
The beedi making industry is an important element of the rural economy of our State. It has got a vast employment potential. It provides regular and seasonal employments. The industry has the unique scope for providing employment not only at industrial premises but also at the residence of the workmen. The number of beedi workers engaged in both the sectors has been estimated around 15 lacs. The industry is concentrated in some of the districts while it is scattered in the others, the workers are mostly unorganized and as such, they have very little bargaining capacity in respect of determining their wages with the large and organized Beedi Barons. They are downtrodden economically, socially and physically. Due to the very nature of the industry, the workers are subjected to various occupational health hazards.

For ameliorating the conditions of the Beedi workers, the Government has fixed Minimum Wages in the employment on the one hand and has enacted the Beedi & Cigar Workers’ (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966 for regularizing the conditions of their services on the other hand. This Act, besides providing for licensing of the industrial premises, aims at issuance of Identity cards to the workers and securing certain welfare facilities to them. These are fixed working hours, overtime allowance, interval for rest, limited spread over, weekly off day, annual leave with wages, sanitation, ventilation, canteen, creche etc. Simultaneously, the Government of India has enacted the Beedi Workers Welfare Fund Act in 1976 and some welfare schemes have been prescribed therein. For availing the benefits under this scheme, a worker must have a valid identity card. Several authorities including officers and inspectors of the Directorate were empowered to issue such identity cards under the Welfare Fund Act mentioned above. Under this Act, Identity Cards are to be issued to each of the workers engaged in the industrial premises and to the head of the family in case of home workers. The estimated number of beedi workers (Industrial and Home workers) is around 15,61,533 in this state.