



Mains Practice Question

Q. “The needs of migrants should be addressed through a concerted national policy.” In the light of the statement critically examine the utility of One Nation One Ration Card scheme. (250 words)

29 May, 2020 GS Paper 2 Social Justice

References: [One Nation One Card \(ONORC\) scheme](#), [Policy Watch- ONORC](#), [National Food Security Act](#)

Approach

- In the introduction write the need of a concerted national policy like ‘One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC)’ and explain its objective.
- As the question demands critical examination of the utility of ONORC scheme, the benefits and the associated drawbacks/challenges should be included in the answer.
- In the first part, discuss the benefits emanating from ONORC for all citizens in general and migrants in particular.
- In the second part of the answer, examine the challenges associated with the scheme.
- Give a way forward and conclude by mentioning the need for other concerted national policies.

Introduction

- Indian states are unable to provide basic necessities like food, housing, health, sanitation, education, transport and skilling to migrant workers who play an important part in the urban economies.
- This highlights the pressing need for a concerted policy to secure and protect rights of all migrant workers.
- In this context, the ‘One Nation One Ration Card’ (ONORC) scheme has been devised to provide portability of food security benefits all across the nation.
- The ONORC scheme is all about inter-state portability of ration cards. It enables the beneficiaries who are taking food grains under the Public Distribution System (PDS) to access the same benefits if they happen to migrate from one part of the country to the other, in a seamless manner.

Body

Benefits Emanating From ONORC scheme

- **Interoperability of Ration Card:** The scheme will allow any PDS recipient to use their ration cards at any PDS shop across the country.
 - The poor migrant workers will be able to buy subsidised rice and wheat from any ration shop in the country but for that their ration cards must be linked to Aadhaar.
- **Empowering Consumers:** The scheme will give the beneficiaries the opportunity to opt for the dealer of their choice. If any dealer misbehaves or misallocates, the beneficiary can switch to another Fair Price Shop (FPS) instantly.
- **Right to Food:** The enactment of the National Food Security Act, (NFSA) 2013 marks a paradigm shift in the approach to food security from welfare to the rights-based approach.

- The ONORC scheme will ensure that the right to food (a legal entitlement) is secured to all the people including migrants and no poor person is deprived of subsidised grains.
- **Integrating the Country:** The ONORC scheme will add to the integration of the country as wherever a person goes, he will be able to get food grains at that place. This scheme will further help in adding to the nutritional values of the poor consumers.

Challenges Associated with the Scheme

- **Domicile-Based Social Sector Schemes:** PDS is a domicile-based scheme and thus it restricts people to access government social security, welfare and food entitlements at their place of origin. It needs serious rethinking before making 'ONOR Card' portable.
- **Logistical Issues:** An FPS receives the monthly quota of products strictly in accordance with the number of people assigned to it.
 - The ONORC, when fully operational, would disrupt this practice, as some FPSs may have to cater to more numbers of cards even as others cater to less, owing to migration of people.
- **Cost of Additional Food Grain:** One of the apprehensions mentioned by few states is the cost of additional food grain to be supplied to the migrant workers.
- **Logistical Issues:** An FPS receives the monthly quota of products strictly in accordance with the number of people assigned to it.
 - The ONORC, when fully operational, can disrupt this practice, as some FPSs may have to cater to more numbers of ration cards and some to less, owing to migration of people.
- **Technological Challenges:** Since the scheme is based on technology, the government may face some technical challenges in the functioning of the scheme.
 - Like the fears of exclusion are applied for migrant workers, as the fingerprints of people engaged in construction labour and domestic work may change or fade and may not match with the ones entered in Aadhaar.

Way Forward

- The One Nation One Ration Card scheme should also include access to health and other welfare schemes.
- A dedicated e-commerce platform ONORC may resolve the challenge of logistical issues.
- Social auditing must be made mandatory to measure the performance of ONORC.
- The Unorganised Sector Social Security Act, 2008, had drawn up a system of documenting informal sector workers through a system of welfare boards. In order to get credible data regarding the migrant workers, this must be implemented in letter and spirit.

Conclusion

Thus, a concerted national policy such as ONOR Card scheme, a national migration policy, is the need of the hour which will ensure a unified service delivery system based on technology and identity.