

WB Approves Program to Protect India's Informal Sector Workers

The World Bank Board of Executive Directors has approved a \$500 million program to support India's large informal workforce and create greater flexibility for states to cope with the ongoing pandemic, future climate, and disaster shocks.

Creating a Coordinated and Responsive Indian Social Protection System (CCRISP) builds on the \$1.15 billion Accelerating India's COVID-19 Social Protection Response Program to support schemes under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY).

With the new program, states will get greater flexibility and more money in their hands. Devolution of funds under the 15th Finance Commission recommendations will help states create a more adaptive social protection system, provide support to excluded groups and cater to context-specific needs, not only for COVID-19 but also for any future crisis, ecological risk, or natural disaster. Enhanced disaster relief funds to geographically targeted hot-spot districts will support states during the current phase of the pandemic and any future waves. Finally, the government has announced new urban platforms. The program will strengthen these platforms to deepen social protection coverage in urban areas.

The total World Bank funding towards strengthening India's social protection programs to help the poor and vulnerable households since the start of the COVID pandemic stands at \$1.65 billion.

The first two operations approved last year provided immediate emergency relief cash transfers to about 320 million individual bank accounts identified through pre-existing national social protection schemes and additional food rations for about 800 million individuals. States can now access flexible funding from disaster response funds to design and implement appropriate social protection responses...

For strengthening the nuts and bolts of cash delivery and identification of the vulnerable in cities and municipalities, the operation will invest in social protection programs for urban informal workers, gig-workers, and migrants. A National Digital Urban Mission will create a shared digital infrastructure for people living in urban areas through investments at the municipal level. The digital platform will help to scale up urban safety nets and social insurance for informal workers. It will also include gender-disaggregated information on women workers and female-headed households. This will allow policymakers to address gender-based service delivery gaps and effectively reach the unreached, particularly widows, adolescent girls, and tribal women.

Street vendors are an integral part of India's urban informal economy. The program will give street vendors access to affordable working capital loans of up to Rs10,000. Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) will identify them through an IT-based platform. Some five million urban street vendors could benefit from the new credit program.

Source: worldbank.org

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