



# **Human Rights of Domestic Workers in India: A Socio-legal Study with a Focus on Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh**

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## **1. Introduction**

Domestic work remains largely unrecognized as labour, with no full-fledged national law to regulate it. The existing provisions of the unorganized sector inadequately cover the physical, emotional, social, and economic circumstances faced by domestic workers. They are excluded from basic entitlements since the draft e-Industrial Relations Code still does not cover domestic work. Consequently, such workers remain unprotected, irrespective of years of service or number of households engaged.

The Institutional Framework under the Domestic Work Policy has failed to address the plight of domestic workers. Certain provisions are nominally applicable to domestic workers in Bareilly, nevertheless, in the absence of a Labour department registration, personal contracts become binding. The Domestic Work Policy acknowledges that it is a prevailing exercise to provide some protection and institutionalism to domestic work (Neetha, 2021).

In Bareilly, the socio-economic situation for domestic workers remains complicated. Demand for workers persists owing to the increasing migratory environment, urbanization, and exposure to modern day-to-day requirements via technology. Dum efficient access, connectivity, modes of referral, and lack of awareness continue to prove deterrent (Bhattacharjee & Goswami, 2019). In urban areas where the domestic worker policy provision exists, it is functioning inefficiently owing to unawareness. Workers are unregistered, contracts are verbal, and despite awareness generation effort threads have failed. Workers do not recognize themselves as domestic workers, instead referring to more palatable titles such as care-taker, family support, or service.

Existing umbrella provisions for workers of all categories prevail, nevertheless, workers oriented towards the domestic work category remain detached from these broader outreach effort. Urban domestic workers are missed by broader outreach efforts and thus remain unnoticed (Kundu, 2008). Awareness-generation schemes observed on other types of unorganised labour have not been effectively extended to such urban workers.

## **2. The concept of domestic workers**

Domestic workers are engaged in a variety of productive activities within private households. The term 'domestic worker' refers to individuals who undertake work in

an employer's home. Such work commonly includes cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing, marketing, babysitting, guarding, and gardening, although some workers may engage in only one of these types of activity. Typically, domestic workers perform their jobs on a daily basis. In India, they usually work for more than one employer to supplement their income. Hours of work may range from four to sixteen a day, divided between two or more households. Many women workers cover both day and night shifts in different households. Domestic workers come from all age groups, but most are women and girls especially those employed for cleaning.

Domestic workers are often regarded as a relatively privileged group due to their presence within the homes of the better-off. Even so, they remain vulnerable members of the lower socio-economic sector because they frequently have no fixed working hours, no specified days off, and no written contracts. Very few can afford to take even a single day off, as they would then lose the entire day's earnings. Poor remuneration is the norm, and many workers receive less than the minimum wage fixed by the government. Domestic workers do not receive compensatory pay for overtime, paid holidays, or other incentives. Moreover, the administration does not regard them as workers, so they are denied social security benefits. All these factors deprive domestic workers of their dignity and the right to a decent living (Kundu, 2008).

### **3. Legal framework for domestic workers in India**

Despite rapid urbanization, international concern, and recent national-level attention, India's more than four crore domestic workers continue to be denied basic employment rights. They are not covered by the Minimum Wages Act of 1948, the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act of 1970, the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act of 1979, the Unorganised Workers Social Security Act of 2008, the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act of 1996, and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act of 2013 (Kundu, 2008). The central and state-level Task Force on Domestic Workers, set up by the Ministry of Labour and Employment and the National Commission for Women in November 2009, described domestic work as "fundamental to the dignity of labour" and proposed a national policy on domestic workers to the government in April 2010. Advocacy efforts have resulted in public interest litigation and awareness-building efforts nationwide; the establishment of a national platform by unions, NGOs, and networks of domestic workers; and the International Labour Organization's Domestic Workers Convention in June 2011 (Neetha, 2021). However, no legislation has so far been implemented to cover domestic workers (Bhattacharjee & Goswami, 2019).

In Bareilly, the Municipal Corporation has drafted a Bye-Law that includes provisions for registration, work arrangement, wages, and shelters for domestic workers. An additional check on the implementation of the informal agreements between domestic workers and their employers in Bareilly is provided by the Bareilly Domestic Workers Association with the support of a local NGO. Domestic work is one of the most challenging forms of employment for women in India; despite the various legal initiatives, the condition of women domestic workers in Bareilly remains very stressful. Therefore, it is of immense importance to assess the rights and protection coverage in Bareilly and clarify the salient socio-economic parameters that govern the practical extent of rights and protection given by the local authorities.

#### **3.1. National laws and policies**

Domestic workers are the most neglected labour force in India (Bhattacharjee & Goswami, 2019). Though steps have been taken by the government to provide necessary

rights, protections and recognition to domestic workers, they continue to remain excluded from the purview of labour laws (Neetha, 2021). Many policies have been framed by the government in consultation with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and various stakeholders, but only some have been officially notified and implemented. In 2009, the Ministry of Labour and Employment formulated a draft National Policy for Domestic Workers to provide nationwide recognition of rights and access to social security. This policy still awaits approval and implementation. Domestic workers are excluded from various legislative frameworks, but initiatives are being taken to address their grievances nationwide, including Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh.

Many attempts have been made to regulate domestic work, including the inclusion of domestic workers in the Child Labour Act and the Unorganised Social Security Act. In 2008, the National Commission of Women drafted the Domestic Workers Bill to address exploitation, especially of live-in workers. A task force on domestic work was set up by the Ministry of Labour with ILO's leadership, developing a draft national policy emphasising labour rights, social security, registration, skill development, and grievance redressal. The policy advocates for domestic workers' rights to dignity, fair wages, voice, and career progression. It aims to integrate domestic workers into existing labour laws and social schemes, with the government responsible for necessary interventions. The RSBY health scheme was extended to domestic workers on a pilot basis, and the policy was under consideration before 2014. Inclusion of domestic workers in the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2013 was achieved through campaigning, though mechanisms for redress are lacking. A key intervention was the inclusion of domestic work in the list of scheduled employment under the Minimum Wages Act, following directives to state governments, leading to coverage in most states before the rollout of new labour codes in 2020. Differences in sector definitions, wage calculations, and enforcement remain concerns across states.

### **3.2. State and local provisions**

The state and local government has developed legal measures for domestic workers, though coverage remains patchy. Uttar Pradesh enacted the Uttar Pradesh Domestic Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 2010. The Bareilly Municipal Corporation drafted a policy in 2017 that remains in the proposal stage. Neither measure has been officially notified or implemented. However, the state and local provisions along with proposed policies are described below.

State legislation was notified on 8 December 2010. The Act covers workers engaged in various households, including private residences, hostels, lodges, and guest houses. Bareilly's draft policy takes an informal approach. Describing the objectives of the policy, the preamble states that the workforce of domestic workers is growing due to urban migration, educational opportunities for women, and the break-up of the extended family.

State legislation sets out the Act's objectives. It applies to households employing ten or more domestic workers and to the owner, occupier, or management of such premises. Employers must obtain registration and may be penalized for hiring unregistered workers. There is also scope for worker registration. The Bareilly draft policy identifies three types of domestic worker: live-in, live-out, and part-time. (Kundu, 2008) (Bhattacharjee & Goswami, 2019) (Neetha, 2021)

### **4. Rights and protections in Bareilly**

Domestic workers in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh should work in a safe environment and receive guaranteed minimum wages. Even when they worked or lived on previous employers' premises, protection against forced labour was vital. Domestic workers

should receive appointment letters that outlined the terms and conditions of their employment. Registration of domestic workers with the state helped them access further benefits. They should be enrolled in social security schemes endorsed by the state government, including life and health insurance coverage, old-age pensions, maternity benefits, and children's education assistance. Employers must ensure their domestic workers' safety, health, and hygiene while travelling to and from work, at the workplace, and at home. Safety measures included safe transportation, safeguards against harassment and violence, access to adequate toilets and potable water, and rest periods. Lastly, domestic workers required an effective, timely grievance redressal mechanism to ensure that their rights were respected and to seek remedies for violations.

#### **4.1. Work environment and wage protection**

Work environment, like other aspects of domestic work, reflects the social position of the workforce. Domestic workers in Bareilly pursue one or more jobs with no legal attachment to families. They usually work in ill-lit and unsanitary conditions, which expose them to metal dust, hair, chemicals, fumes, and household vermin. Wages and other work conditions are fixed by the families who employ them. Workers face stigmatisation and social ostracism; expectations of an informal work relationship hinder the formation of a formal or written contract. Pay is seldom adequate. It is even less of a living wage and frequently arrives late. Workers are often compelled to hold multiple employments as there are many households seeking domestic help and the number of job seekers far exceeds the number of jobs available. Workers' earnings are subject to arbitrary variation by families. Despite a rapid rise in household demand for help, remunerations rarely keep pace. Barriers such as the absence of a formal workplace and dependency on family goodwill mean workers receive no health or leaves benefits.

The residence of the family that engages domestic work is a prime factor in the choice of employment. Housekeeping jobs are more common in urban households than in rural ones, and the higher demand in towns is fulfilled by migration from villages. Urban workers tend to avoid migration towards more distant cities such as Delhi. Movement remains concentrated within the district of Bareilly, as commuting on foot or by bicycle is still feasible. Urban journeys are routinely made on cycle-rickshaws, which charge roughly INR 10.00 for a one-way trip. Families often maintain several homes in different locations; circular itineraries between these locations facilitate job-seeking. People in Bareilly frequently change occupation; willingness to switch jobs helps workers seek better remuneration (Kundu, 2008). Full-time workers seeking to change occupation may simply stop going to one family and begin providing service to another. Rural employment patterns pay homage to informal domestic assistance. Households from neighbourhood villages invite assistance, and local preferences are sometimes tangled with embedded caste sensitivities.

#### **4.2. Registration, contracts, and social security**

Domestic workers form a large part of the workforce in Bareilly. They look after children, do household work, run errands, and take care of the elderly. Owing to their vulnerability, domestic workers are widely exploited. They perform their work in insecure conditions, without written contracts or social security. Wages, working hours, weekly off days, and other conditions are set unilaterally by the employers—a situation further aggravated by the low bargaining power of workers.

For the registration of domestic workers in Bareilly, specific instructions were issued by the UP government on 12 December 2016 (Neetha, 2021). Despite this, there is a

lack of awareness among both workers and employers regarding registration, which leads to the exclusion of domestic workers from benefits of the Vishakha guidelines. Workers are not covered under any accidental death or health insurance scheme.

### **4.3. Safety, health, and grievance redressal**

Domestic work involves complex activities, usually performed in the employer's home, that include cleaning, cooking, child care, and elder care. Domestic workers attend to an employer's household either full- or part-time (Bhattacharjee & Goswami, 2019). Most of them are young, poorly educated, and unskilled. They are considered informal workers, with limited bargaining power, and work for low pay under poor conditions. Their dignity is rarely respected, and they are considered inferior to people with other jobs. Even in urban areas, domestic workers often do not know their rights or who to ask for help. Workers often migrate from nearby rural areas to the more urbanized Bareilly metropolis, leading to urban demand in new urban spaces.

Globally, millions of domestic workers are employed in agricultural, industrial, and urban settings. They work in homes as skilled and unskilled laborers, with low pay and poor working conditions, and many, especially women, are subjected to violence, including sexual violence. Formal recognition of domestic work is often lacking, and many workers are excluded from labor laws and vulnerable to exploitation, leading to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).

## **5. Socio-economic factors affecting Bareilly's domestic workers**

Domestic workers in Bareilly face barriers imposed by socio-economic factors. Education and awareness are low among employers and workers alike. Consequently, various state laws and development schemes targeting women escape notice. The socio-political climate adds another layer of complexity. In the city, decreased demand for migrant labourers has dampened expectations regarding emergency employment. Limited funds also block access to machinery that could generate alternative livelihoods. Coupled with poor health, these challenges aggravate domestic workers' socio-economic status (Bhattacharjee & Goswami, 2019). They remain dependent on contractors who exploit them for profit (Kundu, 2008).

Gender discrimination, fragmentation within familial structures, and traditional views on gender-related roles dissuade female workers and their families from taking initiatives that would increase control over domestic workers' safety and status. As such, strict regulation of household occupations is necessary to safeguard dignity, safety, and work-life balance.

### **5.1. Education and awareness**

Education has both positive and negative impacts on the social status of domestic workers for a variety of reasons. There is a greater emphasis on education in urban India than in rural areas. Illiteracy is the biggest hurdle for the poor to get an education, especially for women. A daily wage of 300 to 500 rupees can only feed a household of some size; hence, dependence on children's wages is compounded by ill health or the loss of a job. Workers aspiring for government jobs do not favour any other engagement, domestic work included; the next available option is to seek out employment in other households.

Even though the government implements various labour laws, social protection is lacking for the informal sector. Several efforts are directed primarily at raising awareness about the necessity and significance of education, indicating that something must be done to strengthen such initiatives (Bhattacharjee & Goswami, 2019).

## **5.2. Gender and family dynamics**

Domestic workers in Bareilly live in a patriarchal society. Males have significant power and overall authority during the life cycle. Their roles and responsibilities shape their economic position, mobility, and decision-making. Females are usually subject to the authority of either their parents or husbands. The decision to migrate to a city is usually made by males. Females need permission and take on household task (Krishnan & Subramaniam, 2017). Domestic work is not regarded as a respectable form of activity for young married women.

The gender dynamics of movement into domestic work vary. Most young unmarried girls starting their working lives are not sent into domestic work. Urban families prefer arranged marriages—these contribute to the tendency for young couples to remain in the protective enclosure of parental homes for longer (Kundu, 2008).

## **5.3. Migration and urban demand**

In Bareilly, migration from surrounding rural areas occurs for several reasons, including seasonal work, marriage, or family. Rural distress, urban core demand, and better employment options in urban areas drive a significant share of migration to metropolitan centres, including Shimla, Delhi, Ghaziabad, Moradabad, and Saharanpur. Migration, while beneficial, introduces new vulnerabilities. It disrupts social networks and leads to new forms of exploitation, especially for women and children (S Betancourt et al., 2013). Pattnaik describes the gendered vulnerabilities of migrants due to a lack of awareness about rights and absence of non-discriminatory social security benefits and legal protections.

## **6. Challenges and gaps in implementation**

Most of the labour laws are either not enforced properly or have inadequate infrastructure for enforcement of such existing laws. The instances of violation of rights are numerous but there is hardly any action taken by the state agencies to ensure compliance. Such violations persist despite statutory compliance requirements because the enforcement machinery on the ground remains ineffective (Kundu, 2008). The domestic work sector is highly informal in nature and is characterized by the presence of a large number of part-time and full-time domestic workers. This is that the worker, their services are not sought on a regular basis do not get benefit from various social security schemes as the registration of such work is usually done on the basis of part of full-time domestic work. The current status of domestic work, this implies that the majority of domestic works remain unregistered and therefore they do not enjoy any of the social security benefits provided to the workers in this sector (Neetha, 2021). There is also an increased tendency towards dual earning in many families owing to liberalization and modernization of the economy, which has bolstered domestic work as a viable source of both income and employment. The status of a domestic worker is further complicated by attitudes of their own families. People often regard them as an inferior in status compared to a typical white-collar job. Family attitudes towards workers further increase the vulnerability of domestic workers working in urban areas.

### **6.1. Enforcement and monitoring**

In India, no machinery exists to enforce and monitor the rights recognised for domestic workers. Central and state governments document policies, with states widely initiating programmes. However, dedicated institutions to fulfil these measures are absent. Therefore, implementation occurs in a haphazard manner. For Bareilly, extensive government policies and protections feature in the laws, but no legislative

framework regulates domestic work. The only existing ordinance outlines a mechanism for workers in the unorganised sector to complain before a nodal officer when basic rights are violated. Complaints are rare, both in Bareilly and elsewhere, drawing attention to the limited awareness of the law, its provisions, or accessible avenues for raising problems (Neetha, 2021).

Domestic workers in Bareilly fall outside the parameters of existing rights, making these regulations ineffective. Since the town remains part of the informal economy, numerous social protections customary for workers in other sectors do not apply. Moreover, family-based demand for domestic workers has surged in the last decade, brought attention to the sector, and enhanced protections for workers in terms of wages and conditions. Nonetheless, Bareilly has embraced domestic work within the private, informal economy, and familial arrangements prevail among nearby routes for access. Parents, brothers, and maternal uncles source recommendations to establish initial links. Consequently, families lack access to enforcement mechanisms (Bhattacharjee & Goswami, 2019).

## **6.2. Informal status and exploitation**

Every country recognizes the importance of labour laws and regulations to protect workers and regulate their employment terms. However, in India, most domestic workers find themselves completely left out of the legal framework that governs the workplace. The lack of formal recognition pushes domestic workers into an informal status, which makes them vulnerable to exploitation by employers. This informal status is further aggravated by a lack of education and awareness regarding the rights, privileges, laws, and legislation pertaining to domestic workers and the constitution of India in general.

In Bareilly, only a few workers are aware of or have access to any work-related benefits and protections set out by the laws of India. In fact, a few interviews conducted during the study revealed that several low-income households are unaware that their household chores can be considered work and, consequently, that the person performing such duties can legally be recognized as a worker entitled to duties, privileges, and rights. Most low-income families accept domestic work as a form of unpaid labour or household responsibility rather than an informal employment option (Kundu, 2008). This situation, along with other socio-economic factors such as gender, educational background, and familial duties, restricts domestic workers from effective representation regarding their demands in Bareilly (Bhattacharjee & Goswami, 2019).

## **6.3. Role of families and employers**

The interplay between domestic workers and their families often mirrors that between workers and their employers. In a hierarchical and patriarchal society like India, vulnerable women find themselves subject not only to workplace exploitation, but also to familial pressure, control, and harassment. Although Bareilly allows some degree of mobility, women—especially the young—still face intense family scrutiny. Many women workers report supportive or benevolent families that actively protect them. Some families view girls as a liability, blindly prefer boys, and see paid work as a sin. The mother-daughter bond is especially precious. Familial positions, values, nature of jobs, and the respect accorded to different work in the community affect Bareilly families. Pressures of economic hardship, ignorance, and inadequate social security compel many workers to continue despite threats, even to life.

## **7. Community voices and case studies**

Domestic workers play a crucial role in society. Unfortunately, the pandemic has further aggravated their plight due to lack of awareness of law, policy, and social

protection. They have been excluded from fundamental labour rights and provisions like minimum wage and employment-contract rule.

Some case studies from Bareilly illustrate the distinction between rural and urban areas. In rural scenarios, even the mere mention of domestic work is taboo, and young girls are actively married off. Conversely, in urban scenarios, young girls are permitted to work. Transporting female domestic workers from rural to urban locations occurs, but these young rural girls are generally discouraged from working outside their villages. As a result, these individuals still cover the same 'rural' distance within the urban setting. (Neetha, 2021)

## **8. Pathways to better protection**

Domestic workers in India require better support and information from the government and various stakeholders. The implementation of existing rights and protections needs improvement. To enhance the situation, several pathways are recommended: (i) modification of laws and policies, (ii) increasing awareness of rights among domestic workers and families, and (iii) strengthening institutions dealing with domestic employment (Neetha, 2021).

Existing laws, policies, and guidelines for better protection of domestic workers in Bareilly need modification to keep pace with emerging challenges. These include increasing informal and unrecognised employment, migrant workers, additional state and local provisions, and increasing family responsibilities impacting work conditions. Without regular updates, the need and significance of protection mechanisms reduce. With minor modifications, existing national guidelines on protection of domestic work supply on most relevant pointers. The emphasis can also move towards formalising existing provisions and policies in Bareilly and similarly situated locations.

In Bareilly, many workers, families, and employer-companies lack awareness about existing rights and protections. Domestic workers are mostly unrecognised and treated as unskilled workers. Even ordinances, where introduced, lose significance without awareness and hence compliance is also limited. Greater awareness across all stakeholders is crucial in increasing understanding of the sector in policies, legalities, and regulatory needs. Mechanisms for raising awareness need to be implemented on a broader scale.

The institutions involved in the protection of domestic workers in Bareilly and Uttar Pradesh such as central, state, and local municipal authorities and agencies either lack the necessary personnel and infrastructure or experience poor coordination and linkages among various departments. Establishing linkages with agencies routinely interacting with such workers, such as state insurance departments involved in sanctioning the Life Insurance Scheme for the Hand culture Cultivators scheme, is necessary to fill the vacuum for such workers and enhance the implementation of existing rights.

### **8.1. Policy recommendations**

In light of the ongoing gaps in compliance with existing laws and related policy frameworks pertaining to domestic workers in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, the following measures are recommended for better enforcement and adherence to statutory provisions.

(i) All national and state laws governing the sector must be disseminated widely through low-cost, easily accessible, uncomplicated audio-visual and print mediums, pinpointing specific rights for unorganised workers in general and domestic workers in particular. Campaigns can be organised by women's rights groups that are active in awareness-raising, but female workers' groups unaffiliated to mainstream women's

movements would also reach unorganised labourers better. Unorganised workers typically disseminate information themselves when it reaches them; circulation of such literature via one of these networks would intensify understanding and interest. Mass education about the minimum wage is critical alongside wider rights, as employers often cite ignorance of this law as justification for fraudulent contractual arrangements and payment of lower than legally entitled amounts.

(ii) Priority needs to be accorded to channeling greater governmental resources – financial, infrastructure, institutional, and personnel – towards implementing and monitoring rights and protections. Relevant state departments have limited staff and capacity to attend effectively to the considerable sector-wide task set before them.

(iii) Extensive self-regulating workers' organisations are a precondition for securing domestic workers' rights and entitlements, as their informal status renders reliance on state institutions for documentation and protection impractical. Such organisations may draw upon the experiences of earlier initiatives targeted at agricultural and construction labour. Women's rights groups can assist with the foundational stages of ascertainment, circulation of rights information, and initiation of collective action.

## **8.2. Rights education and empowerment**

References show the need for rights education and empowerment as vital components for better protection of domestic workers in Bareilly. Writing in question–answer format helps clarify both concepts. In Adevisit, the conditions of domestic workers in Bareilly are described as serious and concerning. Sahamati believes it is necessary to minimize these issues by continuing awareness programs. When equipped with complete information about the rights and procedures inscribed in national acts, laws, and policies, workers become conscious of their rights and can identify situations that infringe upon those rights. A rights education program can thus provide knowledge about fundamental rights under the Constitution of India—particularly Articles 14 (equality before the law), 21 (right to life and personal liberty), and 23 (prohibition of traffic in human beings)—as well as basic rights enumerated in important acts like the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970, the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, the Maternity Benefit Act 1961 and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal Act) 2013. Workers are often uninformed not only about their rights but also about the available legal provisions for enforcing those rights. Knowledge of both rights and the means to remedy violations can enhance their sense of security. In addition, a proper contractual agreement detailing duties, job timings, wages, and other parameters should be drafted and signed to prevent exploitation (Neetha, 2021). Empowerment especially for female domestic workers—can lead to economic independence, enhanced self-respect and dignity, and greater control over one's life and domestic matters. Integrated programs that provide training opportunities subsidized by the government and facilitate easier access to credit from financial institutions can enable action. Skills like tailoring, beautician services, or household cooking that can be pursued alongside domestic work offer valuable options. Training courses, loans to buy sewing machines, or skills tests with certification can all contribute. The economic and asset-building benefits flowing from livelihood advancement help foster independent thinking. School education coupled with vocational training for young girls, along with further improved conditions for domestic work, could generate similar positive impacts. Once established, these benefits tend to reinforce independent thought and, over time, help uplift families.

## **8.3. Strengthening institutions**

The focus on Bareilly's domestic workers was encouraged by the presence of the

Bareilly Domestic Workers' Union (BDWU), which was initiated in 2015 by the Girijana Sangha at Mawaitha, a Bilari block hamlet. Although the trade union focuses mainly on the livelihood of agricultural and unskilled workers, it undertook a survey of domestic workers in the districts of Daysa and Arjunpur of Bareilly at the instance of the Delhi-based domestic workers' union. The BDWU preparatory committee was initiated in Delhi in 2018 with the help of the Domestic Workers' Federation to encourage the formation of the Bareilly trade union. On account of these associations, it was possible to respond to the situation of domestic workers in Bareilly, although considerable gaps of information still remain.

In the absence of specific policies addressing the issues of domestic workers in Bareilly, it is opportune to examine the existing direct and indirect provisions and formulate measures that may offer them greater protection (Neetha, 2021).

## **9. Conclusion**

India defines domestic workers in various ways at national, state, and local levels. Nationally, definitions differ among relevant legislation, and some states have yet to adopt domestic worker bills. Nevertheless, Bareilly contains important examples of domestic worker rights and violations. The work environment for domestic workers in Bareilly remains problematic. Some workers enjoy safe premises but lack written contracts. Payment delays, especially after festivals, and unjust deductions for damaged items are common. Compliance with the minimum wage for unskilled labour is rare, and many workers receive significantly lower payments for urban cleaning, cooking, and childcare. Non-registered workers receive no benefits, and safety measures like gloves are uncommon.

With its sizeable domestic workforce, society tends to overlook the need for worker protection in Bareilly. Education and awareness about rights remain limited, particularly since Bareilly surpasses India's literacy average. Gender dynamics further exacerbate challenges. Workers often consider domestic work a familial obligation rather than an official occupation. Widespread male migration after the pandemic has heightened urban demand for female domestic work, yet workers remain unaware of employment contracts. Socio-economic obstacles impede implementation of constitutional and statutory rights. Legislation facilitates children's school attendance, yet parents still incline toward early marriage and associated work. Child labour persists and is common in slums. Challenging family issues like divorce, polygamy, and domestic violence also drive early engagement in domestic work.

The national policy for unorganised workers, deployed primarily in rural areas, offers limited assistance for the primarily urban domestic workforce in Bareilly. Socio-economic and institutional frameworks restrict implementation of rights within the domestic sphere and concentrate enforcement at action centres like residential colleges.

Domestic workers in Bareilly underscore the disparity between constitutional rights and socio-legal realities. Workers frequently express gratitude toward families for employment, suggesting deep-rooted non-recognition of domestic work as formal labour. Besides state-level bills, the need for policies on children's rights and early career engagement adds further complexity.

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