***PRESS RELEASE***

***Job Losses is a Temporary Phase: IMPRI Study***

 A webinar to discuss the findings of one of the largest headcount telephonic-survey titled byinterviewing 3121 households across 50+ cities across the country byImpact and Policy Research Institute (IMPRI)*, Delhi*was held on May, 27 2020. The survey was conducted during 7th May to 17th May 2020.  This webinar was attended by more than 500 participants from different part of the world and deliberation made by some well-known scholars such as Prof. Chris Silver, Prof. Ruth Steiner, Dr Abhinav Alakshendram, University of Florida, USA,  Prof. Wendy Olsen (University of Manchester, UK), Mr. Sandeep Chachra, ActionAid, Dr. Arjun Kumar, IMPRI and Dr. Soumyadip Chattopadhay, IMPRI and Visva Bharati.

The study findings are:

  Eight out of 10 casual daily wage labourers and 6 out of 10 salaried workers reported unemployed or lost their employment during lockdown due to closure of business/construction activities and inability to visit their workplaces.

  Six out of 10 respondents reported that unawareness and congestion are the major constraints in ensuring social distancing and hygiene practices during the lockdown and the pandemic.

  Coverage of different government’s schemes is far from being universal and lack of awareness and eligibility are the two major impediments

  Many respondents reported that they are not eligible for the programmes introduced by the government.

  More than 50% of the respondents are worried about earning a livelihood and losing work and are anxious about how they would feed their families and themselves.

  About 6 out of 10 respondents demanded free ration after the lockdown ends.

  Eight out 10 respondents seems to resume their work after the lockdown end reveals the current livelihood loss is a temporary phenomenon. However, this will depend to a large extent how the government, business and people respond.

Key policy takeaways suggested are:

  Local Periodic data are essential for the pandemic preparedness and response;

  New urban agenda focusing on dynamic urban planning processes and empowering the city governments;

  An urban job assurance programme as a longer-term policy option to address the looming economic crisis;

  Plugging the gaps and expanding the public assistance programs; Rights of the CityMakers to the City.

Prof. Olsen said “we need an extremely localised solution for catering to the needs of the citymakers who comprise over 140 million citizens. She highlighted the need for free ration, advance wages and assured food supply for each of them to alleviate the sufferings of the people. Prof Olsen pointed out the need for a true political will. Health insurance, basic amenities, coordination between local governments is needed, the Urban Local Bodies need requisite finance, and local capacity needs to be strengthened.

Mr Chachra pointed out that while providing immediate solutions the long outstanding call of informal workers, decent wages, workers’ rights should not be diluted and further the years of labour struggles. The labour laws cannot go to abeyance and neither should social security and protection (400 million in India, and 2 billion people around the world).

Prof. Ruth Steiner said “A large section of Indian population is usually ignored from the policy challenges when a nation is shutdown, how do we take note of the way they meet their basic amenities. We need to understand the importance of public transport to access goods and services, draw lessons for the future”.

Dr Arjun Kumar said “Government programs like the Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Yojana being harnessed to provide intermittent relief to the poor. However, per person allocation of monetary support is very low, and for schemes like *'Thalinomics’* (for ensuring a balanced diet) to succeed, assured assistance of “*A $ a Day*” (around rupees 2000) is needed. It was expected that the government is the guardian and its welfare schemes must be accessible for all, while simultaneously ensuring the reach of all”.

Dr. Balwant Singh Mehta (IMPRI & IHD), and Dr Simi Mehta (IMPRI), the study Co-ordinators commented “The study findings show that urban informal worker was mainly engaged in low paid casual daily wage work and self-employment activities such as street vendors, and only a few involved in salaried jobs. Therefore, the lockdown has a huge impact on their livelihood as 6 out of 10 workers have lost their livelihood. However, the most interesting part is over three-fourth of them reported that they will resume the work once the lockdown will be lifted. The study clearly demonstrates that prolonged lockdown has badly disrupted the livelihood of urban informal workers. Therefore, in case of any such adversity in future, adequate measures need to be kept handy. Relief measures must be provided on a war footing keeping in mind the prevailing realities and understanding how stressful the situation becomes for all, especially the lives and livelihood of the CityMakers.”

Assistant Coordinators and senior researchers Ms Anshula Mehta and Ms Ritika Gupta (IMPRI) remarked that, “The study reflects the unprecedented sufferings, anxieties and perceptions of the CityMakers during COVID-19 and lockdown in a candid manner. It reveals ground-level stories and realities not captured in any other survey. This study presents ample scope for taking corrective measures through evidence-based governance in both, the short and the long term.”