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# **Examining the effectiveness of One Nation One Ration Card Scheme**

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# ONE NATION ONE RATION CARD

## Abstract

The paper studies the One Nation One Ration Card Scheme where it highlights the ground level ineffectiveness of the scheme among the migrant workers. It includes discussion on the possible reasons responsible for the ineffectiveness of the scheme with special focus on the soft factors i.e. mindset of the targeted group. The paper aims to see how the ONORC scheme's effectiveness can be improved. It includes findings based on primary and secondary research. The findings are in direct contrast to the policy objective. In the end, it talks about some recommendation measures that policymakers should take to improve the last mile delivery and make the programme effective.

**Keywords:** Migrants, ration card, psychological, ration card, temporary migrants, permanent migrants, Primary, secondary.

## Introduction

This new Initiative of Government of India "One Nation One Ration card" is the solution to challenges faced by not only migrant workers but also curbs corruption and allows portability of food security benefits. That means a ration card holder from Bihar can buy his stock from any of the ration shops in his state and the destination state as well. This has been made possible by a single digital card linked to the beneficiary's Aadhaar card and enabling E-POS for Biometric Authentications at the Ration shops. The Scheme will give significant relief for migrant labourers, Urban Poor and the daily wagers.

However, the challenges need to be overcome. Most of the migrants are not educated and have nil financial literacy, due to which they do not trust any of the digital platforms.

There is a lack of clarity on operating procedures and beneficiary entitlements about prices and food habits in different states. The items and the quantity supplied at the PDS shops differ from state to state. For instance, in Tamil Nadu, one family receives 20kg of rice, whereas, in Karnataka, a family receives only 5kg of rice. Then in Tamil Nadu, 20 kilograms of rice is given free of cost, but in Bihar & UP, Rs3 is charged. Furthermore, some states supply both rice and wheat, whereas states like Maharashtra provides only wheat. So, the

migrant workers should be clarified about the items included in their ration through the One Nation One Ration Card Scheme.

Most people are not aware of the benefits they are entitled to. The system needs to be designed so that a typical illiterate person can understand without much cognitive load. It has to be made more inclusive. The ONORC scheme intended to benefit the migrant workers is not effective on the ground level. The ground-level reality is very different.

Some migrants are hesitant to use the Scheme altogether. They have no intention of using the Scheme even if all the benefits are accessible to them because they want their families in the village to consume ration as there's no flow of income there while they can earn and buy in cities.

### **Methodology**

The paper is based on primary and secondary research. It is based on a field study conducted in different areas, including a slum area containing 400 construction workers in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, multiple construction sites at IIT Bombay and one slum area behind Hiranandani Hospital, Mumbai. The Aajivika Bureau helped in coordinating the fieldwork at Ahmedabad. The age of the respondent was between 18-60 years. The sample size was 25. The total number of variables is 625, with 25 sample sizes and 25 questions each. Data has been analyzed using cross-tabulation in the traditional excel method.

### **Findings**

After the field study it was realized that the migrant workers do not prefer to carry their ration cards to the cities, which lead to the under-utilization of the ONORC scheme. The slum area in Ahmedabad where 400 families of construction workers resided, most of the families were from the Madhya Pradesh region or the Dahod district from Gujarat and those from Gujarat travel once a month to their villages to collect the ration by using their ration card.

The PDS Shops in the Gujarat state does not accept ration cards from outer state migrants despite the one nation one ration card scheme. Also, Migrants do not prefer to buy their rations here in cities because they want their families to buy in the village. There are different reasons for it. First, migrants are not aware of the kinds of benefits they are entitled to. Second, a ration card is a household-based card and is yet to be translated by delinking all the people and transferring them into the individual-based card.

Another interesting point that could be realized from the Gujarat field study is that most migrants do not bring their ration cards to cities because they are afraid that their ration card will be lost. Given, that they don't have much security in the slum area and there are difficulties in obtaining a new ration card, the fear is justifiable. They trust their village and have no trust in city people.

Migrants who are in cities but do not make use of the ration card in cities for months, when they go back to their hometown after a few months, then also they don't get the rations at their hometown for the months that they have missed. However, according to the law, they should get the remaining as well. On being asked if they get a sufficient amount of ration from PDS shops, they answered that the shopkeepers do not allow them to measure the food. They do not give all the food that's supposed to be delivered. Few PDS shopkeepers are supporting. But then, there is always an issue of server down and internet. Sometimes Fingerprints do not match.

The problems on the side of the PDS Shopkeepers are that they also have some procurement issues. They have to get their supply from higher groups, and they face problems in procurement. Even though the ONORC scheme provides for migrants to buy their food from any place, it has not facilitated the PDS shops to have that much supply to provide to as many people as they come to the shop. PDS shops are in the habit of delivering to a fixed number of people every month, and accordingly, they maintain their supply.

Every month the migrants in Ahmedabad spend more than 50 % on food. They don't buy ration because they have the problem of storage. They buy their ration every day before cooking their meals. It is because of fear of theft. They don't even buy a packet of flour or a bottle of oil. Before every meal, they buy their groceries from a store which is located in their slum.

The field study was also conducted at three different construction sites in IIT Bombay, and the response varied across all three locations. In one construction site, migrants from Jharkhand, Bihar and Bengal agreed not to make use of one nation one ration card scheme even if they were given the benefit. The reason is that they work in the city for 3-4 months on a contractual basis and then go back to their hometown, and as a part of that contract, they are provided three times a meal from the contractor, so they don't need ration in cities. So even if all the facilities are provided to them to make use of the Scheme, they would not choose to do so.

In one of the construction sites where the workers were migrants and contractual laborers, and fooding was not part of their contract, one worker agreed to make use of the ONORC Scheme if all the things were facilitated to him. So out of 25 people, who were interviewed, only one person belonging to 18 years age group agreed to make use of the One Nation One Ration Card Scheme.

The finding based on the interview conducted at the multiple construction sites in the IIT Bombay campus reflects that the migrants do not carry their ration cards with them. Even a few migrants from Bengal had their ration cards delinked from families, yet they did not choose to bring their ration cards. They wanted their families to have their share of ration since there was no flow of income in their hometown, and they could buy in the migrated cities.

Another reason that they don't use their ration card in cities is that they feel the opportunity cost is higher. Since most migrants are daily wage labourers, they earn around Rs 400 daily, and if they go to buy ration cards, their one day would be wasted, and the cost of the ration they receive is around Rs 125-200. So they prefer to buy their ration rather than through governments help.

Similarly, in the slums area in Hiranandani, Mumbai, where most migrants were intrastate and had their ration card with them, they did not face any hurdles in getting their ration every month. They all had no complaints and were unaware of the one nation one ration card scheme. They buy their ration from the PDS shops near them. But few interstate migrants from Karnataka did not have their ration card and were in a difficult situation compared to intrastate migrants.

Based on the data, around 92% of the migrants had ration card including people who do not carry it with them and all of the people covered in the survey agreed to have paid heavy bribes to get their ration card made.

**Table: 1 Demography of the respondents are as follow:**

<b>GENDER</b>	<b>TEMPORARY</b>	<b>PERMANENT</b>	<b>AVERAGE AGE</b>
<b>MALE</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>30.55</b>
<b>FEMALE</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>40.71</b>
	<b>16</b>	<b>9</b>	

The total number of respondents is 25 samples, out of which 18 were male, and 7 were female. The above-mentioned table reflects that out of 25 migrants, 9 were permanent workers, and 16 were temporary workers. According to the data, the average age of permanent migrant workers is 44.55 and of temporary workers is 27.12 years. The average age of migrant female workers is 40.71 years and is higher than the males, i.e. 30.55 years.

**Table 2**

**Did you bring your Ration Card to the city?**

Migration Pattern	YES	NO	NO CARD	TOTAL
PERMANENT	6	3	0	9
TEMPORARY	0	14	2	16
TOTAL	6	17	2	25

The data also shows that 68% of the migrants do not carry their ration cards with them to cities, out of which 82% of migrants are temporary migrants and go for contractual works.

**Table 3**

**Do you perceive that the Government in the city will be there in times of need?**

GENDER	YES	NO	TOTAL
MALE	8	10	18
FEMALE	3	4	7
TOTAL	11	14	25

The data provided gives that 42% of females and 44% of males trust the city government. They feel that Government will be there for them in times of need.

**Table 4**

**NATURE OF MIGRATION**

GENDER	TEMPORARY	PERMANENT	TOTAL
MALE	14	4	18
FEMALE	2	5	7
TOTAL	16	9	25

There are two types of migrants Temporary and Permanent. Temporary migrants are circular migrants with no intention of staying for long in the city. They are the contractual workers. Permanent migrants are ones who wants to be part of the city and stays for more than a year. The above table shows that 71% of female migrants are permanent migrants, and only 22% of males are permanent migrants. So, around 78% of male migrants are contractual workers and are temporary migrants.

**Table 5**

**Ration card to the city**

<b>DELINKED</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>YES</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>NO</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>23</b>

The data concludes that only 26% had their card delinked from their families, and even those 26% did not prefer to carry their ration card to the cities. And 2 people did not have ration cards.

**Table 6:**

**do you get the full amount from the PDS ?**

<b>Did you pay extra to get ration card</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>YES</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>NO</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>25</b>

The above table shows that 100% of the migrants agreed to pay bribe or extra charges to get their ration card and around 12% of the migrants complained of not getting the full units of grains from the PDS shop through ration card.

**Table 7:**

**Did you bring your ration card to the city?**

<b>are people back at home taking ration regularly</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>YES</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>NO</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2(NO CARD)</b>	<b>7</b>

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>25</b>
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The above table shows that only 24% migrants brought their ration card to the cities and these were permanent migrants. One important point to note is that around 72% of the migrant's families take ration in their hometowns and these are temporary migrants who do not carry their ration card to cities and leave it for their families to consume.

**Table 8:**

**Did you bring your ration card to the city?**

<b>are you aware of the ONORC Scheme</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>YES</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>NO</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>25</b>

The above table shows that only 8% of the migrants knew about the ONORC Scheme and still 50% out of those 8% did not bring the ration card to the city to take the benefit of the scheme.

**Table 9:**

**Do you perceive that the Government in the city will be there in times of need?**

<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>25</b>

The level of education is divided into 3 categories with 1 as primary education, 2 as middle school and 3 as secondary education. The data shows that around 52% of the migrants did not perceive that the government will be there for them in times of crisis out of which 54% had done primary education and 46% were middle school graduates.

**Table 10:**

**Is it delinked?**



<b>Is your family living with you</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>YES</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>NO</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>25</b>

The above table reflects that 24% of migrants lived with their families and these were mostly permanent migrants and out of which none had their card delinked. And around 32% of the migrants out of 76% of migrants who did not lived with families had their card delinked.

### **Discussion**

The Government needs to understand how those groups function and how their behaviour changes with time. If the Government gets an idea about the mindset of the policy target population, then they could design the policies that could be more effective. The policymakers can follow an action-based approach and see how different elements interact.

The Government should try to address the psychological fears of the migrants. They should make an effort to make them feel secure in cities and spread awareness about the benefits they are entitled to. These are the people left out in the towns because they don't have voting rights in cities. The Government should do some ground-level work. Frequent interactions with these people can be a helpful step in removing their psychological fears. Some frontline workers of the Government could be assigned for this job if the Government does not have sufficient time for such interactions. It is crucial for the Scheme such as the one nation one ration card to be successful in actuality and not just in policy manuals.

During such interaction, the Government should take into account the linguistic barriers. The workers should speak the language of the migrants. It would make them feel more secure, and they will trust them more. If the group's behaviour could be changed, they are the citizens; by default, the problems can be solved.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has tried to analyze the ground level situation of one nation one ration card scheme. From the data, we could see that around 68% of migrants do not carry their ration

cards to cities, mostly the contractual workers. And approximately 74% still have a household-based ration card, which strengthens the desire not to carry their card to the cities. Therefore, even if the Scheme is well intentional and seeks to address the migrants' problems, it is underutilized because of the mindset of the migrants. Hence, it makes it essential to focus on the soft factors and not only on the technical and logistics barriers to make the Scheme effective.

The paper highlights the importance of using psychological insights and not being limited to fulfilling the Pareto-efficiency criteria. The findings based on field study shows how ineffective the One Nation One Ration Card Scheme is in practice and the lack of awareness among the migrants about the scheme. The finding strengthens the argument of on why to not focus only on the hard factors. Followed by some ways through which the effectiveness of the Scheme be improved.