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Social Audit to Track Construction Workers' Benefits

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- The Labour Ministry has issued the draft framework for the social audit on the implementation of the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996 (BOCW).
- Social Audits of the implementation of the BOCW Act are being carried out after the directions of the Supreme Court in its March 18, 2018 judgment on a petition from National Campaign Committee for Central Legislation on Construction Labour (NCC-CL). The apex court had also noted that the BOCW would be useless without accountability in registration efforts.
- The construction industry is India's second largest employer, with estimates suggesting that there are between five and seven crore workers in the sector, of whom less than half are registered.

Objectives of Social Audit

- The objective of the social audit is to check if construction worker welfare boards are registering workers and also to weed out non-workers registered illegally.
- The objective of Social Audit is to make sure that construction workers and their children are getting benefits they are entitled to under BOCW Act, 1996 like the scholarship for children, pension, and maternity benefits,

Building and Other Construction Worker Act, 1996

- The 1996 Act is meant to regulate the employment and conditions of service of building and other construction workers and to provide for their safety, health, and welfare.
- The law mandates that any construction activity that engages more than 10 workers must follow the guidelines set by it.
- The Act provides for the establishment of state welfare boards to counsel and assist workers, fixed hours of work and ensure regular payment to the workers.
- The boards also provide identity cards to the workers upon registration that may be used for availing benefits.

- Under the Act, 1% of the total amount of every construction project worth over Rs 10 lakh, whether private or public, must be submitted to the Labour Department as 'welfare cess'.
- This money can be utilized for various schemes meant for labour welfare such as scholarships for labourers' children, compensation for families in case of death or physical handicap, low-cost housing, among others.

Social Audit

- Social audit is a democratic process where the concerned community demands information and verification from agencies in a systematic manner, thus ensuring/leading to public accountability.
- The process of social audit is used to establish whether benefit meant for an individual or community has reached them or not.