



The New Social Contract: CSO Reflections

BACKGROUND

The coronavirus pandemic has exposed the flaws and gaps present in development governance of every government around the world. The flaws and gaps have been further exacerbated for migrant workers and irregular migrants in several countries of destination, now struggling to extend basic services for all in attempts to control the spread of the virus. Currently, multiple stakeholders are looking at improving existing social contracts in their fields as the incapacity of state bodies to handle the crisis has laid bare several forms of inefficiencies.

A social contract can be understood as an implicit arrangement that defines the relationship between the government and citizens, between labour and capital, or between different groups of the population. Essentially, a social contract reflects a common understanding on how to distribute power and resources in order to achieve social justice (ILO, 2016). As per the ILO (ILO, 2016), certain trends such as globalisation and financialization of the economy, technological advancements in the field of work, informality within work and the weakening of labour market institutions, were driving forces in eroding the existing bases of social contracts. These trends compounded by the pandemic has made it imperative for governments, trade unions, businesses and civil society to alter or improve the existing social contract to benefit all of society - in terms of recognising migrant workers and workers classified as 'essential', expanding access to social protection for all workers and improving access to healthcare and services.

Migrant Forum in Asia facilitated a webinar session for various CSOs and trade unions to rethink modalities of the social contract. Moderated by William Gois, Regional Coordinator (MFA) and Roula Hamati, Regional Coordinator (CCRM) on **22nd May 2020**, leading CSO and trade union activists including Mr. Saji Narayanan, President, Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS)¹, Ms. Sumitha Kishna, Director of Our Journey (Malaysia), and Chairperson of MFA, Dr. Sr. Lissy Joseph, Chairperson, National Workers Welfare Trust (NWWT)², Ms. Dina Nuriyati, Advisory Indonesia (SBMI) and Mr. Laxman Basnet, General Secretary of the South Asian Regional Trade Union Council (SARTUC) participated in the webinar.

¹ BMS is one of the oldest and largest trade unions in India. BMS has affiliated unions in all of the 44 industries classified by the Ministry of Labour. BMS also leads the delegation of Indian workforce in the Conferences of International Labour Organisation (ILO).

² a registered union of domestic workers in India, and Founder of the Domestic Workers Movement - Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

The Social Contract

The core elements of the social contract involve the safety net administered by government, and paid for by citizens and business, and the employment rules governing relationships between enterprises and workers. The social contract also defines the relative roles of employers and government as they relate to social protections, employment rules, and taxation. In the 20th century, the social contract expanded to provide protections related to retirement pensions, healthcare, safe working conditions, work hours, vacation, and family leave. Ideally, social contracts adapt to societal and economic changes to remain effective and to support social and economic stability.

As per the ITUC (2020), the social contract must be underpinned by universal social protection and a Labour Protection Floor which is built upon

- ILO fundamental rights
- Occupational health and safety also as an ILO fundamental right
- Adequate minimum wages
- Maximum limits on working hours.

Depending upon contexts, the social contract may change but is envisioned as including living wages, social protection, a transformative agenda for women, inclusion of young people and Just Transition for climate action and technology, along with taxation reform to fund vital public services.

However, several economic and socio-political events and challenges weaken the social contract or place undue pressure upon it. These pressures inadvertently affect migrant workers, many of whom work under ill-implemented social contracts. These include the following:

- **global competition** for CODs with respect to economic competitors, access to both lower-wage and high-skilled workers, changing migration patterns, developing the local education system to maintain a competitive workforce
- **business and employment models** such as the gig economy, increased use of contracting, flexible work arrangements which have caused concern for CSOs, trade unions and migrant workers regarding protections and quality of work; A lack of job security, unpredictable work schedules, reduced benefits, lower wages, and new workplace safety risks make it harder for workers to find jobs with the necessary wages, benefits, and skills training to thrive and advance
- **technological advancement** disrupting labour markets, putting low-skilled workers at risk as well as lack of accountability for corporate owners of data
- **demographic changes** such as an aging population, requiring increased investment in both healthcare and efficient pension systems as well as increasing urbanization leading to pressures within diversity and inclusion
- **changing cultural context** such as increased workforce participation of women, changing notions of care work leading to changes in work-life balance, demands of worker benefits and flexible work arrangements.
- **climate change** and increased investment in green technologies would create different needs to be included within a new social contract
- **increasing inequality** due to various economic and financial pressures including the weakening relation between productivity and wages, lessening of progressive taxation, among others- improving demand for equitable growth and better wages and benefits for all labour. (BSR, 2019)

Similar notions within this paper were echoed by Guy Ryder, Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO) on 23 May 2020 on the 'Talk to Al-Jazeera' show on Al-Jazeera.

In the interview, Ryder mentioned that the ILO estimated a loss of 305mn jobs worldwide due to the pandemic. While in some countries, workers were protected due to the presence of job retention and social protection mechanisms, others were falling through the cracks in some of the richest countries in the world. The focus must be placed upon ensuring livelihood for people without financial reserves and those dependent upon daily work, working in dangerous conditions for daily wages.

He particularly noted the conditions in which migrant workers live as causes for their vulnerability and that they were perceived as a problem in the pandemic because their work was no longer needed or they were 'disposable'. However, it is the very same workers in supermarkets, transportation, and social care who have stabilised economy and society during trying times. Ryder further recognised that, despite this, these workers are afforded least care and are majorly undervalued and disregarded.

Informality Among Migrant Workers

Among these forces that affect the implementation of a social contract, the informality of the work and lives that migrant worker lead, is to be particularly focused upon. Deregulation of labour market institutions have also resulted in an erosion of employment standards through an increase in labour casualisation, as formal enterprises outsource production to informal workers. Greater labour market flexibility has helped create conditions that maximise the potential for the exploitation of migrants, predominantly in the most disadvantaged segments of the market. Methods of control include disciplining by employers, debt bondage and the use/threat of violence.

Technology has also been a major disruptor in the labour market, that has inadvertently led to increasing informalisation among migrant labour as well. While digitalization and automation also allow for better economic opportunities and more flexibility, there are concerns of a 'jobless future' particularly considering growing economic inequalities and precariousness of the job market.

One of the biggest developments in recent years is the 'gig economy' – while previously employers were responsible for the well-being of their labour, now this responsibility is neither taken up by consumers, nor the platforms that provide gigs. For instance, in the case of 'on-demand' taxi companies, drivers are considered independent contractors who either own the cars they drive or pay rent for the use of the car – less regulations have led to less protected work environments for drivers in countries where the state has struggled to demarcate the form of labour and ensure adequate provisions for their protection (particularly with regard to working hours, compensation, accidental insurance, etc.). Labour law and commercial law have effectively become blurred for these workers. Informality has broader implications for the social contract in a society, as it constitutes a symptom of a significant malfunctioning in the relationship between the state and its citizens. (ILO, 2016)

Within a new social contract, the state would also need to respond to emerging factors and changes in the world of work, particularly with respect to new technologies, green industries, data protection and power relations between countries of origin and destination. This would further require an in-depth analysis at the capacity of state actors to provide social safety nets for migrant workers or returnees, prospects of improving skilling at automation, and the growth of alternative economic models. (BSR, 2019)

Ryder noted that within the informal economy, the ILO observed destitution among 1.6mn workers, suffering the worst impact of the pandemic on their livelihood due to the lack of labour legislation coverage and social protection mechanisms.

He termed this situation as a "potential humanitarian catastrophe", stressing that informal workers operate outside the coverage of protections have no access to healthcare nor wages.

Developing countries and those with less resources were places where informality and its vulnerabilities are felt more acutely.

Women workers in the informal sector were observed as being disproportionately affected as well as in general, being primary care providers (particularly in unpaid settings) and bearing the undue burden of unpaid care responsibilities.

Impact of COVID-19

Migrant workers consistently form the largest section of essential workers in countries of destination. Moreover, their contributions to their families, communities and countries through remittances and investments are also characterised as essential to their economies and societies. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an evolution on the concept of essential work and workers. While earlier essential work that migrant workers were involved in included 3D (dirty, dangerous and demeaning) jobs, this changed to specific sectors such as sanitation, logistics, groceries, health, etc.

Employment and financial insecurity among labour was widespread, although lower-skilled and less educated migrant labour bore a major part of the brunt. Despite lockdowns and quarantine measures, countries saw mass exodus of workers both internally and externally, and the general consensus was that trends would continue as

the labour market shifts as per economic conditions in countries. State responses were observed to be slow, confounding and inefficient while non-state actors were observed as providing access to primary facilities and services as well as basic items such as food, shelter and medical supplies. Severely affected by unemployment (or in most cases, non-payment of wages and dues), migrant workers were found to be helpless and looking to stave off death due to starvation rather than COVID-19.

Not only were jobs primarily occupied by migrant workers understood to be necessary and relevant, the informal nature of many occupations that migrant workers are predominantly employed in has become recognised and publicly validated by instances in many countries and the governments' immediate reactions during the pandemic. For instance, in countries such as India, internal migrant workers were referred to as 'guest workers' (in an ironic instance of exclusion) despite being recognised as essential workers, without whom the economy has been severely affected.

Migrant domestic workers in particular were seen as being the most vulnerable during this time since they are also essential workers but accorded less rights than other migrants (including their lack of inclusion under labour laws and access to justice and basic services). Despite being 'live-in', domestic workers, particularly those involved in geriatric care, were seldom paid for their overtime nor were provided sufficient protections, leaving them overworked and underpaid. The refusal of state actors to recognise domestic works as independent labour migrants is based upon a certain dilemma of outsourcing to the 'public' a job that is 'private' in nature and usually unpaid. States are also hesitant to recognise them as independent workers due to care work becoming commodified, which falls square against the gendered notion of unpaid private responsibility handled by women within the family (without any state interference).

Their situation was quickly realised by CSOs, who strove to find possibilities, while facing restrictions of movement and funding among others. For instance, in India, the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) a trade union, organised a nationwide agitation with trade unions of 45 sectors and raised issues with respect to conditions of inter-state MWs (who are prominent in India and as vital as external migrant workers), payment of wages, job losses, suspension of labour laws and poverty schemes and increasing privatisation of public sector undertakings. The BMS released statements recommending to the Central government on measures regarding prevention of

Ryder opined that the responses of CODs such as deporting infected workers were evidence of the vulnerability of migrants and the principled position would be not to treat migrant workers different from voters and to create entities to have their lives and health protected.

While the solution is to provide the basic facilities for survival, there are multiple challenges. Ryder notes that due to lack of international cooperation of common purpose, different governments have been investing large amounts of resources for keeping their own economies and societies moving. This lack of cooperation demonstrated by state actors and multilateral corporations has impeded the process of resource-sharing and transfers and affected the capacity to respond.

massive job losses, ensuring timely wages, extension of the Employees State Insurance schemes for the unorganised sector, provision of loans through the Employees Provident Fund, and access to ration for those without ration card. BMS further recommended the inclusion of migrant workers and SMEs within the bailout plan proposed by government.

However, conditions of labour during the pandemic were only adding to existing contentious situations for labour. Due to widespread socio-economic policy changes, unstable economies as well as change in governments, the labour market had already favoured some sectors and occupations, forcing semi-skilled workers into low-skilled occupations, and reducing the income of low-skilled workers, due to a race to the bottom as it were. While these changes have occurred over time, there was a rapid deterioration of their economic and social security, pushing more workers from 'middle-class' into poverty. (Bussolo, Davalos, Peragine, & Sundaram, 2019).

A primary concern with respect to 'building back better' in labour migration governance is whether the new forms of state involvement will include strengthening **the welfare state** through welfare programmes and opportunities for this to be financially supported. CSOs note that universally, state governance has been lacking in providing support and has been unsympathetic to the common populace. The concept of the welfare state had been undermined during the pandemic. It became evident that the state was coerced into providing immediate relief measures due to lack of investment in the relevant sectors earlier.

The lack of political will to invest in healthcare, social protection and labour migration governance were due to several conflicting socio-economic pressures, particularly public rhetoric in reference to migrant workers. For instance, in Malaysia, only essential sectors were allowed to operate during the lockdown period – these sectors naturally included migrant workers without whom these industries would have been severely affected, particularly security sector and domestic workers. While initially the government responded proactively in aiding migrant workers, they later rolled back services due to economic and socio-political pressures.

Creation of New Ways or Improving Existing Advocacy?

The pandemic has affected all sectors, occupations and modalities of labour migration, mobility and markets. The ITUC Global Poll (2020) revealed that 94% of the global workforce is a 'hidden workforce' who are exploited and also subject to modern slavery. The neoliberal approach to labour and migration governance has been exposed as fragile and affecting all stakeholders equally in the face of economic shocks. Large conglomerates and employers of repute were found to require bailouts for their companies and workers were left in the lurch, forced to work without pay. The capitalist mode of business and labour 'management' almost collapsed and the vulnerable nature of profits, earning and payouts was revealed at the global level.

This has become a prime opportunity to improve inclusiveness within a new social contract in a holistic, diligent and strategic manner. In an era of increasing climate change, polarised societies and economic disparity, it becomes imperative that a new form of social contract is instituted - based upon an inclusive, rights-based and holistic perspective, and builds upon the 'new normal'.

1. This would involve a [universal social contract](#) which replaces the existing donor and recipient relationship between the state and its citizens. For instance, the exercise of providing handouts and financial aid by governments during the pandemic will need to be replenished and supported (and in some instances, replaced) by structural mechanisms. Through multi-stakeholder involvement, the priority may also be placed upon creating sustainable models. The pandemic revealed the ability of states to localise their governance efforts with a horizontal movement of resources and responsibilities as compared to the common trickling down approach. **Local and state governance bodies** played a far larger role in supporting and protecting the workers - this was performed through their inclusion into wages and social protection systems or existing welfare programmes of ration, employment, etc.

2. State and non-state actors would need to seriously involve in how the social contract could reflect changes in the [modalities of work](#) or forms of employment as well as changing roles of work (both paid and unpaid) in a society. A new social contract must effectively tackle race to the bottom by countries of origin as well as reform taxation regimes to benefit the countries and communities in which they operate. It must also pinpoint governance structures and enterprise accountability mechanisms that ensure sharing benefits between the private entity and the communities in which it operates. (ILO, 2016)
3. [Stakeholders in CODs](#) would look to analyse labour market supply in the face of nationalisation measures and lack of labour in essential industries and low-skilled labour occupations. The weakening of labour market institutions has driven higher inequality and insecurity among workers through changes in employment and earnings patterns, persistent unemployment, and underemployment, as well as decline of real wages. Labour market institutions are not only challenged by external forces, but in many countries also by a lack of adaptation to a fast-moving social, political and economic context. Keeping those institutions on a par with the changing needs of workers and employers is also an “internal” responsibility of its actors. (ILO, 2016)
4. [State and non-state actors in COOs](#) need to consider the possibilities of providing employment if the rates of migration decrease or the barriers of labour mobility are bolstered post pandemic. Migration strengthens households’ resilience by strengthening their ability to cope with economic risks and shocks, through informal insurance strategies. Remittances have also been shown to increase at times of national shocks and stresses (for instance in the Philippines after natural disasters). **Returnee migration** may also be harnessed to foster innovation through social remittances and skills transfers. High-skilled migration also generates positive externalities such as increased investment in education and a more educated domestic workforce. (Overseas Development Institute, 2018) The social contract would also need to specifically emphasise upon creating opportunities for reintegration and employment for returnee migrant workers. There is also a larger focus upon providing social protection, although focus upon returnees is still lacking. Returnees also require financial assistance, particularly in the case of migrants who were laid off or not paid their wages or dues. Returnees are rarely provided with monetary assistance to restart their life with most targeted schemes being contributory.
5. The lack of returnee assistance was observed to have particularly affected repatriation efforts for [female migrant workers](#), many of whom are the sole breadwinners for their families. During the pandemic, civil societies urged that in the attempts to build back state machinery, minimal basic standards and conventions have to be fulfilled. Particularly in the case of **domestic workers**, the social contract must address their rights as females, as migrants and as workers. States recognize the need for the labour of migrant domestic workers, thereby granting them access to legal residency, but simultaneously deny the recognition of their labour and the related legal position - outside the protection of sending states and exempt from the basic standards of employment in receiving states. (ILO, 2016)

In the interview, Ryder mentioned that it becomes necessary for state and society to introspect as to how workers will be paid and how their conditions may be improved, for their services. State responses need to look after migrant workers, as a matter of humanity and self-interest for their local population. Local populations need to be informed of migrant worker circumstances – particularly regarding frontline workers and those in essential services – by concerted efforts to confront prejudice through facts. Through a change in mindsets, it would be possible to create lasting impact.

He finally recommended that the pandemic was a wake-up call for countries where the social contract has been ill-considered or broken, to improve them and ensure basic decency and fairness. It becomes necessary to understand give-and-take relationships with the private sector, in the face of delayed and denied payments to workers and how to resolve them through looking at executive remuneration and tax policies. It is also important to recognise what is fair in the way the world of work is organised currently.

The nature of their work must not be determined by the private modality of their workplace where current rhetoric revolves around them being family members. It must rather encompass a broader sense of their labour and migrant rights from a gender-based perspective. Another issue within the advocacy of domestic workers pertains to their portrayal as helpless victims, which can lead to the State being their legitimate protector, negatively affecting their mobilization.

6. The new social contract also requires [investing resources and creating opportunities](#), apart from structural changes. For instance, the progressive return of migrant workers was implemented in developing countries like Nepal and India as these countries were not prepared by way of resources and infrastructure, for the sudden influx of returnees. Non-state actors such as CSOs and trade unions face the challenge of ensuring protection of the rights of the returning migrant labour and incorporating them into the local economy when states have increasingly removed labour protections and amended labour laws during the pandemic.
7. The emphasis needs to be upon creating an [inclusive economy](#) where workers have voice and the right to effectively participate in their own governance. State actors must discover and innovate existing frameworks to strengthen migrant voice and participation at the workplace, local and national levels. Adapting multi-stakeholder social dialogue to new trends in organisation and representation becomes vital to the inclusion of informal workers and workers in other modalities of work. (ILO, 2016)
8. An effective social contract requires a fair balance between rights and obligations, an [equitable and effective application of the law](#) and appropriate enforcement mechanisms, as well as effective accountability mechanisms. If citizens (and economic actors) cannot trust the state to provide them with needed services and protection, if laws are not enforced in an equitable and effective way, if legal and institutional frameworks are perceived as dysfunctional and ineffective, if the tax system is not recognized as a fair and effective mechanism to finance collective good, then compliance with legal frameworks will remain low. (ILO, 2016)
9. Nonetheless, there is a need to look at labour [beyond the dimensions of skill and education](#) as, during the pandemic, workers in 'low-skilled' jobs were found to be the most essential for daily life and contributed the most to economy and society. For this to happen, multiple stakeholders need to promote creativity and innovation, recognise the 'new normal' in labour migration markets and governance. CSOs would particularly need to observe how their work during the pandemic could contribute to the institutionalising of a new social contract within this new reality.
10. In countries of origin, distinctions regarding a migrant and non-migrant worker have been narrowing and this is expected to be shown in future policy changes regarding labour – it becomes an important marker for [trade union involvement](#) at the local level to improve inclusive means of participation and collective bargaining, particularly with respect to domestic and gig workers. Collective bargaining has come under pressure in many countries since the financial crisis of 2008 and this may be accelerated by the gig economy and other informal modalities of work. A primary observation in migrant rights advocacy was that during rescue and relief efforts, the dichotomies between NGOs and trade unions were not completely visible, evidence of the **potential of solidarity** in these circles. This solidarity may be built upon to strengthen the labour movement. Trade unions would also need to consider this strongly and expand beyond sector-based or industry-based memberships to protecting the interests of the larger labour migrant community. The differences between irregular migrants, migrant workers, national workers and refugees is seen as being thoroughly entrenched in certain countries of destination as well.

11. **Private entities** would also need to be included in social dialogue with workers, unions, and other stakeholders, enabling risk management to support worker's needs. As per BSR, businesses can reduce such risk by: *disclosing the risks* of economic and employment changes; investing in *community renewal and economic diversification*; ensuring *benefits and retirement security* for workers, paying a *fair share* of taxes, advocating for *income support*, and by working with governments to ensure that the *cost of the changes* (to automation, green industry, technological advancement) is not passed to low-income populations; contribute to *skill development* through investment in the high-quality jobs within green industries, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, including workers, unions, civil society, and government. Businesses may also invest in *inclusive development* through green industries, to counter claims that climate action would increase vulnerability and job losses. (BSR, 2019) Advocacy would also need to **moderate its perception** as a critique of government alone. The focus of arguments should be placed upon the need to have better housing and protection for migrant workers, and to show that they are essential and necessary for economy and society. CSO advocacy would need to push governments to recognise migrant workers through a different lens, without whom the economy of many countries of destination and origin were at the risk of collapse.

Strategies of advocacy

- **Maintaining data and documentation:** This is to ensure that information that CSOs have gathered can be utilised effectively in developing advocacy among MFA members and partners in different countries. The data and ensuing analysis may also be presented to reflect the need for vital change where the emphasis is not on case studies and storytelling, but upon policy changes and strategic communication.
- **Improving inclusiveness within advocacy:** By expanding the target community to cross-border migrants, temporary workers, refugees and irregular labour, trade unions would be able to effectively improve solidarity with NGOs and foster policy change that would be beneficial for all labour in the face of shifting demand and lowered remittances due to large amounts of returns.
- **Rights for Returnees:** Advocacy should not only focus upon rural employment schemes as returnees may also not be willing to work in jobs that pay lesser or lead to their deskilling. Alternative ways of rehabilitation need to be considered, which are meaningful and provides fulfilment in terms of compensation and productivity. Not every returnee can become an entrepreneur so reintegration and employment efforts must be designed to account for returnee needs.

Government actions to be taken

- There needs to be national identification and registration of returnees and potential migrant workers into existing social protection mechanisms, starting at the ward level. For those returning prematurely due to contract termination, they bear the cost of returning and hence, unemployment insurance, income protection schemes and other incentives for local employers and workers need to be considered to improve sustainable reintegration efforts.
- **Create Skills Certification and Recognition of Prior Learning systems.** Returnees may also be assisted in expanding/recognising their skills prior to remigration, which can be stated within their job applications in the future. Additionally, there may be a training fund instituted for workers catering to migration corridors based upon job types.
- **Understand reintegration efforts within a small-scale industrial atmosphere or other efforts which may be prioritised.** Governments also need to understand the links or possible repercussions this may cause for local workers and internal migrant workers, with the support of data and documentation sourced through official records of state and non-state actors. Government may also invest in green industries in this regard.
- **Focus upon specific essential sectors such as Domestic Workers:** Firstly, ratifying relevant Convention such as C189 for domestic workers becomes imperative to labour migration governance. Secondly, domestic workers may be trained to expand their existing skills to secondary industries such as hospitality, nursing, etc. The health industry alone requires several types of care work including midwifery, nurse assistant, sanitation at hospitals, elderly care etc.
- **Establish supportive institutions that can help families, who stay behind, adapt to the loss of an economically active member or caregiver through migration.** Interventions should be tailored to the length and type of migration in question; options could include putting in place safety nets to improve health and education outcomes for children in the community, including those of migrant children, and introducing accessible banking, credit, investment and insurance systems. (Overseas Development Institute, 2018)

According to Ryder, immediate priorities with respect to creation of a new social contract include:

(i) resolving injustices at work,

(ii) access to healthcare (addressing collective trauma and the underinvestment in healthcare and comprehensive social protection),

(iii) creating a better 'normal' and fostering safety and stability in societies by improving upon failures of the past.

(iv) Improving political will and the means to develop this, by revisiting basic policy orthodoxies. For example, taxing enterprises and individuals, improving the funding of states and giving ourselves the means to achieve our goals.

Accountability of Private sector (BSR, 2019)

- Private sector can play a relevant role in creating a new social contract. It can help address the needs and skills of workers by being involved in delivering products and services, investing in local communities, and providing quality employment. To achieve this vision, business engagement should be based on the following principles: improving the role of business in society, human capital development, promoting economic security and mobility in non-traditional work models, improve transition to a green economy, and foster digital trust and accountability.
 - Aligning business objectives with the SDGs and promoting different corporate forms such as cooperatives and employee stock ownership.
 - Support skill development and career pathways to prepare workers for the jobs of the future.
- Promote economic security and a social safety net to enable individuals and families to meet their needs: Companies can commit to wage levels that allow workers to meet basic needs; evaluate CEO/worker pay ratios and reduce the large and growing disconnect between them; extend benefits to all employee categories; support employment transitions through meaningful severance payments; offer pension programs tied less directly to market outcomes; and not oppose efforts to establish collective workplace representation. (BSR, 2019)
- Modernize employment practices to invite new work arrangements that allow both innovation and economic security: Companies could incorporate workforce planning for worker classifications; ensure that migrant workers not in traditional full-time jobs are paid in accordance with at least statutory wage and hourly requirements; ensure that workers, regardless of their situation, have terms and conditions (such as benefits, scheduling practices, unemployment etc.) that support an adequate standard of living; and commit to engage with the flexible-worker population to better understand its needs and concerns.
- Companies could work with industry associations to create best-practice standards for flexible workers and engage with suppliers to adopt them when employing flexible workers. companies could encourage government to support decent working conditions for flexible workers, work with policymakers to develop portable benefits systems and take a public stand against worker misclassification.
- Implement ethical data stewardship practices to protect the privacy and non-discrimination rights of workers.: Companies must accept a duty to protect the rights of not only workers but of all customers, users, and citizens that share data with them. This means deploying the policies, technologies, and organizational measures required to protect personal data. The data-driven economy alters the power dynamic between company and citizen in significant ways. It is important to establish norms that protect the most vulnerable and marginalized when harnessing data for the public benefit (BSR, 2019)

Conclusion

Currently, all efforts aimed at migrant workers, while involving multiple stakeholders, still requires various forms of support. CSOs and trade unions urge that the support that migrant workers need fall far beyond their capacities and administrative jurisdiction – requiring concerted effort of governing bodies, political bodies and private employment sector. For instance, in certain countries, stimulus packages targeted not only employers but also workers themselves – this becomes imperative for workers in 3D jobs and for migrant workers to be recognised in national-level schemes needs to become the norm. Sustainable, systemic, and structural change can be gradually developed by tackling governance issues, exploring possibilities in different sectors and fostering innovation in practice in a post-COVID era.

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