



## Key Findings of Research on the Distress of Migrants

### CONTEXT

Covid-19 pandemic has battered the migrant community and exposed this vulnerable community to indescribable agony and distress. The pandemic that is raging around the world has unleashed cascading miseries on the migrant community which has always languished on the margins of the society with little public and government attention. With minimal social protection and access to welfare arrangements, the migrant community had to bear the worst brunt of the pandemic. The nationwide lockdown that was clamped down to arrest the spread of the virus turned out to be a terrible blow for the migrant population. Lacking jobs, money and food, millions of migrants were staring at scary uncertainty and a certain prospect of starvation. To make things even worse, the lock-down brought the public transportation system to a screeching halt and made it impossible for migrants to cross state borders on their way to their native places. Thousands were forced to begin the dangerous walk covering hundreds of miles back to their native places. Many died after collapsing on the roads in the scorching heat, several were killed in tragic accidents on roads and railway lines and hundreds stranded themselves under bridges, railway station compounds, at government-set-up transit points and along the highways with no energy and food to continue the long walk to their homes. Caritas India conducted the research to understand the severity of the distress of migrants who had to flee back to their native places because of the loss of livelihoods.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The rapid research covered 624 migrants (394 males, 228 females and 2 transgender) who had returned to their native villages/homes in the wake of the lock-down. Information was collected from these returnee migrants while they were either at their homes or isolation/quarantine places in their villages. An interview schedule on the platform of KoBoCollect app was used to collect information. Returnee migrants of 10 states (Telengana, Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Odisha) were contacted by the trained team. At least 50 returnee migrants were contacted in each of these ten states during the research that was conducted from 22 to 28 May 2020.

### MAJOR RESEARCH FINDINGS

- 141 migrants (22.6%) spent more than Rs. 5000 on their return journey to their native places, 100 (16.0%) migrants reported that their expenses on return journey was in the range of Rs. 3000-5000 and 90 migrants (14.4%) spent Rs. 2000-3000 on their return journey.
- 179 migrant workers (28.7%) said that they will not go for migratory labor and would stay back in the village, 195 migrants (31.3%) reported that they have not decided yet whether

to go for migratory labor and 200 migrants (32.1%) said that they will go back to the place from where they returned home after the pandemic is over and lock-down is lifted.

- 321 migrants (51.4%) said that their families have much less to eat due to the loss of work and 211 migrants (33.8%) said that they cannot afford to eat what they used to have before the pandemic. Only 61 migrants (9.8%) reported that the pandemic had no effect on the food availability of their families.
- 430 migrants (68.9%) said they need immediate support in the form of work/wage labor for their survival and 59 migrant workers (9.5%) said that they need food support immediately. 90 migrants (14.4%) said agriculture support as the immediate need to restart their lives.
- Of all the migrants who have children 167 migrants (46.4%) said that their children had to discontinue their schooling since they had to flee to their native places and 123 respondents (34.2%) informed that education of their children has become very difficult.
- 594 migrant workers (95.2%) said that they have lost all means of livelihood due to pandemic and 194 migrants (31.1%) said that they lost all their savings due to various expenses during the lock down and 66 migrants (10.6%) said that they lost their family members to the pandemic.
- Just 41 migrants (6.6%) have received work under MGNREGA after returning to their villages. Of these, 236 migrants (37.8%) don't have job cards for availing of the benefits of MGNREGA.
- 250 migrants (40.1%) reported that they have not received food supplies from PDS either because they don't have the ration card or they were not provided with the food supplies.
- 294 (47.1%) respondents said that they received no food or monetary support from anyone during their return journey, 35 migrants (5.6%) informed that they received some monetary support from government while 169 migrants (27.1%) informed that they had received food support during their return journey.
- 79 migrants (12.7%) had returned to their villages on foot, 230 migrants (36.9%) in private vehicles and 237 migrants (38.0%) returned to their villages by public vehicles. 10 migrants (1.6%) cycled back to their native places.
- It took 6-10 days for 101 migrants (16.2%) to travel back to home while for 20 migrants (3.2%) it took more than 20 days to reach home. 21 migrants (3.4%) returned home after travelling for 11 to 20 days. 482 migrants (77.2%) reached home back in 1-5 days.
- 323 migrants (51.8%) travelled more than 1000 kilometers to return home, 111 migrants (17.8%) travelled 500-1000 kilometers, 158 migrants (25.3%) travelled 100-500 kilometers and 32 migrants (5.1%) travelled less than 100 kilometers to return home.

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