most vulnerable communities of workers at a local level need to be identified. A universal portal must be created by every state government where all functioning RPL schemes in that particular state are mapped out district wise. This will help workers who seek information on the Internet to get information in one place. District administrations must be roped in to provide administrative support for disseminating information about RPL programs. Local agents/workers must be employed to conduct door-to-door information dissemination. Increased funding must be allocated to outreach projects and the language used must be colloquial in nature to ensure that even illiterate workers can become informed. Information about RPL schemes, registration details, etc, can also be spread through community radio channels, pictorial posters and street theatre at community spots. A vibrant skilling culture must be created at the village level, where direct linkages are drawn between skilling and employment.

Focus on gender

RPL outreach policies must be gender inclusive, focussing on specific needs of informal women workers, migrant women, as well as specific requirements of LGBTQAI+ workers. Gender Cells must be formed for targeted dissemination and outreach to the most disadvantaged gender groups. Health and disability must also be emphasised. An inclusive, accepting culture encourages differently-abled workers to get skilled and gain employment.

Partner with civil society

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have linkages and networks at a micro level with workers across India. Such linkages and networkers must be tapped and their potential expanded. CSOs can mobilise workers to join RPL schemes, and help in creating a database to identify clusters of workers in need of skill certification and training. CSOs can host innovative events for mobilising networks of workers such as Vikas Utsavs, an outreach event spearheaded by Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA). Vikas Utsav is a fair or festival conducted in an informal space for people to celebrate their local development issues. With the help of local cultural programs, people from diverse backgrounds exchange information and ideas. Such unique fairs and festivals create a space for informal social gathering, giving various stakeholders a chance to offer their expertise, and facilitate critical links between them. Organisations can use pictorial/verbal/music/creative arts as a medium to communicate with workers. Investing in community radio or community-level information channels can dramatically improve scale of outreach.

Partnerships with the private sector

The private sector has the advantage of understanding the demand side of the labour market and can afford to fund large-scale outreach projects. This advantage can be harnessed to reach out to large numbers of vulnerable workers. Private sector investment in training institutes must be used to develop innovative, culture-specific and inclusive training methods. These training institutes must collaborate with CSOs/adult education trainers to provide skills training and certification.

CONCLUSION

This paper argues that the present skills certification and upgradation regime in India caters only to the formal sector workforce, while leaving out the majority of workers who are engaged in informal work, especially the most vulnerable informal migrant worker. The current system is job-profile oriented, thereby excluding seasonal migrant workers or other informal workers who do a range of jobs in a year. Training centres boast industry partners and job linkages with big industries; but there is no mention of a worker in a small scale biscuit factory, or an individual informal worker engaged in food delivery or domestic work. Methods of assessment are not flexible and do not take into account the practical experience gained on the job by informal workers. Lack of strict evaluation criteria compromises quality standardisation, and an information asymmetry makes the skilling ecosystem inaccessible to marginalised informal workers. Lack of gender inclusive outreach and skilling programs for women and LGBTQAI+ workers, and absence of education, health and rehabilitation facilities for children of migrant workers only exposes the extent to which the informal workforce is excluded from the skilling regime in India. A review of these gaps provides the basis for the proposed practical interventions to establish a vibrant, inclusive skilling regime in India for informal workers. A flexible skill certification

and upgradation system, which takes account of the work arrangements and environment within the informal economy, and uses innovative practical assessment tools and participatory learning can help increase employment opportunities and sustainable livelihoods for millions of informal migrant workers who are the drivers of India's economic growth.

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