

### General Studies-2; Topic: Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

## Home-Based Workers in India

### 1) Introduction

- Home based workers are part of the informal economy.
- They are those who are involved in the production of goods or services directly for the market or an employer for remuneration.
- The work is produced from either their home or at factory or an office.
- They can be self-employed workers or sub-contracted workers.

### 2) Present Status

- To cut costs and maximize profits, firms outsource production to home-based workers.
- Women suffer violence at the hands of middlemen. More often cases of abuse and violence go unregistered because of fear of loss of work
- Poor wages, bad working conditions and negligible social protection collectively make life difficult for the home-based workers.
- Those producing goods for global value chains receive a marginal percentage of the final profits.
- Given that the home is their workplace, even the absence of basic amenities, like water and electricity, severely affects their productivity and quality of life.
- Lack of credit facility and skill up-gradation opportunities
- The Unorganized Workers Social Security Act includes home-based workers as a section of the informal sector but the Act remains poorly implemented.

### 3) Need for a policy for home-based workers

- A policy to address their needs and provide them with recognition and security.
- To get the government to recognise home-based workers as 'workers' who contribute financially to their families, their community and their country.
- Need for social security measures, including life insurance, healthcare and disability benefits for all home-based workers while also focusing on women.
- To help women secure their livelihood and savings while improving their income opportunities
- To provide basic human rights and adopt declarations to improve their working and living conditions.

### 4) Government Initiatives

- Programmes that will benefit the home-based worker are Make in India, Skill India, Digital India, Smart Cities, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna, Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, Jan Dhan Yojana and the Draft Labour Code on Social Security.

### 5) Organization & Voice

- Because they are often isolated and scattered, home-based workers are difficult to organize.
- When home-based workers organize and have collective voice, their ability to bargain increases.
- The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) has been instrumental in achieving higher wages and better working conditions for home-based workers in many industries.

### 6) Way Forward

- The government must address the issues of occupational safety and health being faced by the over 37.4 million home-based workers in the country.
- There is a need for a National Policy to Safeguard the Rights of India's Home-Based Workers
- They have to be seen as economic agents of change.
- Provide the self-employed home-based workers with credit, markets and technology.
- Need for fair wages, transparency in contracts and regulation of contractors for sub-contracted workers.
- There is also a need for a dispute resolution mechanism.
- Since home is the workplace for home-based workers, the government must provide affordable and secure housing
- Access to basic affordable civic amenities is essential as the lack of these services cuts into their work hours and also affects their health, which impacts their productivity and incomes.
- Issues of occupational health and safety also need to be addressed.
- State must provide ample protection for women workers and secure their livelihoods.
- The policy for home-based workers must ensure the involvement and participation of multiple government departments/ministries.
- Poverty reduction and women empowerment initiatives should specially target home-based workers, because majority of home-based workers are women.
- International development agencies and regional inter-governmental bodies must recognise the importance of home-based workers

