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Report by Mr Ashish Ku Sahu Senior Manager – Strategic Team – Mahashakti Foundation

Organised by -

MAHASHAKTI FOUNDATION ,FOCUS ODISHA FOUNDATION AND MIGRATION WATCH INDIA

REPORT OF WEBINAR ON

Responding to the Emerging Issues & Challenges on Migration crisis and Exploring Opportunities for Livelihood & Social Security

Introduction

The Covid-19 lockdowns led to the reverse migration of millions of inter-state migrant workers from big cities and industrial hubs back to their native villages. Unable to secure income, food or a safe place to stay during the ongoing pandemic and the ensuing nationwide lockdown, and with public transport completely shut across the country, millions of migrant workers were left with little choice but to walk hundreds of kilometres in the unforgiving heat. This story became a burning topic, as many workers on their way back home was crushed by trucks on the road or hit by trains on railway track. What we witnessed was heart wrenching stories of these already impoverished. After the government showed some interest and started running the Shramik Special Trains lacs of migrant workers came back to their home state. But the predicaments continued. The struggle for income and food continued. After the Unlock started in the country, many migrant workers wanted to return to the cities and work. However, there is now an atmosphere of fear and apprehension amongst these workers. They are concerned about the rising number of Covid-19 cases in the cities. Even those who have jobs waiting for them in the cities are unwilling to return thereof, without adequate assurances from their employers about accommodation, wage security, healthcare, and arrangements for travel to return home in case of another lockdown. The mass movement of migrants back to the cities may now create some huge problems for them, so their personal interest and health has to be safeguarded on priority.

Speakers and their thoughts on this Webinar:

Jugal Kishore Patnaik

Mr. Patnaik welcomed all the guests and participants present in the webinar. He highlighted the data on the migrant workers arrived in the state of Odisha. The data gave an insight about the difficult employability situations the migrants are facing in these unprecedented times.

Sudarshan Chhotoray

Mr. Sudarshan was the moderator for all the sessions of the webinar. He started with the areas of Corona hotspots where most of the migrants had arrived and suggested to prioritise such areas on short term basis. He brought out his concerns on the loss of remittance services which acted as a good support to the migrants.

Sandeep Chachra

Since Lockdown 1.0, Mr. Chachra has been actively involved in facilitating relief and rehabilitation opportunities to the migrant workers. He is an Executive Director for ActionAid Association and through it he has supported more than 37 lacs migrant workers in these grim times. He addressed this migrant crisis as a mammoth problem for Indian economy and suggested to bring out structural changes to tackle it. He emphasised on reviving Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) as an immediate solution. He explained how bringing up new opportunities under MGNREGA could be a short-term address to the migrant distress. He proposed to bring out a dignified wage rate through MGNREGA and new opportunities should be made available to needy migrants without any kind of discriminations on the basis of political or social status.

Gopal Mishra

One of the shortest speeches of this discussion was delivered by Mr. Mishra. He was very brief and suggested to search for new opportunities on sectoral basis at this time of pandemic. According to him, new job creation could be very much helpful to address the migrant distress.

Shaonli Chakroborty

Ms. Shaonli started her speech by highlighting the problems those are being faced by the marginalized communities. She raised her concerns for these communities as they have become the most vulnerable ones at this point of time. She was affirmative on the point that the safety, security and dignity of the migrants have been compromised to much extent and suggested that critical information exchange is the need of the hour. She advised to address the migrant crisis on the basis of three key principles:

- People Focused- Moving from virus centric reaction to people centric response.
- Gender and Equity- Interventions should be focused on equity and gender aspects.
- Work with what works- Working with existing partners, their actions and not duplicating is necessary.

She provided us with some of her lessons and implications through her personal experiences:

- Services have been delivered at scale with limited or no resources; need for contextual deepening of impact.
- Efforts and focus needs to be ranging from humanitarian relief and response to long term revival and resilience.
- Need sufficient engagement between govt., policy makers and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).
- Shift from Issue Focus to Solution Focus; no one actor or solution is enough, need multi stakeholder ecosystem approach.
- There should a special focus on programs linking source-destination- transit corridors.

Niranjan Sahoo

Mr. Sahoo started with highlighting the progressive works done by the Government of India (GoI) through some of its schemes such as PradhanMantri Rozgar Yojna (PMRY), housing schemes etc. He said that through PMRY the government has been able to create more than 1.2 billion-days of work. He brought our attention to the economic impact because of the migrant crisis and suggested for a national data pool for migrant workers. He explained us that with ongoing economic crisis and upcoming general state level elections, there is much possibility of a change in country's political landscape. He focussed on the need of policy level changes in different sectors (education, health, manufacturing etc.) to tackle such a pandemic situation.

Pratyush Panda

Mr. Pratyush being a CSR professional and heading the CSR vertical for an organization i.e. ACC Ltd., started his speech by sharing his experiences while helping more than 10,000 migrants with food, shelter and travel. With sharing his experiences, he tried to bring out some of the administrative level shortcomings while dealing with the migrant problem. He was a little bit sceptical over much dependency on MGNREGA, as according to him it couldn't be the only solution to deal with the employability problems of migrants but more avenues and options should be explored. Skill based opportunities should be explored and created for the migrants. He gave the example of "MoSahaya" app through which migrant population could be made aware of the new work opportunities.

Santosh Mishra

Mr. Santosh Mishra is a veteran in the development sector and has a good track record in dealing with the wage rights of migrant workers. He explained how the

middlemen have benefitted more than the workers in recent times and about the corruption of middle-agents in MGNREGA. Because of the corruption, many MGNREGA workers don't get their appropriate wages for their hard work. The lower wages and middlemen involvement have led to the lower income structure of most people in the migrant communities. He emphasized to control middlemen involvement in a stricter way so that in these problematic times workers could get most benefits from different governmental schemes.

Abha Mishra

Ms. Abha Mishra has a long experience in development sector and currently working as a state lead for United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for the state of Odisha. She tried to explain the need of immediate support to the migrant population. According to her the socio-economical interventions that was required to deal the migrant crisis could be divided into three categories; short term perspective, medium- and long-term perspectives. She highlighted some of the major interventions to tackle economic problems of migrants:

- Soft-loans should be provided to the MSMEs which have been most affected.
- SHGs should be made aware regarding different aspects of different income generating value-chains.
- Migrants should be encouraged for new entrepreneurship ventures in the fields of livestock, dairy and organic farming.
- Revitalising the rural economy is the need of the hour.

Md. Amin

Mr. Amin started explaining the need of a proper planning to generate livelihood opportunities for the migrants who lost their livelihoods due to the Pandemic. He added that special focus should be given to entitlements of migrants and suggested for a special administrative team to look after the wellbeing of the displaced migrants. There should be a proper coordination between the state governments at the migrant's destination point and that with the origination point. Lastly, he added that inclusive financial schemes could be a big support to revive the economy of migrant population.

William Stanley

Mr. Stanley has dedicated his life to fight for rights of tribal communities. He said that the migrants of the tribal communities have been worst affected during this pandemic situation. He emphasized that governments should introspect regarding their mistakes while dealing this crisis and should plan how to bring back those suffered migrants to their own place. He also suggested to form an advocacy group for migrant issues.

Biswajit Kanungo

Mr. Kanungo Started his speech by describing the importance of providing the migrants with rehabilitation and finding the root cause of their sufferings. He led his concerns on the unhygienic environment in which the migrants are forced to reside and regarding the education of their kids. He pointed out that it's of utmost importance to reach out to the migrant population with different skill based development programs.

Workshop Agenda -

Lead Presentation	Sri Sandeep Chachra Country Executive Director, ActionAid Association, Co-Chair-World Urban Campaign of UN-HABITAT
Guest Speaker	Sri Gopal Misra Sr. Journalist and Foreign Affairs Expert, New Delhi Ms. Shaonli Chakraborty COVID Action Collaborative, Bengaluru, Director- Wellbeing for Workforces and Gender
Expert View	Dr Niranjan Sahoo Senior Fellow, Observer - Research Foundation, Country's Leading THINKTANK Sri Pratyush Kumar Panda Head CSR - ACC Limited

Session2: Opportunities & Challenges in Rebuilding Livelihoods' for Migrant Workers

Speakers	Dr. Aurobindo Behera Retd IAS, Former Member-Board of Revenue, Odisha Ms. Abha Mishra State Office Head, UNDP -Odisha Sri Santosh Ku Mishra President - Mahashakti Foundation Sri Md N. Amin President, ADHIKAR
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Speakers	Sri Wiliam Stanley Social Activist, Visaskhapatnam Sri Biswajit Kanungo UTKAL ASSOCIATION MADRAS, Chennai
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Session3: Reaching out Migrants in Distress

Moderator	Sri Sudarshan Chhotaray Sr. Journalist, Convenor-Migration Watch India & Focus Odisha Foundation
Background Note	Sri Jugal Kishore Patnaik

ABOUT THE GUEST SPEAKERS



Mr. Sandeep Chachra

Mr. Sandeep Chachra is the Executive Director of ActionAid Association and is a social anthropologist by training. He is the Managing Editor of a leading global political economy journal on the Agrarian and work questions, called Agrarian South. Mr. Chachra also Co-Chairs the World Urban Campaign of UN-HABITAT.



Mr. Gopal Mishra

Mr. Mishra is a New Delhi-based Distinguished Journalist, Columnist on Foreign Affairs at Tehelka, is an author, media teacher and has been delivering lectures on political and current affairs within India and abroad. The newspapers he served include, Times of India, Gulf News and edited the television edition of the Wall Street Journal bulletins on the Indian television.



Dr. Niranjana Sahoo

Dr. Niranjana Sahoo is a Senior Fellow at Observer Research Foundation, a leading think tank in New Delhi. A recipient of Ford Asia Fellowship (2009) and Sir Ratan Tata Fellow (2010), Dr Sahoo currently serves a member for the Carnegie Rising Democracies Network, Washington, D.C. His forthcoming book is on Funding India's Democracy by Routledge, London.



Mr. Pratyush Panda

Mr. Panda heads the CSR department of ACC Limited, its subsidiary companies and ACC TRUST. His role is instrumental in creating long term CSR and Sustainability strategy for the Group Company, Establishing M&E tools and process for effective measurement of CSR outcomes and impacts. He is closely working with SDGs, UCN, GRI, UNGC to adopt globally accredited CSR & sustainability processes.



Dr. Aurobindo Behera

Dr Behera, a Retired IAS officer has served the state of Odisha in various capacities Collector, Revenue Divisional Commissioner, and Secretary to Chief Minister. He has also served for the Departments of Forest and Environment, ST and SC Development, Rural Development, Public Works Department, Water Resources Department etc. He was also Managing Director, Odisha State Disaster Management, Additional CMD, Industrial Development Corporation Odisha and Member, Board of Revenue.



Ms. Abha Mishra

Ms. Mishra is working as Stead Head in UNDP Odisha Office. She's engaged in action-based research and implementation experience in Community Development projects like Forest Management, Disaster Risk Reduction, Livelihood, Social Protection and Tribal Studies for the last 28 years and has worked with different NGOs & international Universities.



Ms. Shaloni Chakroborty

Ms. Chakroborty has over 17 years of experience in gender, environment and public health in India & 11 other countries. She has led an international program on women's workforce empowerment initiative in factories and rural communities. Currently, she's working as the Director of *Wellbeing for Workforces & Gender*. As a part of the COVID action collaborative, she is working on migrant collaborative actions and apparel industry response.



Mr. Santosh Kumar Mishra

Mr. Mishra, a retired OAS(1) is the President of the leading livelihood development organisation of Odisha - Mahashakti Foundation. He has more than 40 years of experience in the field of general administration rural development & SHG Bank linkage program. He severed with Govt Of Odisha for a long time under Panchayatiraj Department



Mr. Md. Amin

Mr. Amin is the Founder & CEO of Adhikaar- a State Level NGO engaged on sustainable livelihood promotion. In addition, he also is a veteran in the social development sector with an experience over three decades. He is one of the early votaries of microfinance movement in Odisha & holds certificates on credit delivery & recovery mechanism from Grameen Bank, Bangladesh and Havard Business School, Boston, USA.



Mr. William Stanley

Mr. Stanley is a Vishakapatnam based social activist who has devoted his career in community rights and community development work. Mr. Stanley has worked on poverty eradication, health, education, leadership, PRI, Skill building, environment, Technology, Climate Change, disaster preparedness and response, Covid-19 Resp Migrant Workers.



Mr. Sudarshan Chhotray

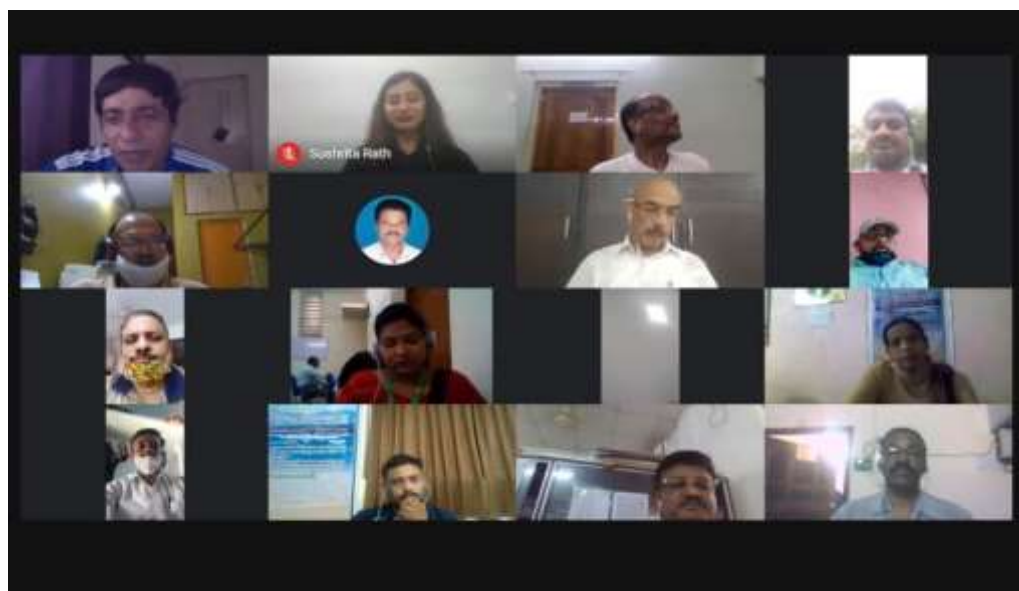
Mr. Chhotray is a Journalist since 1993 who has worked with leading Media houses in the Country. He Started his career with BLITZ Mumbai. And has worked for Humanscape, India Today, Tehelka, India Insight, Outlook and recently his by-lines are there in Firstpost.com, The Wire, News18 Network & International Publications like The New Humanitarian etc. He has also worked in Ajira Odisha, Aankhon Dekhi, AAJ TAK and ETC NEWS.



Mr. Jugal Kishore Pattnayak

Mr. Pattnayak is the co-founder of Odisha's leading livelihood development institution, Mahashakti Foundation. He's a pioneer in rural livelihoods development and creating employment opportunities for rural poor. He has an expertise in livelihood & cluster development, Promoting Farm and off farm producer Companies, SHG promotion, linkages & federation building, managing institutional development and relationships.

IMAGE GALLERY



www.migrationwatchindia.in

www.mahashaktifoundation.in

www.focusodisha.in

