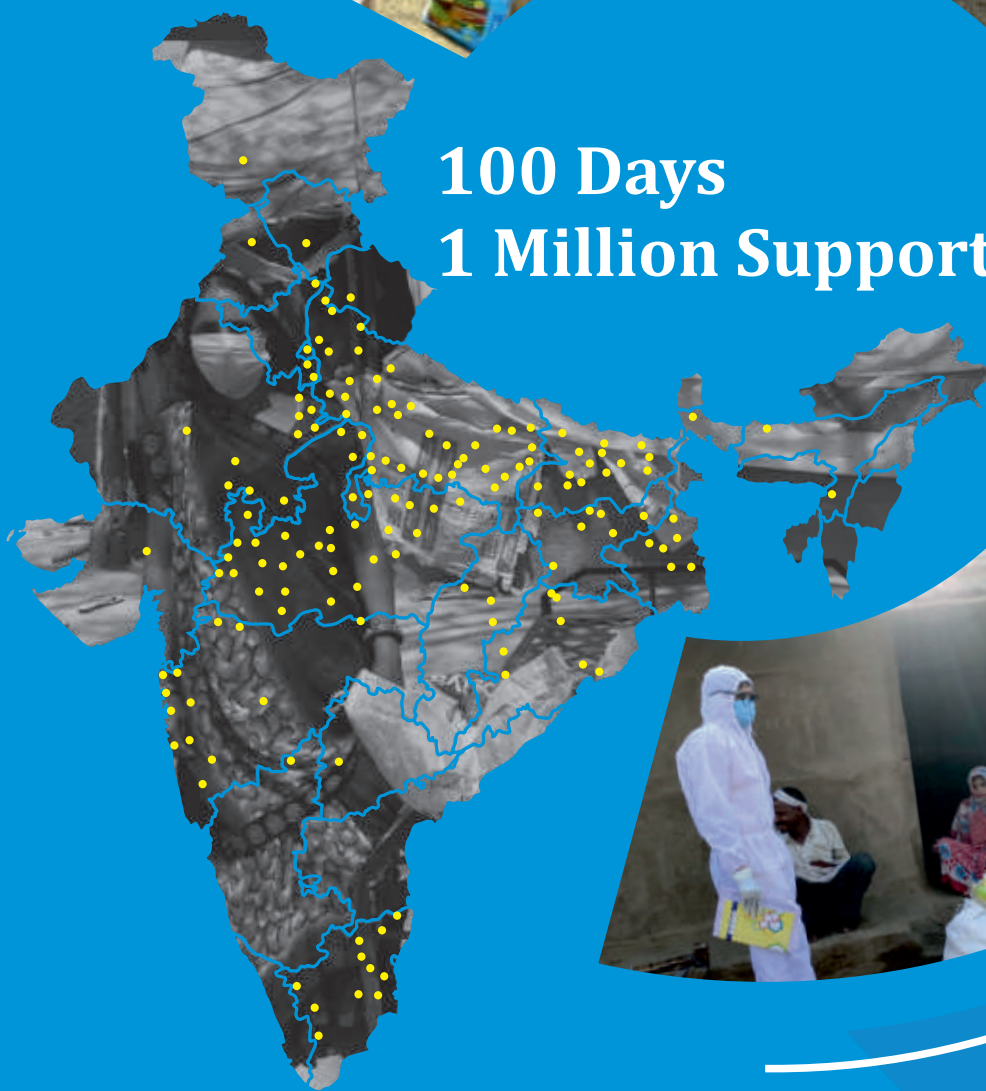


COVID-19 Relief Response

Stories of Resilience & Hope



**100 Days
1 Million Supported**



COVID-19 Relief Response

Stories of Resilience & Hope



July, 2020

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Foreword

Dear Friends,

The last four months have been a steep learning curve and a humbling experience for all of us at Jan Sahas. The difficulties that unfolded after the sudden announcement of the lockdown to control the spread of COVID-19, pushed us to undertake the first rapid assessment survey of migrant workers in India. Those conversations and interviews brought to us two important realizations. First, providing relief for migrant workers is only the first step in a longer path of work that needs to be done with migrant workers to ensure the realization of dignity of labour and worker rights. Secondly, the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown are going to impact the marginalized communities much more than the rest of our society.

The compilation of the stories in this report, provides a glimpse into the deep trauma, anxiety, humiliation, and low self-worth that our fellow citizens have faced in the past few months. The experience of hunger, thirst, physical pain, and fear of death exposes the extreme vulnerability of poor people. In these times of deep despair, we have found hope, courage, and good will from unexpected quarters. In this report, you will also find the story of a young person who fundraised for Jan Sahas after reading an article about our work. As well as about the way a local police officer worked long hours with us with impeccable sensitivity and commitment inspiring us to work even harder.

In the first week of the lockdown, the staff at Jan Sahas took the decision of donating 10% of their salaries to buy relief material. Their decision inspired staff of seven other companies and institutions to follow suit. In the last four months, Jan Sahas has received donations from over a thousand individuals across India and 36 philanthropies have partnered with us for both short- and long-term efforts. With all this support, Jan Sahas has provided relief in the form of food, cash support, transportation, mental health support, network linkages, and legal aid. Multiple departments and ministries of many state governments have collaborated with Jan Sahas in ensuring that the services reach the needy.

Lastly, I take this opportunity to salute the staff, volunteers of Jan Sahas and team members of our 40 partner organizations for their hard work and single-minded commitment to value human rights and life. I am humbled by the sacrifices they have borne, sometimes staying away from their families for as long as two months. I continue to be amazed by the agility with which they have changed to adapt to new working styles in the current COVID era. Due to the collective efforts we have supported more than 1 Million individuals from the most excluded communities - from migrant workers to survivors of gender based violence. Additionally, we have also developed a database of 1.5 Million migrant families that will help us in the development of mid and long-term social interventions for migrant workers and their families.

Thank you once again for your continued support.

Ashif Shaikh

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Introduction

The announcement of the lockdown due to the spread of the coronavirus in the country towards the end of March was unanticipated and sudden. It marked the beginning of a period of uncertainty and fear that caused the suspension of everyday life and normalcy to the point of being surreal. The lockdown period exposed the vulnerability of the working class in India who without jobs, food and shelter were left entirely to fend for themselves. The nonpayment of wages, the flaws of the public distribution system and the non-availability of health services in both rural and urban India have been exposed. Several organisations and ordinary people on the ground have risen to the challenge of relief and support activities for the huge vulnerable and floating populations of people who have been left stranded with no means for survival.

These stories form a cross sectional view of the range of problems faced by different communities on the ground. They cover multiple "at risk" groups including migrant labourers, agricultural and bonded labourers, construction labourers, daily wage workers, manual scavengers, and survivors of sexual violence. They also cover the work of Jan Sahas team members, mental health professionals, police and health workers, and ordinary people who contributed by collaborating with organisations such as Jan Sahas. The stories are a microcosm of the crisis, seen through the lens of issues such as unemployment, migration, labour, economic deprivation, class, gender and caste-based discrimination and deprivation.

The exodus of migrant labourers is a metaphor for displacement. Not only is it a literal movement from the rural to the urban, the village to the city, and all the fissures in between, but a figurative sweep of the journey of unwieldy development and those who are left behind by this vision of urbanisation and "progress". The irony of the worst affected being the very same people who have built the cities, who keep its machine well oiled and tended to, cannot be reiterated enough. Various accounts bring to the forefront these otherwise overlooked groups around us.

There are silver linings to these stories. Team members on the field, welfare workers and social advocates, the police, health workers, ordinary citizens etc. have worked tirelessly to provide support. They inspire confidence and hope. Many of these people selflessly put their own lives at risk to provide welfare for the people who needed it the most. These stories document a plethora of emotional responses - from uncertainty to fear, shock to despair, anxiety and stress to depression, and finally, strength and resilience to gratitude.





COVID Relief Response

Jan Sahas, with its experience of working with migrant workers, farm labourers and daily wage workers anticipated the impact of the unavoidable lockdown. As the health crisis was new to the world and very limited information was available, the lockdown seemed to be a feasible solution. However, it had huge economic implications especially on vulnerable communities at the bottom of the pyramid. A singular, individualised intervention was never the solution to the current socio-economic and health crisis.

A multi-pronged approach was required to support the people directly or indirectly affected by the crisis. The Jan Sahas team, in collaboration with local partners and government authorities, started various kinds of intervention towards short-term relief and long-term benefits. In the last 100 days (25th March to 2nd July 2020), interventions such as dry ration support, cooked food for migrant workers, mobile recharge, cash transfers, and helpline support that connected people to help from concerned authorities, were implemented by Jan Sahas. As the health crisis grew, awareness campaigns were organised for the safety and security of the people. Safety kit distribution in workers' colonies, slums and rural areas were important to slow down

the spread of COVID-19. As front-line workers had a major role in managing various important activities such as health facilities and proper implementation of social distancing, Jan Sahas collaborated with various institutions and associations to support them in their on-ground activities. Safety kits and PPE kits were distributed among sanitisation workers, Aanganwadi worker, ANM, Asha, health staff and Police.

As the lockdown unfolded and rules for inter-state transportation was relaxed, the Jan Sahas team supported workers and stranded people with transportation support at various locations. Even during this period women and children were the most vulnerable as the support systems in place for their protection were not functional. Through the Jan Sahas helpline several cases of gendered base violence were supported. Apart from the food crisis, physical health safety and economic implications, most people also faced mental health issues due to the extended lockdown and the loss of livelihood. The Mental health team at Jan Sahas also initiated counseling support through telephonic sessions for people in need.

The long-term impacts of the health crisis and the lockdown were visible. Through a systematic approach Jan Sahas in collaboration with government institutions, NGO's, community groups and corporates, implemented long-term programmes to support various communities across India. This included linkages of marginalised communities with social welfare schemes and entitlements, maintenance of migrant workers database and upskilling of workers.





Ration Support for a Month

281314 individuals in
90 districts of 15 states



Cooked Food Support

more than 218000
migrant workers



Transportation Support

17640 migrant
workers



Mobile Balance & Cash Transfer

25520 individuals in
145 districts of 19 states



Safety Kit distribution

21765 units
distributed



PPE Kits to Front-Line Workers

12480 units
distributed



Helpline Support

more than 34350
calls received



Support in Gender Based Violence

1237 survivors
received support



Mental Health Support

2480 individuals received
psychosocial support



Migrant Workers Database

1 Million+ migrant
workers from 12 states



Partnership with CBO's and NGO's

Collaborated with 40
partners in 15 states for
relief distribution



Jan Sahas Team Members

986 members
involved in
relief distribution



Institutional Donors and Supporters

40+ institutional and more
than 1000 individual
donors supported

COVID-19 Relief Response

Fighting for survival in a city that doesn't accept them as citizens



Delhi is a big city. It's not like other places, where people help easily. Nobody will help with credit for food or other things. We need to find work to feed our families.



Many among the people that Jan Sahas provided relief to during the lockdown are daily wage earners who live from one day to the next on their earnings, with limited or no savings. For an entire class of people whose means of existence is so precariously placed, the shift in a single factor has proven to be catastrophic. The lockdown has shed light on issues which had gone unaddressed for centuries.

In February 2020, two months before the lockdown, Sonu Kumar's younger brother, Ravi, took up a daily wage job to clean up sewers before a political rally. That decision proved to be fatal, and he met an untimely death in the sewers among the noxious gases. Ravi was to be married and the two brothers used to manage household expenses together (Sonu has a family of six, with four children). While Sonu had found a housekeeping job in a company in Noida, Ravi was still looking for a job, when he found out about the sewer cleaning job. He can't hide the regret as he mourns the loss of his brother who took up the job for a measly sum of Rs. 350-400.

Sonu came into contact with Jan Sahas team members including the field co-ordinator, Ram Narayan, at the police station while trying to get justice and compensation for his deceased brother. Jan Sahas has been providing assistance in filling an FIR and

giving legal support. In the period after Ravi's death, as Sonu was trying to handle the many tasks of giving Ravi a proper funeral, and also ensuring that his brother would be recompensed by the government properly, he lost his cleaning job at the corporate organisation he was working in, as they were unwilling to give him a 5-day leave. This is yet another example of how the system denies basic rights to the workers at the bottom rung of the ladder.

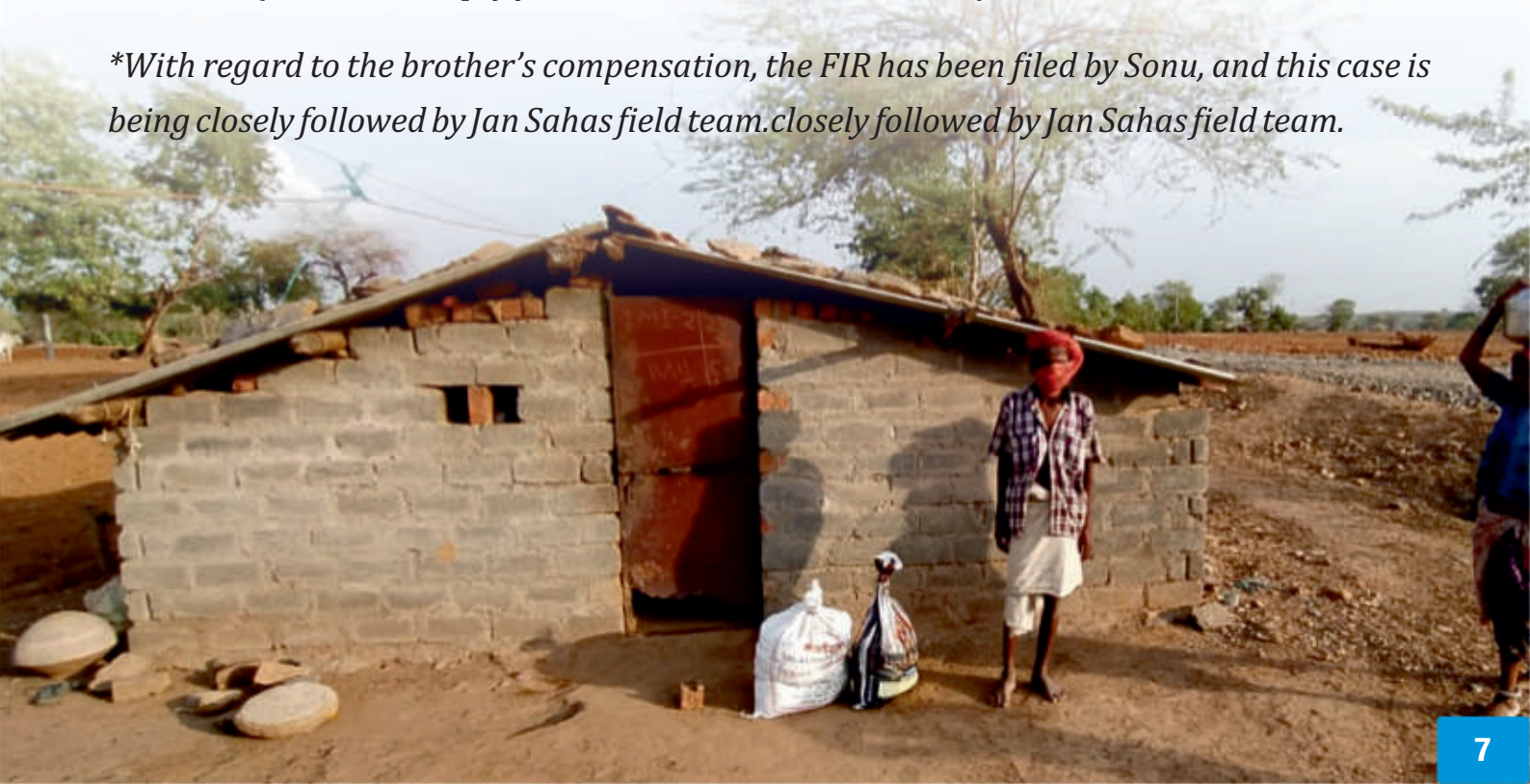
Sonu did not lose hope. Even after he had lost his job, he would attempt to make two ends meet by driving a rickshaw, dropping residents to the mandi (market), close to where he was staying. When the lockdown eased, he immediately rented the rickshaw again for Rs.



50, and he would make Rs. 200-300 a day by doing multiple trips to the mandi. When the lockdown was announced Sonu was in a difficult situation. Jobless and with nowhere to turn to feed his family, he received a call from Ram Narayan, the field coordinator who provided dry rations and promised that in time they would provide a cash transfer too.

Sonu was lucky in one regard - his landlord was a thoughtful person who did not take rent from him for the first two months of the lockdown. Sonu says that the landlord spoke to all the tenants in the area telling them that he would not take rent. Seeing the huge droves of migrant workers going back home, the landlord said, "Bas khali mat kar ke jaana makaan." (Just don't empty your homes to head back home)

**With regard to the brother's compensation, the FIR has been filed by Sonu, and this case is being closely followed by Jan Sahas field team.*



Returning home has never been so difficult

“

We had a very tough time in the first 40 days of the lockdown that we spent living in Noida. We were told by our employers not to leave and to stay where we were.

Sometimes we got some cooked food from well-wishers. But this was in spurts. We were at the mercy of others - we managed to salvage some money from our employers (very little), and then by incurring personal debts. This was not enough to feed our families. We had no way of getting food for ourselves.

”

Sarman Prajapati was working as a construction labourer in Noida, Sector 4, when he heard rumours of a “Bharat Bandh”. At that time he never imagined that such a harsh “lockdown” would leave him and others who worked with him, stranded for days on end. He was living along with his wife, two children and two brothers in a makeshift shack next to a construction site where he worked as a mistry (semi-skilled worker). He was amongst 120 construction labourers employed to build a school. After dealing with uncertainty for the first 40 days of the lockdown, people from different parts of India including Orissa, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh (Sarman and his family hail from Damoh), decided to start the long trek back home. Sarman talks about how, towards the end, before they started the journey back they hadn’t eaten properly for days.

“The situation had become extremely bleak, and it seemed as if there was no help forthcoming from any corner. We were in touch with our families back home, and they would cry on the phone when they heard how we were living. They kept asking us to come back home. The idea of reaching back home and being safe with family seemed like the

only feasible alternative. This thought was more compelling than the possible hardships on the journey back. We were anxious, so were our family members. We decided to walk back because of this helplessness”

25 of them from the same village in Damoh started walking back towards their homes in the second week of May. They walked nonstop for two days and two nights to reach Agra. They had tried calling different help lines and organisations for support. They even called the Jan Sahas helpline just before they started walking. The helpline team after understanding the situation that they were in, took their details, and supported Sarman with two cash transfers amounting to Rs. 6000, which eventually helped them arrange for transport back to Damoh. In Agra, they managed to pay a truck driver to take them back home for Rs. 20,000. The truck dropped them in the dry region of Bhind Morena, where there was a camp set up for such vehicles. From there they got a government bus back to their village.



Now Sarman and his family are happy to be back home, but still uncertain about the future. Even after the hardships that they had to face, Sarman is clear that he will have to go back to the city once things settle down. He says there are limited or no opportunities in the village, and the only possibility for work is in a place like Delhi, where he would at least earn enough money to send back home, and to take care of his family.



The lockdown's effect on the poor & elderly population

One group of people that has been particularly at risk during the lockdown is the elderly. While the aged are particularly susceptible to the virus itself, the lockdown has also meant that those who have been dependent on others for essential services have been suddenly deprived. In this context, families and welfare services have had to rally their efforts to ensure that they are not at risk. The situation of Suli Bai, a 72 year-old *adivasi* woman living along with her 75 year-old husband in Kalyanpura village, Jhabua district is an example of the negative effect of the lockdown on those who might already be living at the edge. Sadik, a Jan Sahas field coordinator from Jhabua district, found out about this case through Rajendra who is part of his local network on the field. Rajendra was helping informally with food rations and relief efforts with his friends when Sadik asked him to share details with Jan Sahas and combine efforts. Suli Bai's case required immediate help.

In the first four weeks of the lockdown, the couple had managed food with the help of some neighbours and Rajendra's family who had donated some rations. Towards the end of April, when Sadik went to their house along with Rajendra, they were not at home. They waited for them and found out that the couple had gone to try and retrieve their senior citizen pension. The couple is completely dependent on this pension and hadn't received their pension of Rs. 500 each for two months since the lockdown was announced.



Suli Bai's two sons had fought with each other and deserted their parents, so the couple had to fend for themselves. The *kachcha* (mud) house was in a dilapidated state, and there was less than half a *bigha* (local unit of measurement, which is approximately 0.14 acres in area) of land accompanying the house which was not fit to farm. There seemed to be no electricity. Neighbours stressed their terrible state and said that the couple should definitely be put on the list

for relief. On speaking to the couple and seeing their state, Sadik immediately provided them with dry rations from Jan Sahas. When the ration shops under PDS (Public Distribution System) opened, they also got some free rations from the government.

When Sadik and Rajendra spoke to the couple, they did not seem to comprehend the extent of the virus and the lockdown. Because of their age they were unable to do any work. They were resigned to their situation:

“Sarkar ki marzi hain. Kuch bhi kar sakte hain. Hum tho adivasi log hain” (It’s the government’s choice. They can do whatever they want. We are tribals).



Lockdown exposing the lives of vulnerable communities living on the edge

The stories of bonded labourers, migrant workers, manual scavengers, socially excluded communities and survivors that have come to the fore in this lockdown period are not isolated incidents that stand out because of exceptional circumstances. Rather, they are symptomatic of the existing precariousness of vulnerable communities. The stories must not be read merely as an outcome of the lockdown or the pandemic, but as examples of the lockdown exposing these hidden scars. The process of transformation is long and many such cases have come to light because of Jan Sahas's network of "social advocates" and field co-ordinators, and workers (many of who have been working hard through the period of the lockdown constantly seeking out those who require support).

Narendra is a daily wage worker in Kaleenjar village, Banda District, Uttar Pradesh (UP). He worked as an agricultural labourer in the fields or any other odd jobs he could get to feed his family. This included occasional paid work in a fort that was situated in the area. His wife, two children and father were left completely hungry when the lockdown was announced. A couple of weeks into the lockdown, some harvesting work began in nearby fields, but he was not given any work. His family was in such a bad state that his children would scour nearby fields and collect leftover *gehu* (wheat grains) or *channa* (grams, legumes) fallen on the ground. They would bring these scraps home, clean them up and then boil and eat them. They lived in this state for more than two weeks, when a Jan Sahas field co-ordinator found out about the family's condition. Seeing their state Jan Sahas helped them with enough dry rations for the whole family for 50 days. The family was content to receive food support. Narendra said, *"We can finally fill our stomachs with wholesome food, and don't need to beg or live on scraps"*



Suman Verma and Om Prakash's story in a different village, Dadariya, in Banda district is

a story of the fatal consequences brought on by anxiety due to desperate circumstances. Om Prakash did daily wage labour work in the village and occasionally ran a rickshaw in the area. He had been unwell even before the lockdown and was extremely stressed about his family's situation. Since the lockdown, as everything was shut down, he would stay at home. One day after eating, he seemed uneasy and anxious. He suddenly collapsed and was rushed to the nearby hospital, but was pronounced dead on arrival. Suman, his wife, called the Jan Sahas district coordinator Radha. She was in tears and sounded desperate - "My husband suddenly passed away. What will we do now, didi? We have no food at home, nothing to eat. We don't even have money to do the rituals for my husband".

Jan Sahas supported them immediately. Jan Sahas was already working towards connecting this family for welfare support, documentation and ration help from the government, when this incident took place. During the course of the lockdown, the Jan Sahas field team facilitated two rounds of ration support. In addition to this, Suman was also connected to the mental health team for psychosocial support.





Part I: Cooked Food and dry ration



**Jan Sahas provided
dry ration support
for a month to
281,314
individuals in 90
districts of 15
states across India.**



**More than 218,000
individuals were
supported with
cooked food in
various locations**

Dry ration support was one of the early interventions started by Jan Sahas as part of the COVID relief response. Within a couple of days of the lockdown announcement, we received requests of ration and food support on the Jan Sahas Helpline. In the last decade of our engagement with migrants and farmworkers in North and Central India, we have been connected with more than 100,000 workers, and we have supported them with various issues related to social security. As the situation of vulnerable communities is dependent on day to day earnings, no work means no income, directly affecting the purchasing power of these families.

Dry ration support was essential for marginalised communities as the hunger crisis and uncertainty in employment made the situation worse. Ration and food support was also required to restrict movement, limit reverse migration back home during the lockdown period. **Jan Sahas provided dry ration support for a month to 281,314 individuals in 90 districts of 15**

states across India. Our objective has been to reach out to the maximum number of people with a focus on vulnerable social groups like migrant workers, single women, women-headed households, liberated manual scavengers, victims of trafficking and survivors of rape/violence. After the first few weeks of lockdown, when guidelines were issued for food distribution and relief activities, Jan Sahas, in collaboration with local partners and volunteers started the distribution of cooked food for migrant workers. **More than 218,000 individuals were supported with cooked food** in various locations including labour colonies, highway and transportation hubs.



Case Study

Begging for food due to lockdown and no work

It is difficult to translate the pain in the voice of Hari Om, a sewer cleaner who lives near the slums in Kalyanpuri, Delhi. Earlier, Hari Om had a contract job cleaning the sewers in R.K. Puram, Delhi. He earned just enough to feed his family, living in a makeshift slum. About three months before the lockdown was announced, Hari Om moved to Kalyanpuri after a dispute with his extended family. He lost his job because there was no easy bus route from R.K. Puram to Kalyanpuri. Since then his situation took a turn for the worse - even without the lockdown, work was difficult to find. He would go on his cycle to the nearby Mayur Vihar colonies and some gated communities and call out for work - if he was lucky, he would get two or three cleaning jobs every 15 days, maybe a clogged drain in a toilet, or a gutter cleaning job in or near a society. The lockdown put an end to that.

In the beginning, desperate and afraid of what the future held, Hari Om took a loan of Rs. 500 from a person in his locality, but with the promise that he will pay back



“

What can I say? I can only thank God. I don't have words. At least the children are able to eat something, go to sleep with their stomachs full, even if I can't find enough work, it's fine.... When the lockdown left me with a family of three hungry children and wife, with empty supply containers in the kitchen, and I did not have a single paisa in my pocket, with no gas in the cylinder, I had lost all hope. If destiny and God's blessings hadn't led me to the thin gentleman who was distributing food near the chowk, I do not know what would have happened.

”

with high interest - Rs. 700. Left with no choice, he took the money and managed to stock up on basic supplies for a week or two and pay rent to his landlord. As soon as the rations finished, and there was no sign of the constraints on movement and work being lifted, he once again set off in search for food. He could not bear to see his children hungry.

Hari Om was driven to the depths of despair. It was serendipity that Ram Narayan, a Jan Sahas field coordinator, was distributing dry rations in the chowk near his house. When Hari Om saw him, he walked up, said Namaste, and told him that he was a sewer cleaner without work, and there wasn't a single morsel left to eat in his house. Ram Narayan visited his house and realised how dire his state was - he saw his children going door to door begging for food and the boxes of rations empty. Seeing his situation, he gave Hari Om some money to refill the gas in the cylinder and provided him with dry rations, enough for a fortnight. In this way, during the three months of the lockdown, he helped him with ration and money on two different occasions.

The lockdown has been traumatic for Hari Om, but he speaks with courage and hope. As his situation eases out even a little bit, he goes out in search of jobs and talks with pride about the little work that he manages. This pandemic has truly revealed how vulnerable communities are always the worst affected and Hari Om's story is an example of this. The Jan Sahas team is in touch with Hari Om and closely following his journey, like others in the community. As he ends our conversations, he says,

"At times, the situation felt so bleak that I contemplated just ending it all - by hanging, or just jumping in front of some car...but this help has been a Godsend, I will not forget it all my life"



Case Study

70 migrant workers' families walked for 150-200 km.

The image of migrants walking along tracks has now become symbolic of the severity of the lockdown. Jan Sahas District co-ordinator Akshay Mere found himself face-to-face with such a situation when he found a community of close to seventy families who were left high and dry because of the lockdown, in Palghar district, Maharashtra. These people were daily wage earners who would find work at the local naaka. Their precarious situation became fatal as the little income that they earned was suddenly put to a stop.

Jawahar Singh worked as a *mistry* on construction sites and took up any work that came his way. Along with his wife, daughter and son, and people from his village, Ranapur, in Jabua District of Madhya Pradesh, he decided to undertake the long journey back home:

“Samajh mein nahi aaya kya ho raha hain. Lockdown kab khulega, ki nahi khulega, aur kare bhi kya? kuch kaam-dhanda nahi tha. Aise baith bhi tho nahi sakte na. Do roti tho mil raha tha kaise bhi karke, par kuch tho karna padhta na? Tho hum rel ke patri ke sahare ghar wapas chalne lage.”

(We did not understand what was happening. We thought, who knows whether the lockdown would open or not, and so what will we do sitting here, there is no work. We were getting some food somehow. But we have to do something or the other no? So, we decided to walk back home along the tracks)

Close to seventy families started to walk towards their village in MP, a week after living off the food that was distributed in spurts by well-wishers and the *Ambe Mata Mandir* in the locality. They walked for a day upto the Gujrat border, where their journey was cut short. The police at Umbergaon turned them back, saying that they were not allowed to cross the border during the lockdown. Jawahar's voice trembles as he talks about the police, and the fear is apparent. The day-long walk back to their makeshift settlement in Palghar was filled with despair. Ten days into the lockdown, this community found themselves once again untethered and uncertain.

Akshay found out about Jawahar and the others through his contacts on the field and

realised that they needed immediate help. The local *tehsildar* had supported these families for couple of days, initially. Later, the team managed to get a letter of permission from the police. He then facilitated relief packets of dry rations consisting of dal, rice, atta, oil, spices etc. that would be sufficient for each family at least for a fortnight. In this way Jan Sahas managed to assist the community at least twice.

On May 10th, more than one and a half months after the lockdown began, the group of labourers got on a train to their homes in Madhya Pradesh. Akshay and the Jan Sahas migration team assisted with the documentation to get them on to the trains and they managed to finally make their way back home without paying any fare.



Jawahar was content to be back home. As he thinks of the difficulties, he faced during the lockdown he suddenly mentions something he found out from Akshay. He recounts that Akshay had worked in his hometown in the past, and had even visited his village, unknown to either of them. He smiles and says,

“Achi jaan pehchan ho gayi sir ke saath” (Sir and I, we got to know each other well).



Case Study

Cooked food support on the Indore-Bhopal highway

Since the first day of this lockdown, the country has witnessed a huge exodus of migrant labourers and their families returning home – forced to leave the very cities they had built with their sweat, toil and hard work. Images of workers braving the scorching sun traveling on foot, cycles, rikshaws, trucks, buses, etc. have continued to surface in news reports throughout the lockdown period.

Jan Sahas worked together with the Dewas district administration to provide food support on the Indore-Bhopal highway to the mass of beleaguered workers and their families returning home. A 25-member Jan Sahas relief team worked day and night to provide food support (Puri-Sabji) to at least 2000 migrants on a daily basis.

The work of giving food and care to migrants on the highways was possible because of the help of both formal and informal networks of support. The Dewas district administration extended their full support by assisting in sanitising the restaurant three times a day and helping with social distancing protocols during the relief work, for both the safety of migrants and Jan Sahas support staff. A highway restaurant contributed the much-needed space, utensils, etc. completely free of cost, so that food could be cooked on the spot.

A local businessman offered 400 sandals for free to provide to any migrant who was walking or cycling back home, and was in desperate need of footwear. This proved useful to Alam, an Indore factory worker, who was walking barefoot when Jan Sahas field coordinators met him. He somehow managed to scrape through the first 50 days of the lockdown by eating once a day. While he was in a difficult situation, he did not consider returning to his village until he heard of the death of his grandmother. He decided to walk the 700 odd kms to his home in Satna for his *dadi's* (grandmother) last rites. Due to the lockdown he was not even able to see his grandmother for last time. Jan



Sahas provided him with food packets and in collaboration with the district officials arranged a local truck that was going in the same direction as his village.

Jan Sahas team members spoke to hundreds of workers who were travelling in private or government bus services, many of whom informed them that they hadn't had food to eat in the last 15-17 hours because of the lack of any open highway restaurants and sometimes, because the bus driver refused to stop. Many migrant parents spoke about how their children hadn't had milk since the beginning of the lockdown. Jan Sahas quickly took the decision to also provide milk to infants taking this arduous journey with their parents.

Santosh and Prabha were one such couple who were en-route from Mumbai to Uttar Pradesh on a bike with their 11-month old baby son. Santosh worked as a daily wage worker in a steel-polishing workshop and earned Rs.400 as daily wage. He lost his job the day after the lockdown was announced. In order to avoid unnecessary expenses, he



had requested his contractor to help him save and he hoped to get his savings of Rs.5000 back to tide over the lockdown – unfortunately, the contractor paid a measly sum of Rs.1000 and asked him to leave for his village somehow. Since there weren't enough rations to continue in Mumbai, Santosh and Prabha's families sent them Rs.4500 to make their journey back home.

The day they met with Jan Sahas staff, it was already four days since they started. Prabha looked distraught as she relayed their condition, *"Our baby son often gets cranky because of the heat. He hasn't had milk or proper food for the last 4 days. I just can't wait to get home."* Jan Sahas team members provided them with food packets and milk. While they had already gone through a terrible ordeal, Jan Sahas staff hoped that this little support would make the final leg of their journey more comfortable.





Part II: Safety kits for community and frontline staff



In total, 21,765 units of safety kits were distributed among community members



Distributed 12,480 units of safety and protection kits to health staff, Police department, Anganwadi workers, Asha workers and sanitary workers.

One of the most effective ways to control the spread of COVID-19 is by prioritising hygiene and social distancing practices. As the situation of urban poor and marginalised communities is very difficult, most of them are forced to stay in cramped up spaces and share common utilities. Due to these circumstances and their nature of work their exposure to COVID 19 has been at high risk. It is important that every member of society should have access to basic safety and security to fight the pandemic crisis.

Jan Sahas followed a strict protocol and social distancing norms for all the team members involved in relief distribution. **In total, 21,765 units of safety kits were distributed among community members** in rural as well as urban areas. Similarly, the frontline staff has been working 24x7 in extreme conditions to support our fellow citizens. Services provided by them are very important for the safety and maintenance of law and order in society. The Jan Sahas team in collaboration with various governmental agencies and departments **distributed 12,480 units of safety and protection kits to health staff, Police department, Anganwadi workers, Asha workers and sanitary workers.**

Case Study

Not a single case of COVID-19 infection in Dewas Police Department.

“We did not have any pre planned agenda or design to do relief activities for the people. But on 22nd March after the sudden announcement of the Janta Curfew, and then the lockdown, we went out onto the field and distributed some oranges, water bottle and chips packets to some poor children in the local community. Seeing the smiles on their faces, we realised the need of extensive relief efforts, and it felt good to provide relief. We felt that we should work more.”

Leela Solanki, a sub inspector of MP police, Dewas district, was out on the field throughout the lockdown with her other colleagues, providing relief to those in need along with the support of local organisations. On 25th March, Leela Solanki shared contact details on her social media profiles with a message: *Those who wanted to contribute to relief efforts need not step out of their houses. The police would come and pick up any relief packages or help from their doorsteps.*

Karan Rathod (Program Lead) and Jaipal Deora (Project Coordinator) from Jan Sahas in Dewas, had gotten in touch with Leela to offer Jan Sahas's help during the lockdown. They had worked with the district administration in the past as well, and a collaborative working relationship was already in place. Jan Sahas organised cooked food and subsequently, dry rations for people across Dewas district. Leela talks about the efficient system and partnership that made it possible for dry rations to be provided in Dewas city, as well as remote rural areas:



“There was excellent co-ordination between the police and Jan Sahas team members that ensured help reached the most distant areas on time. With the help of Jan Sahas, we even went to several containment zones. For more than two months during the lockdown, and even after that, Jan Sahas team members worked tirelessly with the police, and they

continue to monitor the situation. Often, if any distress calls reached the state helpline or the police, we would immediately alert the field coordinators who were in touch with us. In my view, each and every needy person who we found out about across the district, got dry rations and support primarily because of Jan Sahas's team on the ground working with the police."

An important initiative that Leela sees as essential during the pandemic's spread is the distribution of health and safety kits and protective material by Jan Sahas for the police who were working as frontline workers during the lockdown. Approximately 700-800 such safety kits were given to Dewas Police, who were going into hotspots and containment areas. In addition to this, Jan Sahas distributed masks and gloves for migrant labourers walking on the highway coming back from Maharashtra.



Leela remembers hearing about people from the police being infected in the neighbouring districts of Ujjain and Indore. In Dewas, senior police officials and her superiors gave special attention to safety protocols and health advisories during the entire period of the lockdown, and this gave her strength and courage to go out on the field. The S.P.

Krishnaveni was in touch with those on the field on a daily basis and would enquire about all activities. Her words would boost the morale of the force: ***"Dar Dar ke kya jeena. Achcha kaam karna hain"*** (Why should we live in fear, we should focus on good work). She would go along with the team to several places where relief activities were being undertaken, and her constant encouragement and support gave Leela and her colleagues energy and confidence.

Dewas S.P. and other police superiors would also do daily video conference calls and follow-ups reiterating best practices of health and safety while going into containment areas and other places for relief activities. This constant guidance and reiteration ensured that safety was at the fore in the minds of the police on the ground. As a result of the adoption of health equipment and safety kits, and regular guidance and safety drills, there was not a single case of corona infection in the Dewas Police. This fact, in itself, is a major accomplishment, and the police force's collaboration with Jan Sahas and other

organisations in Dewas serves as a kind of role model for collaborative action and humanitarian activities.

Leela's husband is also in the police force, as a constable. They would constantly speak to each other about the nature of the work, reassure themselves and give strength, saying, *"Nothing will happen, we are doing good work, important work"*. Leela remembers emotional moments which would make it difficult to go on. Having children herself, she recounts breaking down and crying while seeing children who had walked for miles with their parents, who hadn't eaten for days. **"They may not die from corona, but they would've died from hunger and heat, if we hadn't given them food on time"**. Her voice becomes hoarse with emotion when she recounts several such stories of desperation, but she finds strength in the smiles and tears of happiness that she'd see on the faces of the migrant families after they had received food, water, the comforting protection of the local police, and most importantly, the realisation that they had finally reached home.





Part III: Transportation support to migrant workers



Around 17,640 migrant workers received transportation support through the Jan Sahas team

As the spread of COVID-19 was increasing, the cloud of fear and uncertainty was clearly visible in everyone's life. Concerns about the well-being of seasonal and migrant workers staying thousands of kilometers away from their families only increased. Further, as the lockdown had snatched away all their sources of income and livelihood opportunities, they were forced to return back home as a last resort. During the announcement of lockdown 3.0 State Governments and the Central Government relaxed some rules for interstate mobility and started bus and train

services for workers. Due to logistical challenges and social distancing norms, only online registration for train tickets was allowed by the government.

Jan Sahas field teams at source and destination in collaboration with various volunteers, community groups and NGOs started collecting data of migrant workers who wanted to return home. With this information, arrangements of buses and required permissions from origin and destination were completed. In addition to this, several team members at various locations also assisted migrant workers in completing their online registration and application for train tickets. **Around 17,640 migrant workers received transportation support through the Jan Sahas team** to return back to their homes. All the workers returning through Jan Sahas support also received masks and gloves for personal protection while traveling.

Case Study

We borrowed money and paid Rupees 120,000 for a bus that only dropped us mid-way

This is a story of a group of labourers from Madhya Pradesh (MP) who were working in Tiruchirappalli in Tamil Nadu, and who made their way back home in the middle of the lockdown. Bhupendra is a driver - one of twenty people from the same village in Rewa district, MP. They worked as drivers of heavy vehicles such as road rollers, trucks or JCBs for a company that is involved in the construction business.

Ironically, work did not stop during the lockdown and the company continued to extract work from its employees even with the looming threat of the pandemic. The company either gave its employees some flimsy masks, or no health equipment. According to the workers, the company officials told them to fend for themselves and asserted, *“If anything happens to you, we are not responsible in any way”*. Bhupendra was working in the company for the last six months. There were others in his group who had been working there for much longer.

While working there, they found out that 4 workers like them from a cement factory 5 kilometres away had tested positive for COVID - 19 and died. This news created a stir in the employees. While the management did not care about its workers, Bhupendra and the others decided to take matters into their own hands out of fear of the virus affecting them. Rather than taking care of the welfare of those that worked for them, their superiors refused to pay them for one and half months' work, cursing them and insinuating that they were taking actions out of their own volition, without the consent of their employers.

The group walked to Tiruchirappalli junction, and managed to get food thanks to some well wishers. They spent three days at the junction, waiting for trains back to their homes in MP, but to no avail. Realising that they had to make some arrangements, they got in touch with someone from their village who helped organised a bus to



take them back. They were told to arrange for Rs. 1,20,000 for a bus for twenty people. For labourers such as them, this is a huge sum of money and Bhupendra mentions that all of them incurred debts back home while organising the sum. The bus only dropped them till Nagpur and Bhupendra and the others were once again stranded. Frustrated and hungry, they called home again and were told to wait there.

At this point, Jan Sahas field coordinators found out about the case. Jan Sahas immediately arranged for food and a bus was organised for the group. When Bhupendra found out about this arrangement, he was relieved.

“They did not take a single rupee from us and delivered us safely back home. We were already tired and hopeless from the journey up till there, and had already spent huge amounts of money in an already difficult state. If Jan Sahas had not gotten involved, we would have ended up walking on the road back and died somewhere along the way”.

All twenty people were happily welcomed back to their homes in the second week of June. Bhupendra is conscious about the virus and its effects and continues to take care, keeping himself as physically distant and isolated from the rest of his family as possible, while staying in the same house.





Part IV: Monetary & mobile balance support



Jan Sahas team supported 25,520 individuals were supported by online cash transfer, medical and mobile balance in 145 districts of 19 states across India.

Monetary support or cash transfer was another early initiative implemented under the COVID Relief Response by Jan Sahas. When the countrywide lockdown was announced on 24th March 2020, institutions had limited clarity on the mobility of various basic utilities. Guidelines concerning these areas followed in the coming few days. But the Jan Sahas helpline team started receiving calls for help, and we understood that the situation of daily wage earners would only worsen. As the provisions for transportation and relief distribution was not clear, Jan Sahas team created a new team "Needs Assessment" with members from each level of the organisation with an understanding of migrant worker's issues and contexts. This team was responsible for the verification of requests and the estimation of support to be provided as an immediate response.

Initially, money transfer to support rations and other requirements were supported through direct bank transfer.

Collaborations with local partners, vendors, and NGOs became essential to providing online funds transfers. As the provision of e-passes for relief distribution was formalised by the government, we were directly able to reach out to families that required support. But we understood that the requirements were not uniform or homogeneous. Different kinds of requirements called for evolution in the nature of money transfers, and an upgrade in the form of this kind of relief activity.

For instance, connectivity to family members became important in this period, and due to low or zero mobile balance, various workers were not able to communicate with their respective families. Similarly, milk supplies for children and pregnant women and medical support for families, etc. were important. All these special cases were taken care of by online cash transfer. With the objective of providing support to vulnerable communities in all possible ways, Jan Sahas team supported 25,520 individuals were supported by online cash transfer, medical and mobile balance in 145 districts of 19 states across India.



Case Study

We don't have money or any source of income. It's better if we die

21-year-old Sushma Kushwah from Motiyari village, in Banda district was already in a dire state when the lockdown was announced. To support her three children, she and her husband worked as daily wagers. They were already in the throes of poverty - living in a small *kachcha* home (the entire family lived in one room) which filled up with water during the rains. One *bigha* (local unit of measurement, which is approximately 0.17 acres in area) of their land was mortgaged to the local *zamindar* to whom they owed Rs. 40,000. Moreover, the 15kg ration that they got from the government was hardly enough to feed the family. When the lockdown was announced, they did not have any source of income or work. Overwhelmed by the burden of these troubles, Sushma's husband committed suicide by consuming poison on the 5th of May - a little more than a month into the lockdown. The death of her husband broke Sushma's spirit completely. The prospect of providing for three infant children with no income and no strong family support (her husband's brother and her mother-in-law lived in the same area, but could not assist in any way) loomed threateningly over her. On 3rd June, a month after her husband's death, Sushma attempted to kill herself and her children by consuming poison and mixing it in her children's food.

Fortunately, some labourers who lived nearby found out about what Sushma had done, and rushed her and the children to the hospital. While the children vomited and the poison left their system in a short while, Sushma was sick for a couple of days before recovering. Jan Sahas district coordinator Radha found out about the incident through local media and her network on



the field. Since it was in the area where she was working, Radha immediately went to the hospital with her teammate. She arrived a day after the incident, and found that the patient was first moved to another hospital, and was eventually discharged from there

as well. Radha went to the family's home and after speaking to Sushma she assured her of help, and through regular contact, worked towards strengthening her spirit. Jan Sahas provided her dry ration support and monetary relief of Rs. 5000 for her medicines and further supplies for her family.

When Radha first spoke to Sushma, she was distraught and deeply concerned about her three children and the lack of support:

“What will I do? How can I take care of my three daughters? How will I feed them, clothe them and send them to school? Where will I go? What work will I find in this time where every little thing costs money? We are already in debt as well...”

She did discern, however, that the monetary support and the moral support of the presence of another caregiver did raise her spirits. Radha in association with Jan Sahas mental health team is closely monitoring the situation and plans to visit soon for another round of ration support, and helping in figuring out possibilities for the future. The team of counselors is updated regularly and as Sushma recovers her psychosocial support sessions will be conducted by the mental health team.



Case Study

Pandemic highlights the plight of those already abandoned by society

Jan Sahas has worked intensively for over a decade with the manual scavenging community, towards completely eradication of this practice. Manual scavenging is demeaning and inhuman, and is ratified by caste based stigma. The process of eradication of this practice is slow, but there have been significant victories along the way at the policy level, as well as on the field, where many manual scavengers have found other means of livelihood. Still, the struggle continues. The two narratives shared below are different in that one talks of a woman who was engaged in manual scavenging but was freed from the practice, and the other is still engaged in the practice. The lockdown, however, has affected both these women's lives in disastrous ways.

Gudiya Devi, hailing from the Doom (manual scavenging) community in Nalanda, Bihar, had been engaged in caste-based manual scavenging work prior to 2016. After coming in contact with Jan Sahas, she managed to stop being a manual scavenger and started bamboo basket making. The COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdown affected her and her family adversely. Her husband had lost his job as a watchman just two months before the pandemic and was unsuccessful in finding work again. The family depended solely on Gudiya Devi's basket making, and her work was put completely to a halt due to a lack of resources, she has no money to buy material and no avenue to sell her products. During this time, Jan Sahas transferred Rs. 2000 to help them tide over these difficult times.



Ramli Devi, from Lau village, Tikari block, Gaya, Bihar, is engaged as a manual scavenger. Her husband passed away many years ago and a family of 10 (Ramli Devi, her son, his wife and seven children) is dependent on her and her son. Her son is engaged in manual scavenging work. They echo that they have to do this work to fill their stomachs, but along with the Jan Sahas field co-ordinator, an attempt is being made to get them out of this practice. Identification of close to 500 families have been done in the area, and the

documentation has reached government offices, but the transformation is slow. During lockdown, the little work that used to come Ramli Devi and her son's way completely stopped. The family has been finding it extremely difficult to make two ends meet. Since many families in the community face the same fate, little help has come their way. Jan Sahas transferred Rs. 2000 to Ramli Devi's family, and the field co-ordinator is in constant touch with the family, and others in the community.





Part V: Helpline and mental health support



During the time period from 25th March - 2nd July 2020, more than 34,350 calls were received.



In the last 100 days, 2,480 individuals have received psychosocial support.

The Jan Sahas helpline team is a 38 member team which supports two 24x7 toll-free helpline numbers. The Jan Sahas Mazdoor Helpline is a dedicated line to support workers with information, and emergency support in the case of wage withholding and bondage labour. The Mazdoor helpline has a strong reach in Central & Northern India. The Jan Sahas Women and Girl Helpline is dedicated to support survivors of gender violence across the country.

Due to the active reach of both the helplines in rural and urban pockets, this became the front desk for all intervention activities implemented under the COVID Relief Response programme. At the peak of the lockdown in April 2020 the helpline team was attending a minimum of 700 calls per day. During the time period from 25th March - 2nd July 2020, more than 34,350 calls were received. As per the support required, the helpline team would share details with

the "Jan Sahas Needs Assessment" team and Relief distribution team. Further, the callers were also connected to partner NGOs and local authorities for emergency support if the Jan Sahas team was not present in a particular location. More than 100,000 individuals have received relief and emergency support through the helpline team.

Due to a prolonged lockdown period, we recognised the adverse impact on the mental health of people. Several reports and studies conducted in the countries initially affected by the pandemic showed a clear spike in the number of anxiety and depression cases. The Jan Sahas mental health team quickly adapted to the current situation and provided online counselling via phone. The helpline team was also trained in identifying mental health cases and referring them to the mental health team.

A normal counselling session would start with the sharing of basic details so that the caller feels comfortable. The focus of these calls is to establish a rapport and ensure a safe space for them to share whatever is on their minds. In the last 100 days, 2,480 individuals have received psychosocial support. The mental health team in every session provides empathetic responses and validation to the emotions of each participant. Additionally, all the helpline team members have been meeting regularly for training and mentoring from the mental health team.



Case Study

If it wasn't for the helpline team, I would never have made it back home

21-year-old Manoj from Hatpipliya village, Dewas district, MP, was working in the wholesale food-grains market in Navi Mumbai when the lockdown was announced. He had travelled to Mumbai in search of work. After looking for a couple of weeks, he finally got a job carrying sacks of food grain at the whole-sale APMC market. His work halted abruptly with the lockdown, and he had to survive in Mumbai with the little that he earned from his first 15 days of work at the market. When the lockdown eased for a few days in May, Manoj started working in the market again.



Just three days after he started working again, tragedy struck. While doing his work, a sack full of rice grains fell on his right leg from a great height. He was rushed to the nearby D. Y. Patil Hospital by the owner, where it was diagnosed as a severe fracture for which an operation was required. Manoj's employer paid for the operation, treatment and medication in the hospital. After he was discharged, Manoj survived somehow for a few days in Mumbai, helped in part by his

employer, and the little money he had saved from his short stint of work in the city. But soon his employer told him that he would not be able to support him further. It was at this juncture that he contacted the Jan Sahas *Mazdoor Helpline* seeking help.

The helpline team forwarded the case to Dharmendra (block coordinator from Manoj's block in Dewas) for verification. Seeing Manoj's family condition, Dharmendra helped organise for an ambulance that would bring Manoj back to Dewas from Mumbai. Jan Sahas supported Manoj with a cash transfer of Rs. 12,000 and food rations for his family. On 5th June, little more than a fortnight after his accident, Manoj reached his home.

Being the only other wage earner along with his father, Manoj's accident has proven extremely costly to the family. Earlier, Manoj had stopped his education in the 8th grade to work and earn money to meet the needs of the family. Even his decision to go to

Mumbai was based on better commercial possibilities in the big city. Currently, there is no income in the family, since Manoj's father stays home to take care of him. Manoj cannot walk and the doctor from the local hospital comes home to check on him and change his dressing. Anxious about his recovery and still in pain, Manoj tells us that he has an X-ray visit to the hospital in the evening and that he will tell us when the plaster would come off after the visit. But he is sure about one thing, that after his recovery, he won't return to Mumbai and instead will try and find work close to his village instead.



Case Study

Creating an ecosystem of psychosocial support for marginalised communities



One of the major implications of ‘social isolation’ brought on by the pandemic often goes unreported, and is rarely addressed with sensitivity. This is the issue of the mental health of those already affected in a material way – particularly marginalised communities who are more vulnerable in such situations. Jan Sahas looks to create an ecosystem of support that is holistic. Those who reach out for help are given psychosocial support through counselling by our trained in-house therapists. Attending to the many distress calls on Jan Sahas’s toll-free helpline numbers for migrant labourers and receiving case references from welfare workers on the ground, Jan Sahas staff found that many low wage earners had been experiencing severe anxiety, fear and even suicidal tendencies, and often had nowhere to turn to.

When Rajesh* first called, he was anxious about contracting COVID-19. Stuck with fifty other migrant workers at a temporary shelter in Gurgaon, he was unable to isolate himself and his mother from the crowd. His anxiety was getting worse as he saw images in the news that conveyed the state of unrest in the country because of the lockdown. Already in a precarious situation, he realised that getting a job in this climate would be close to impossible. The Jan Sahas counsellor who got his call during the lockdown, had regular conversations guiding him with ways to keep his anxiety under control, and also be able to imagine a future, while also weighing practical options before him. These online sessions were significant in restoring some confidence and providing comfort in these disorienting times.

For some, the pandemic and the chaos that it has sown in the country has served as a trigger for dark periods from the past. Nitin* from Gwalior had a history of self-harm. He first called to get ration support from Jan Sahas, but was referred to the counselling team for psychosocial support. The therapist realised that he was seriously contemplating suicide and decided to keep following up with him every day. Not having any money to buy basics, he had to sell his gas cylinder to make ends meet. Still unable to provide for

his family, he moved into his brother's house which left him restless, depressed, and filled with self-doubt. He spoke about taking his life as a solution.

Though cash relief was provided to him, what he needed the most was to be able to approach life from a position of strength, and to find belief that things are going to get better. He made great progress through conversations with the Jan Sahas therapist - from saying that he was uncertain about whether he would be alive in the next hour, he started looking forward to the Jan Sahas call every day. A truly inspiring transformation, it outlines the importance of mental health support in such trying times.

Jan Sahas counsellors have been creating a safe space for migrant workers to talk about their problems that have been intensified by the lockdown and COVID-19. The counselling team also prepared posters listing strategies to understand and deal with the psychosocial effects of COVID-19. These have been widely disseminated on social media in two languages. Jan Sahas helplines continue to be open for migrant workers looking for support.

***Name changed to preserve anonymity**

'They don't want to die here': Inside a migrant labour helpline during Covid-19

Part of a team of 15, Bahadur Singh Ahirwal's helpline would get 700-900 calls a day at the peak of lockdown, from people who had been hungry for days, separated from their families, looking for a way home. A 'matter of life and death', they decided no call would go unattended

BY MONICA BATHIJA

4 min read

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Image: Bahadur Singh Ahirwal says that with cases in such dire need, the job took an emotional toll on the team.

Mental Health posters for COVID-19

Common Concerns During COVID-19

The current pandemic has had a detrimental effect on people's everyday lives. Some of the ways COVID-19 and the lockdown may be affecting us are discussed below.

Personal Concerns

Fear and uncertainty: Worries from home have led to a change in everyday routine, with many people feeling a sense of isolation and uncertainty about the future. This is a natural response to the current situation and it is important to acknowledge these feelings.

Health

Many people worry about their own health as well as the health of their loved ones. This includes a lot of worrying about the possibility of getting infected, and a lot of worry about the possibility of losing someone to the virus.

Survival and Financial Safety Concerns

Basic Needs: Due to the lockdown, many people have lost their jobs and are struggling to meet their basic needs. This includes a lack of food, shelter, and financial resources.

Societal Concerns

Stigma: The current COVID-19 situation has created a lot of stigma and discrimination against people who are infected or suspected to be infected. This is a harmful and unfair way to treat people and it is important to challenge these stereotypes.

For any further help and support, please call on toll-free numbers: Migrant Labourers can call on Jan Sahas Helpline Number: 18002000213 For Women and Child related issues: 18002000252 You can also write to us at counseling@jansahasindia.org

Coping with the Psychosocial Effects of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a lot of psychosocial distress by affecting our mental health, social connections, and daily life. Here are some ways that we can manage this stress and cope with the challenges it presents.

Shift your focus

Focus on what you can control: Instead of worrying about things you can't control, focus on what you can control. This could be your daily routine, your diet, or your exercise.

Manage your emotions

Use strategies you have used in the past to manage your emotions: Think about times when you have successfully managed your emotions in the past and use those strategies again.

Give yourself a routine, with time for exercise and fun

Try to maintain a structured routine with some activities and things to look forward to: Having a routine can help you feel more in control and give you something to look forward to each day.

Balance work and home responsibilities

Set boundaries between work and home: Try to create a clear distinction between your work and your home life. This could mean setting a specific time for work and a specific time for relaxation.

Reach out to friends and family

Don't be afraid to ask for help: It is okay to ask for help from your friends and family. They may be able to provide you with emotional support or practical assistance.

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Responding to Loved Ones in Distress

We're sure that the current situation has affected everyone. We may sometimes observe signs of distress in our loved ones, but they may not be able to tell us. Here are some ways that we can respond to them when they are in distress.

Remember their feelings

Validate a connection to what they're feeling: Let them know that you understand how they're feeling and that their feelings are valid.

Keep their story in mind

Don't forget a conversation if you don't have the space to respond immediately: If you don't have time to respond immediately, let them know that you will respond to them when you have the chance.

Be a good listener

Don't interrupt them: Let them finish what they're saying before you respond.

Be a good supporter

Don't give advice unless they ask for it: Sometimes people just need someone to listen to them and offer support.

For any further help and support, please call on toll-free numbers: Migrant Labourers can call on Jan Sahas Helpline Number: 18002000213 For Women and Child related issues: 18002000252 You can also write to us at counseling@jansahasindia.org

Identifying Signs of Distress

We all have ups and downs in life and we are able to cope with them in some ways. However, it is important to recognize and reach out for help when unpleasant feelings or emotions interfere with our daily activities and disrupt our routine.

Thoughts to look out for

- Worrying excessively
- Having trouble concentrating and being confused
- Withdrawing from those around you
- Having negative thoughts about yourself or the future

Feelings & Emotions to attend to

- Feeling nervous, anxious or scared
- Feeling angry or irritable about what is happening
- Feeling hopeless about what is to come
- Feeling restless about yourself
- Experiencing a lot of irritability and anger

Behavioural and Physical Signs

- Noticing a change in your sleeping pattern
- Eating a lot of food or not eating at all
- Using substances more than usual
- Experiencing frequent and unexplained physical problems that don't go away with treatment
- Crying frequently
- Feeling tired and having low energy

For any further help and support, please call on toll-free numbers: Migrant Labourers can call on Jan Sahas Helpline Number: 18002000213 For Women and Child related issues: 18002000252 You can also write to us at counseling@jansahasindia.org

Taking Care of Yourself During COVID-19

The current pandemic and the lockdown have changed many aspects of our lives. In such uncertain times, it becomes even more important to take care of ourselves, both physically and mentally, in a regular basis. Some ways you can do this are:

Take care of your physical health

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Wear a face mask when you are in public places.
- Avoid going to crowded places and avoid shaking hands with others.
- Get enough sleep and eat a healthy diet.

Take care of your mental health

- Practice self-compassion and be kind to yourself.
- Limit the time you spend on social media and news.
- Reach out to friends and family for support.

For any further help and support, please call on toll-free numbers: Migrant Labourers can call on Jan Sahas Helpline Number: 18002000213 For Women and Child related issues: 18002000252 You can also write to us at counseling@jansahasindia.org

कोविड - 19 के दौरान सामान्य परेशानियाँ

कोविड - 19 के दौरान हम अनेक तरह की परेशानियाँ का सामना कर रहे हैं। इन परेशानियों को ठीक से पहचानना और उनसे निपटारना हमारे लिए बहुत जरूरी है।

आम स्वास्थ्य परेशानियाँ

- ज्वर, बुखार, शरीर में दर्द, थकान, कमजोरी, सांस लेने में तकलीफ, गला घोंघा, खांसी, और शरीर में लालिमा।

मानसिक स्वास्थ्य परेशानियाँ

- चिंता, तनाव, उदासता, निराशा, और अकेलापन।

हम इन परेशानियों से निपटारे के लिए कुछ बातें ध्यान में रख सकते हैं।

For any further help and support, please call on toll-free numbers: Migrant Labourers can call on Jan Sahas Helpline Number: 18002000213 For Women and Child related issues: 18002000252 You can also write to us at counseling@jansahasindia.org

परेशानी के संकेतों की पहचान करना

हम सभी की परेशानी में अनेक संकेत होते हैं। इन संकेतों को पहचानना हमारे लिए बहुत जरूरी है।

मानसिक स्वास्थ्य के संकेत

- अचानक अलग होना, चिंता, तनाव, उदासता, निराशा, और अकेलापन।

शारीरिक स्वास्थ्य के संकेत

- ज्वर, बुखार, शरीर में दर्द, थकान, कमजोरी, सांस लेने में तकलीफ, गला घोंघा, खांसी, और शरीर में लालिमा।

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कोविड-19 के मनोसामाजिक प्रभावों का सामना करना

कोविड-19 के दौरान हम अनेक तरह की मनोसामाजिक परेशानियों का सामना कर रहे हैं। इन परेशानियों को ठीक से पहचानना और उनसे निपटारना हमारे लिए बहुत जरूरी है।

आम स्वास्थ्य परेशानियाँ

- ज्वर, बुखार, शरीर में दर्द, थकान, कमजोरी, सांस लेने में तकलीफ, गला घोंघा, खांसी, और शरीर में लालिमा।

मानसिक स्वास्थ्य परेशानियाँ

- चिंता, तनाव, उदासता, निराशा, और अकेलापन।

हम इन परेशानियों से निपटारे के लिए कुछ बातें ध्यान में रख सकते हैं।

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परेशानी के समय प्रियजनों की देखभाल कैसे करें

परेशानी के समय हमारे प्रियजनों की देखभाल करना हमारे लिए बहुत जरूरी है।

आम स्वास्थ्य परेशानियाँ

- ज्वर, बुखार, शरीर में दर्द, थकान, कमजोरी, सांस लेने में तकलीफ, गला घोंघा, खांसी, और शरीर में लालिमा।

मानसिक स्वास्थ्य परेशानियाँ

- चिंता, तनाव, उदासता, निराशा, और अकेलापन।

हम इन परेशानियों से निपटारे के लिए कुछ बातें ध्यान में रख सकते हैं।

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कोविड-19 के दौरान स्वयं की देखभाल करना

कोविड-19 के दौरान हमारे स्वयं की देखभाल करना हमारे लिए बहुत जरूरी है।

आम स्वास्थ्य परेशानियाँ

- ज्वर, बुखार, शरीर में दर्द, थकान, कमजोरी, सांस लेने में तकलीफ, गला घोंघा, खांसी, और शरीर में लालिमा।

मानसिक स्वास्थ्य परेशानियाँ

- चिंता, तनाव, उदासता, निराशा, और अकेलापन।

हम इन परेशानियों से निपटारे के लिए कुछ बातें ध्यान में रख सकते हैं।

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Part VI: Supporting survivors of gender violence

Outbreaks like COVID-19 threaten the health of all. But women and girls are disproportionately affected. During epidemics, the very measures that are taken to protect populations and keep health systems afloat leave women and girls especially vulnerable to violence. As communities around the world are forced to stay at home, women and girls are at a heightened risk of domestic violence, intimate partner violence, child abuse, and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence.



**1,237 survivors
received support
during the
lockdown period.**

During the lockdown period it is difficult for various stakeholders to reach out to women at risk, as the system is operational at a very limited level. The Jan Sahas survivor support team in collaboration with the helpline team conducted regular follow up calls with all the cases recorded in the system. They collaborated with the Police department, media & news agencies and survivor forums across the country. The Jan Sahas team monitored the situation with strong network partnerships with local NGOs and CBOs in 20 states in India - **1,237 survivors received support during the lockdown period.**

Case Study

“If he killed my mother, who would I turn to?”



The idea of “home as sacred” has always been a popular notion within mainstream discourse. During the lockdown, in fact, the conflation of home with safety, shelter and comfort has only become more conspicuous. The rhetoric and endorsement of “stay at home” as the answer to the threat of the virus, and images and reports of “migrants returning home” in huge droves, has only served to fortify the articulation of the home as a safe space. However, the reality is that home is far from a haven for many women and children. It is a well-established fact that in a majority of rape cases that take place, the accused is known to the survivor and more often than not, a member of the family. Additionally, the lockdown has exacerbated social isolation, making it more difficult for survivors and those trapped within toxic familial situations to reach out for help. In this context, it becomes more important that we are vigilant and support systems are made more robust.

The irony is searing for Kavita*, a 13-year-old girl from Bundelkhand region, MP, for whom home had become a space filled with horror for more than a year even before the lockdown. Jan Sahas field coordinator, Pramila, has been closely working on Kavita’s case for about 11 to 12 months now. Pramila came to know of Kavita’s plight through a local police station. The 13-year old girl was five months pregnant when her case was filed. This was discovered when the child had missed her menstrual cycle that month and was experiencing pain in her stomach. She was taken to the hospital and after finding out that she was pregnant, Kavita reluctantly revealed that she had been sexually assaulted by her step-father for close to a year. An FIR was registered and the accused was taken into police custody and put into jail.

Kavita’s situation is particularly fraught. Her mother, Neelu*, was also pregnant by the accused (and she was due only a month after Kavita). The accused had been able to get away with his vile acts by threatening the survivor that if she revealed his secret, he would kill her mother. This made the situation deeply traumatic for Kavita, whose constant source of support and pillar of care had been her mother. Gradually, in regular

conversations with Pramila, Kavita articulated this helplessness - *"If he killed my mother, who would I turn to?"* Her step-father has a history of violence and she was forced to face his abuse without saying a word about what she was going through. Pramila also observed that social stigma, the subsequent shaming of the mother and the girl by others in the village, and inside the house even the accused's family members blamed them for the whole incident, and these things only validated Kavita's worst fears.

Neelu is a migrant from Chhattisgarh, and was already facing difficulties in access to essential services and welfare. Kavita didn't have any documents - no birth certificate, identification, or Aadhar card. She had never been to school. This was a major barrier in delivering any kind of care to the survivor, and one of the important areas that Jan Sahas has been addressing even during the lockdown. In fact, Pramila observed that initially, the situation was dire, with the hospital unwilling to admit her or give any care. Additionally, since the accused was the sole breadwinner, they did not have any money, or means to organise food, clothing and nourishment. Thus, Jan Sahas had to provide resources, support and care on multiple fronts including medical attention for both the survivor and her mother.

Immediately after the registration of the case, Jan Sahas had begun the process of applying for supporting documents and ensuring entitlements. To handle the weak financial situation, Jan Sahas provided funds and medical care through other humanitarian organisations (including the Red Cross). Pramila observes that the seriousness of the case was such that many institutional systems and individuals bent their rules in order to ensure that the survivor would receive support. A bank account was created and funds were secured through the help of the District Collector's office and bank manager. The child was very young and there were many complications during delivery including multiple C-sections, heavy loss of blood, which was further compounded by her rare blood group.

Jan Sahas managed to secure blood for the patient, provide rations and support her with medical care. While Kavita and Neelu were taken care of and even Neelu's second girl child delivered, Kavita's baby girl died two months before the lockdown due to pneumonia. Pramila falls momentarily silent as she recounts this traumatic experience.

She talks about how difficult it has been to reintegrate the mother and daughter into society, provide them with adequate support and the means for a fresh start. This period

has been critical and has coincided with the extended lockdown. Both mother and daughter are weak and battered, and the mother is not in a state to work. Local *Anganwadis* and the welfare system had not accepted Kavita because of her age (too old for one bracket, and too young for the other), and the mother because she is a migrant. But Jan Sahas managed to overcome this hurdle and has linked both of them to ICDS services, even working with local authorities to harness support from *Anganwadis* and other institutions. From injections to medicines and periodic tests, and securing of official documents (including MGNREGA documents so that the dependency on the accused could be ended) the field coordinator has been fully involved on a daily basis.

Through daily conversations with the mother and daughter, Pramila has sought to blunt the sharp edge of emotional trauma. After leaving the hospital, the survivor and her mother had nowhere to go but the house of the accused's family. This turned out to be a terrible ordeal and using the lockdown as a cover, the family had been mistreating, threatening and abusing them in attempts to get them to leave the house. Pramila immediately reported this to the police, and the police intervened, warning that if any further trouble was caused, an FIR would be filed.

Pramila observes that a beacon of light in this entire traumatic course of events has been the strong mother-daughter bond. Neelu has been the driving force, pushing Kavita to fight and shielding her as best as she can. She does this even as she deflects the barbs that society and the accused's family continuously shower on her. Much of Pramila's effort goes into strengthening the resolve of the mother and daughter in dealing with these tribulations.

For them, the future is uncertain, but Pramila has become like family and even as the lockdown cuts deeper into their lives, they are able to find individual strength in the strong female relationships of care and support that have developed to deal with the present. Kavita is slowly beginning to see the possibility of a future where she along with her mother will have the means to a dignified life, and perhaps, she can put this ordeal behind her.



***Names changed to preserve anonymity**

Case Study

Lockdown has forced survivors to stay with the perpetrator

On the evening of 21st April, 2020, during the lockdown, six year old Meena* was playing outside her mud house in the outskirts of a village in the Bundelkhand region. As it began to get dark, a young boy abducted her and whisked her away, unseen by her parents or anyone in the area. After some time, when her parents noticed her absence, they started looking everywhere in the area. At around 10 pm at night, when there was still no trace of her, they alerted the local police station. The police arrived 2 hours later, but could not find the child all night. The next morning, a little distance from the house, a 12-year-old boy from the village found Meena gagged, with her hands and feet tied and her eyes heavily injured. She was in this battered state thrust into a hole in a wall. The parents arrived on the scene with the police. After giving her medical attention, the child immediately told the mother about her assailant – that she was raped by the adopted son of the village *Sarpanch*. The accused was caught and arrested within 4-6 hours of the FIR being filed. During the act, the accused injured Meena severely in the eyes and in an operation that was performed soon after, she lost vision in one eye completely.



Jan Sahas field coordinator, Anjali found out about the case through the media and a message circulated in response groups in the area. She has been on the field responding to distress calls even during the lockdown and arrived at the local police station 2-3 days after the girl was found. She spoke to the parents, both of whom are daily wage labourers who worked in the fields, or did any other work they would get in the area. Their situation was quite bad during the lockdown. Anjali helped them with dry ration and assured them that she would be in touch and help them in all possible ways. As it was the *Sarpanch's* adopted son who was accused, there was a tacit fear among the people and they were not helpful. However, the district collector gave the survivor's family a compensation of Rs. 25,000.

The field coordinator is constantly in touch with the child and has become so close to the survivor that she constantly asks to talk to her on the phone.

Meena's story is not isolated. Under the cover of the lockdown, there have been stories of rapes of unattended minors, and those separated from their families because of the closing of borders and restrictions on movement. While Meena's rapist was a youth from the village, 8-year-old Bhanu* was raped by her own uncle, who lived close by in the same village (Bundelkhand district). He took advantage of the fact that her parents were migrant labourers who were stuck in Delhi because of the lockdown. The parents had left the two children with Bhanu's grandmother. However, her uncle stole into the house when the grandmother was out in the fields, and her 10-year-old brother was playing outside. He raped her threatening to kill her if she told anyone.

One day Bhanu's older brother saw his uncle in the house and subsequently questioned Bhanu about the incident. This is when the truth emerged and the grandmother, an aunt and an uncle who was staying nearby were immediately informed. Bhanu's uncle was caught only after raping her regularly for almost twenty days during the lockdown. Anjali supported the family, and even spoke to the parents when they eventually managed to reach the village. The parents, even after finding out about their child being raped by a close relative, were unable to find a way back to the village for another week.

Jan Sahas supported the family with a lawyer to assist the public prosecutor and brief the family and facilitate any legal help that was required. Additionally, the family was given ration support, and the field coordinator provided care and support through regular conversation with the child so that she felt secure and safe during the pandemic. Anjali recounts how the child constantly asked about school in the last conversation they had just a day before,

"Mujhe padhna hain. Mujhe school jana hain. School kab chalu hoga?" (I want to study. I want to go to school. When will school begin?)

****Name changed to preserve anonymity***



The extended lockdown left many poor and marginalised people with no income, source of food and way of returning home. **Jan Sahas, with support of over 40 local grassroots organisations and volunteers reached out to more than 1 million families in 90 districts and 15 states across India.** The states included Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Assam, Haryana and West Bengal.

Requests poured in from all corners to provide support to returning migrant workers and their families. In huge numbers, migrant workers had little resources left to feed their families or even buy basic essential items. In such cases, local partners started their intervention by consolidating the list of most vulnerable persons. Once the lists were prepared, Jan Sahas supported local organisations to purchase

ration kits and groceries. These kits were locally prepared and distributed by partners, at all times maintaining physical distancing and taking care of the safety of the people.

There were even cases where special support was required by individuals or group of workers. The Needs Assessment team along with local partners did the basic verification and tried to accommodate maximum support with limited resources. The list of our beneficiaries included the most severely affected from lockdowns such as the Dalits, adivasis, single women, nomadic and denotified tribes, sex workers, bonded labor and adolescent girls. Looking at the needs of communities, Jan Sahas along with partners worked day and night to help, despite all odds of lockdown, non-availability of transportation, workforce and others.

Several volunteers associated with Jan Sahas from various universities and alumni group to organise relief activities in far-flung areas to reach out to most vulnerable people. Preparations of ration distribution were done with the joint support of Jan Sahas and locals.

Over three months this growing collaboration of local organisations across the country has helped Jan Sahas to reach out to those who have suffered the most and have been in need of help. Additionally, collaboration with the various state government and local authorities played a huge role. Due to the coordination with the Police department, the relief team was able to complete all required compliances for e-passes to travel across district and state. In the later phase of the lockdown close coordination with the government helped us to register workers' train tickets, or buses for workers returning home.

Jan Sahas was able to complete more than 10 major activities under COVID Relief Response **through the support of 40 plus institutional donors and more than 1000 individual donors.**



Local partners



Institutional donors

 Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives		 British Asian Trust	 OMIDYAR NETWORK INDIA	 EdelGive Foundation An Edelweiss Initiative
 HT Parekh FOUNDATION BY INITIATIVE OF HDFC	 Apax FOUNDATION	 MACQUARIE	 AXIS BANK FOUNDATION	 swades FOUNDATION Rural Empowerment
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 ING FOUNDATION	 IAHV INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR HUMAN VALUES	 Fidelity	 GMSP GOD MY SILENT PARTNER FOUNDATION	 CHOITHRAM FERTILISERS
 The Ashmore Foundation	 AMPLIFYCHANGE	 AMERICAN TOWER	 Aavishkaar Group	 Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd Formerly known as NHFL. Vision: Housing Finance for ALL GHAR BANEGA, TOH DESH BANEGA.
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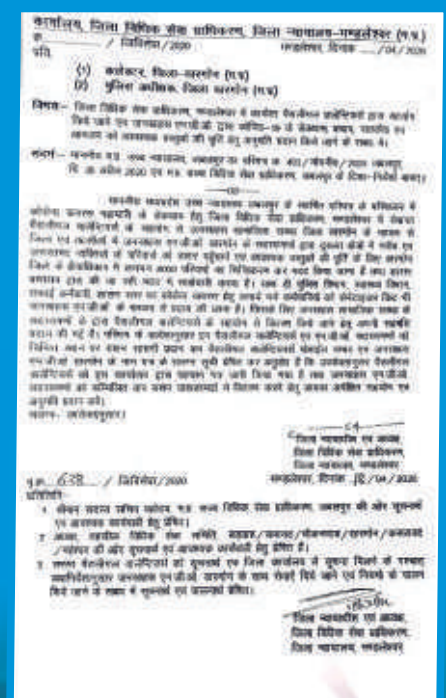
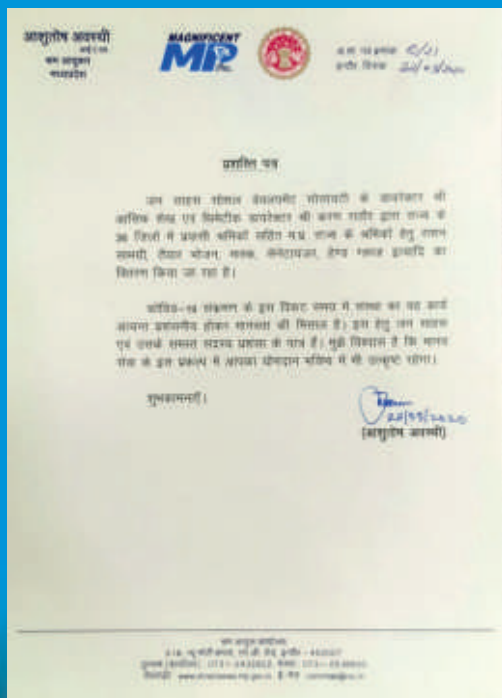
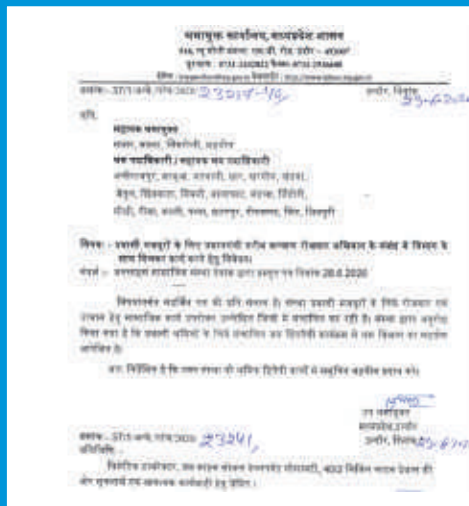
Platforms Partner for crowdfunding



Employee contribution



Recognitions and letters of collaboration with Government



Collaboration with State Governments for Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Rozgar Abhiyan

Jan Sahas with the collaboration of state governments will spread the information regarding Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Rozgar Abhiyan. To accomplish this, an awareness campaign has been launched in six implementing states. Currently with the presence in 62 districts of these states, Jan Sahas' respective field team has started the campaign on ground. Implementing teams are using creative materials such as audio-video, pamphlet, poster and banners to disseminate the information under Rozgar Abhiyan.

Madhya Pradesh is one of the implementing states for Garib Kalyan Rozgar Abhiyan. Jan Sahas has collaborated with the M.P Labour Department to spread the information related to Abhiyan, as an NGO partner. Objective of this collaboration is to support the Government Department in implementation and employment generation under the Abhiyan. We are also connecting to NGOs in various other districts to run similar campaigns and empower SHGs to help the rural development department in the implementation of the Abhiyan. The aim is to ensure that every needy person who is entitled to work under the Abhiyan is not left behind.

श्रम विभाग, मध्य प्रदेश शासन एवं जन साहस के सहयोग से राज्य में जागरूकता और प्रचार प्रसार कार्य के लिए

प्रवासी मजदूरों के लिए
प्रधानमंत्री गरीब कल्याण रोजगार अभियान

कई सरकारें हैं जो यह योजना प्रवासी मजदूरों के लिए प्रारम्भ की गयी है। इस के अंतर्गत गाँवों में आर्थिक/श्रमिक संरचना वाली कि समुदाय/ग्राम पंचायत की ओर और जो मजदूर शहरी के आगे और बाहर जा रहे हैं और वे रोजगार के लिए 125 दिन के लिए रोजगार मिलेगा।

इस योजना के उद्देश्य-

- शहरों से लौटे प्रवासी मजदूरों को रोजगार देना
- गाँवों में सार्वजनिक सुविधाओं की रचना करके उनका समाज रूप से विकास करना

यह योजना अभी मध्य प्रदेश के 24 जिलों में संचालित की जायेगी

योजना के प्रचार प्रसार लिए जन साहस द्वारा जर्मनी में जारी 18002000211

कोविड-19 (कोरोना वायरस) संकट में मजदूर और श्रमिकों की सहायता के लिए जन साहस हेल्पलाइन संकट

प्रवासी मजदूरों के लिए
प्रधानमंत्री गरीब कल्याण रोजगार अभियान

यह योजना किस के लिए है ?
यह योजना के अंतर्गत प्रवासी मजदूरों को 125 दिन का रोजगार प्रदान किया जाएगा।

यह योजना में किसे दिना के रोजगार का प्रचारण है ?
यह योजना के अंतर्गत प्रवासी मजदूरों को 125 दिन का रोजगार प्रदान किया जाएगा।

यह योजना की शुरुआत कब हुई ?
यह योजना का शुभारम्भ 22 जून 2020 को किया गया था।

यह योजना के अंतर्गत किसे तरह के कार्य संचालित किए गए हैं ?
यह योजना के अंतर्गत प्रवासी मजदूरों को 125 दिन का रोजगार प्रदान किया जाएगा।

यह योजना की क्या उद्देश्य है ?
यह योजना के अंतर्गत प्रवासी मजदूरों को 125 दिन का रोजगार प्रदान किया जाएगा।

यह योजना अभी देश के 6 राज्यों के 116 जिलों में संचालित की जायेगी

योजना के प्रचार प्रसार लिए जन साहस द्वारा जर्मनी में जारी 18002000211

कोविड-19 (कोरोना वायरस) संकट में मजदूर और श्रमिकों की सहायता के लिए जन साहस हेल्पलाइन संकट

Case Study

Long term transformation and systemic change is possible only through partnership

The reality of the extended lockdown, while being completely unanticipated and marred by difficulties, has also witnessed some fruitful and effective systems of support emerge out of necessity. This includes on-ground collaborations between different organisations, and the formation of strategic alliances towards the mammoth task of providing support for stranded marginalised groups and vulnerable people across the country. P. Naveen Kumar, Vice President on the board of the Jan Sahas Social Development Society, talks about how the specific circumstances of this period led to the formation of a consortium of NGOs who worked together in Telangana. He leads an NGO called Progressive Education Foundation, and as a result of working for many years in the domain, at a strategic and managerial level, his network is deep rooted, diverse and based on a deep understanding of the issues on the ground.

“Initially we did not anticipate that the lockdown would extend for so long. We thought things would open up in May. But as the second lockdown was announced we saw migrant labourers pouring on to the roads in huge numbers. It was at that point that we felt we should organise and use our resources for relief work.”

Naveen got in touch with several organisations and individuals in Hyderabad, and an informal information sharing network and collective was formed. Different kinds of forces came together to form this multi-functional and diverse support consortium. This included NGOs like Progressive Education Foundation, Disha, Bhumika, Swearos, Nalsar University alumni, doctors and lawyers, local media professionals, the government teachers’ forum and even government officials. In fact this consortium was in touch with the state helpline team and there was constant sharing and



gathering of information and resources for support and mobilisation. Jan Sahas was involved as one of the partners in establishing these connections, and in providing direct monetary support for services and resources. This informal group not only contributed to relief activities but also discerned and brought to the fore deep rooted systemic social issues.

Naveen observes that their area of work has been in the Vikarabad district, a “Telangana gateway” of sorts, falling on the Karnataka-Telangana border. Since they were situated off the national highway, in the last village, they came in direct contact with the dual exodus (coming as well as going) of huge numbers of migrant labourers heading home on foot and on cycles.

The work started with the provision of cooked food to migrant workers. They set up a temporary shelter at a school, and this served as base. They organised logistical support and facilitated the return of migrant workers back to their homes, along with food and essentials. With monetary support from Jan Sahas, the collective organised 4 buses (2 to Orissa, and 2 to Chhattisgarh) - a total of approximately 200 people. 2 more buses to Orissa were arranged through the Nalsar University Alumni Network, who contributed to the effort through Jan Sahas.

The collective identified people who were vulnerable and had no means of livelihood during the lockdown - primarily construction labourers, small enterprise owners, workers, and daily wagers. Jan Sahas’s monetary support also went towards the provision of dry rations for 250 families from within this group. Additionally, the team facilitated the return of 315 brick kiln workers via the *shramik* trains. This included transport from Vikarabad to Hyderabad, logistical support and registration and documentation that ensured smooth return journeys.



A major area of activity was the support of around 8000 migrant labourers (mostly construction labourers) in the Vikarabad region itself, who came back from Pune and Mumbai. They have been supported with dry rations. Naveen talks about the deep

systemic issues, and the problems of social stigma that emerged out of his experience with these people who were returning home.

"I have seen families who came on foot or on cycles, travelling miles to finally reach their homes. Initially, they could not go back to their villages, because of quarantine measures. In Telangana, the quarantine period was often more than 20 days. The state hadn't provided adequate quarantine shelters and services, so many of them were staying in farms, under trees, in places with no food, electricity or proper shelter. Some were staying in government schools as well. After this ordeal, when the labourers left quarantine, many of them were not allowed back into their villages by the locals. The stigma of the virus was so strong among these people. In many such cases we brought up this problem and worked with local administration, and the Police had to intervene to ensure that they were allowed into their homes."

When they collected data from this mass of labourers they found that most of them did not have any official documentation that would safeguard them and give them rights. They had no labour cards, MNREGA or BOCW cards. The team got involved in this long-term, comprehensive work of connecting people with the government through official registration and documentation, and establishing these systems so that they know about and have access to their entitlements. He talks about the extent of this problem in the larger context of exacerbation of the employment crisis through the lockdown.

"A significant thing I noticed is that people want work. They had already suffered two months of no work because of the lockdown. They had taken loans and were put under more stress because they would not be able to pay them back because of no work and therefore, no income. I have personally interacted with almost 400 labourers. They all expressed distress at not having any employment opportunities. None of them had labour cards. They are deprived of these schemes."

The formation and activities of this multi-functional collective of organisations and individuals itself, is a shining example of the way civil society responds to high pressure situations such as the pandemic or a lockdown. The work that they do is not temporary, and shows a commitment to long term transformation at a systemic level.

Case Study

Every contribution and effort is important at this time of crisis

As we have seen across many stories, the pandemic has caused a collapse in social institutions and systems of support for citizens. Healthcare, sanitation and food distribution mechanisms have not been able to cope with the suspension of regular activities, the increasing restrictions in movement, and the rising number of Corona positive cases. In such an environment, ordinary people have sprung into action, and selflessly worked, along with civil society organisations towards filling this gap. Zaiba Alladin's story is one such example of an ordinary person going out of their way to help people who are not as lucky or privileged as them.

Zaiba is a 9th grade student from Chaitanya Vidyalay School in Secunderabad, Telangana, who wanted to do her part in dealing with this humanitarian crisis. Her words are filled with sensitivity and concern as she observed the effects of the pandemic and the lockdown around her:



“Because of the lockdown, schools were closed so I was at home. Every day through the newspaper, I’d see how different walks of life were affected by the lockdown... Usually, the rich and the middle class would worry about how they’d miss out on their holiday, or going back to their hometown. But the actual struggles would be faced by the poor, who cannot even afford a single square meal. A lot of disturbing images would come in the papers, particularly about migrant workers”

Zaiba observes that when she read about this issue, she realised that this is not a “new issue” and that this has come to the limelight now because of the media’s focus during the lockdown. She felt the urge to “do something”, to help in any way that she could. One of her friends had started a fundraiser for frontline medical workers, and seeing this effort, Zaiba felt that she could do something like this for migrant workers.

Zaiba did her own research on the internet and found a list put together by Amnesty International, of organisations worldwide that worked in the domain of human rights. After whetting a few organisations culled from this list, she checked up on the work done

by Jan Sahas. She looked through the organisation's website and its various associations, including Aamir Khan's *Satyamev Jayate* episode that focussed on Jan Sahas's work with manual scavengers, and a Ted Talk on the work done for survivors of sexual violence. She talks of how the inception story of Ashif Shaikh, Jan Sahas's founder, bringing together a group of people to fight for the death of a child labourer in a factory, really inspired her. Moreover, the association of the organisation for more than 20 years with the manual scavengers' community on the field was something that she found unique. Zaiba felt an instant connection to Jan Sahas's efforts directed towards "making people's lives better" and she wrote directly to the team based on the information she found online.

She got a prompt response from Jan Sahas's communication team the very next day, something that endeared her to the organisation even more.

"I was very happy to receive such an immediate response, because that showed that the organisation looked through their online presence and is serious about the humanitarian work. That was something I liked a lot."

After getting in touch, she was guided on the possibilities for collaboration and how she could contribute to Jan Sahas's existing campaigns with manual scavengers, from her home itself. She was struck by the plight of this group of people who were doing the work of sanitation and cleaning with limited equipment even during the lockdown, and she wanted her efforts to go specifically to this cause. She notes that this was important because *"nobody else is talking about this community"*.

Zaiba set up a page on the fundraising campaign platform Milaap that further connected it with an existing Jan Sahas initiative with the Avishkaar group. This campaign would provide healthcare material and ration for these workers in 8 districts of Bihar. She shared the page through her own social networks with families and friends and received a tremendous response. Within a week's time, Zaiba had managed to raise Rs. 86,500 for the cause.

Zaiba's story of self-driven, proactive humanitarian efforts stands out as an example of the power of will and determination. The collaboration with Jan Sahas and the successful fundraising effort by a sensitive individual at such a young age is deeply heartening. Zaiba's social commitment is clear - she says that she wants to be a lawyer

working closely with human rights when she grows up. From a very young age she has been inspired and encouraged by her parents. Her mother runs an organisation called READ that educates underprivileged children in Kerala, and Zaiba has seen this work from close quarters. Her father has always talked to her about the importance of this kind of work for society and how it is institutionalised as a part of their religion, wherein a portion of the family's income is given in charity to the underprivileged as *Zakat*. Zaiba is happy that her contribution through Jan Sahas will help better the lives of the manual scavengers in some way. This kind of collaboration is an important instance of how ordinary people can reach out to civil society organisations and can work together towards the transformation of community structures and processes that they themselves are a part of.





Part VIII: The journeys of Jan Sahas team members and challenges



A 986 member team was actively working on the COVID Relief Response initiatives in 9 states across India

Jan Sahas's special team of members with various skill sets was monitoring issues and government guidelines from the second week of March 2020. As soon as the lockdown was announced the team proactively forged connections with various local partners including police departments and government helpline teams. In the first week of April 2020, Jan Sahas had assigned new roles and responsibilities to the field staff. A 986 member team was actively working on the COVID Relief Response initiatives in 9 states across India within the first 21 days after the announcement of the lockdown. Each member of the team was trained and well informed about safety and precautions for the prevention of COVID-19 infection. Online sessions on the safety of team members and monitoring of data were conducted at each level. As offices were not open, all the team leads and program coordinators connected for a daily team meeting and updates on an online platform for strategising the action plan and consolidation learnings from the field.

Jan Sahas Relief Response and Needs Assessment were the two teams responsible for the coordination of all the relief activity and resource mobilisation. Within the first week of lockdown, through our discussion with various stakeholders, Jan Sahas understood the magnitude of the crisis. For a systematic approach, it was important to have an assessment of the ground reality. As a result, a rapid assessment was conducted with more than 3000 migrant workers from Central India with the help of the research and helpline team. This research was helpful in drafting the framework of our activities on the ground. On 5th April 2020, a report "**Voices of the Invisible Citizens**" based on the rapid assessment was released. It focused on the findings and recommendations for various stakeholders at each level. This report was the first such report in India that focused on the situation of the vulnerable communities and action plan to be incorporated. This report was heavily circulated in India and the international level. Several media and news stories featured the report and its recommendations and initiated a discussion around the relief related action plan and a long term plan to support all the communities affected by the crisis.

Systemic changes and restructuring of the internal Jan Sahas team were conducted parallelly to adapt to current situations. As the team members were working from various locations, monitoring and data management of each activity was important for the intended impact. The team adopted the Survey CTO app to capture data for the distribution of rations, and other material support. All the field team members were trained through a video manual on the Survey CTO system. Survey CTO is a platform available for offline data collection, which helped in capturing remote data collections. Post training sessions, a series of discussions was carried out so that field teams do not face any challenges during the data entry and simultaneously ensure accurate distribution of rations to these vulnerable groups. Since the data was captured almost on a real-time basis, the core team had data for all the individuals and families that received ration support from Jan Sahas. A team of five members was put together to conduct verification calls to the beneficiaries. These verification calls were made to 2% of the total beneficiaries who received ration and other material support in a specific village/ block/ district. Every day non-programmatic team members would reach out to 60-70 beneficiaries and enquire about the distribution. Due to this exercise, we were able to support the second round of ration distribution to extremely needy families. This exercise helped strengthen our intervention and showcase the transparency of our work.

Case Study

Every day I came to know different stories of people walking on the street

“My husband works at a toll naka on the highway. When the lockdown was announced, he came back home every evening with stories about hungry and haggard migrant workers making the journey home on foot or on vehicles. Every day, there would be different stories he would relate. Affected by these stories, in the beginning, I went along with my husband and another Jan Sahas field coordinator from my mohalla to distribute masks. When we went there on the field, I saw the long lines of tired and distraught people returning home - women, children, sometimes even little infants. They were on foot or bundled up and crowded into trucks, standing, like animals - maybe even animals may not have survived being packed together in this way. Seeing the state of the people who were passing the toll booth affected us deeply and we felt like we could do more. On our own initiative, we started preparing cooked food and feeding the hungry. We went to the highway and from basti to basti, in different areas in Jhansi, helping those in need, for close to three weeks.”

Archana Valmik has been closely associated with Jan Sahas for many years now. Before her marriage she worked at Jan Sahas with the manual scavenger community in Tikamgarh district, MP. After marriage she moved to Jhansi in UP, but was keen to reconnect and continue her association with Jan Sahas. In 2019, she became part of the Dignity Fellowship, a Jan Sahas initiative. As a Dignity Fellow and community worker, Archana is an active voice on the field from the Jhansi district.



Deeply affected by the plight of workers on the field, Archana took initiative and started relief activities. After the initial phase, she started distributing dry rations and cash transfers through Jan Sahas. Her reports from the field showed a deeper need for concerted and organised efforts in delivering relief packages. She asked her husband to take three days off from his work as well and went to different areas with him. She helped in compiling a list of about 2000 people who were in need of dry ration or cash transfers and eventually received this support from Jan Sahas.

Archana's experiences on the field were deeply harrowing. Being from the Valmiki (manual scavenger) community herself, she has been an active advocate against caste-based discrimination in her work. She talks about an incident in which this dark divide surfaced even during the lockdown. In a village in Jhansi district, after distributing food to a woman, she noticed something strange. The woman walked away with the food, but a few minutes later, she saw the same woman giving those supplies to another person from the village. She realised that this woman must have found out about her caste and immediately dissociated herself from a "low caste" person. After years of facing this kind of discrimination, she recognises it immediately - she talked about how during trips of distribution, she was asked about her caste by local authorities, or others from higher castes and was turned away or refused support - not directly, but citing some non relevant reasons. She recounts several taunts that she and the others would endure on their journey in the field –



“See how bold these people have become.” “They act like they are some big politicians. Look at them showing off their money.” “They have become so shameless that they have started giving out food to others”.

Archana is distraught about such a situation, but puts it behind her and continues fearlessly with her work:

“I do not know when this kind of discrimination will end, but it will, eventually. The road is long and winding, and meanwhile, there are still such a huge number of people to help. While we made lists of several people who needed help, there were still so many more in distress, who may not have made it to the initial surveys. This is always a dilemma... even as we reach out to huge numbers, there are always more who need help. In time, hopefully this will change.”

Case Study

It has been 66 days since I have seen my family

“

When I'd speak to my younger daughter, she would ask me - "When will you come home? When will you come to my room and put me to sleep? When will you eat with us? When will we all go to the bazaar together?"

”

It was difficult to get a hold of Karan Rathod on the phone to speak about his relief work with vulnerable communities. A thematic leader with Jan Sahas, he's been with the organisation since its inception. On the first call, he politely asked if we could do the call in the night because he had to respond to a call about a group of women who were in need of rations. Karan and his team, in tandem with the police and local administration, has been working tirelessly in Devas city and allied rural areas during the lockdown period, to supply dry rations and cooked food to communities of migrant labourers and disadvantaged people at a tremendous scale. While businesses shut down, and contractors refused to take care of workers under them, Karan got quickly into action and organised a team, personally supervising and delivering rations to people in remote areas, many of whom the pandemic had rendered hungry and helpless.

Every day, he would respond to more than 270 SOS calls for help, shared by the local police, the district collectorate and the media, as well as direct calls. The work would start from 8.30am in the morning and go on up till 10-11 pm in the night. Since March 30th, the Jan Sahas team led by Karan, has been delivering close to 15 quintals of dry rations every day. He observes



that 99% of the people who received the rations were women.

He gets emotional when he speaks about the sordid conditions of the people he served - people who had not eaten for two days, women whose husbands are stuck in Gujrat, Maharashtra, people who have nowhere to turn to. *“Many people would fall at our feet, give duas when we came with rations. But we would tell them not to, because it is only in times of direst need when the systems have failed, that a human being would ask for help.”*

His voice echoes with quiet resolve as he speaks about the stringent measures that he had taken to ensure that he, his team or those close to him were safe from COVID - 19. Knowing that huge numbers of people were dependent on the services that he was mobilising, he ensured complete sanitisation, intense isolation, protective gear, and PPE kits (when visiting containment areas). He had visited 19 containment areas during the first two months of the lockdown to deliver rations.

“It has been 66 days since I have seen my family.” he says. Understanding the gravity of the situation, Karan took a difficult decision to protect those closest to him. He quarantined himself completely from his family - his wife and two children - living alone separately in a flat close to them. *“I take food at night the way prisoners are given food in jails... I explained to my family that this work is important. Many lives will be saved, families will eat for 15 days or more.”* His two daughters' birthdays, his own birthday and his wedding anniversary passed during this difficult period of lockdown, but Karan did not take a single day of respite. He talks about the driver who accompanied him every day, and other people in his team who rose to the occasion - people associated with the Jan Sahas who prior to the lockdown did disconnected odd jobs, but wordlessly came together, working for hours on end to make sure rations reached those who needed them.

He is quick to say that he is not a hero, and this work is natural - not to be *valourised*. He repeats the name of the different people in his team who made the relief work possible. Seeing the work of the Jan Sahas team in Dewas, The Labour Commissioner of MP personally called Karan to his office and presented him with a letter of appreciation.



10 غیر متقیم مزدوروں کے درمیان راحتی سامان تقسیم



اسٹی پی (آرام) کے تحت
راحتی سامان کے تقسیم
میں حصہ لے رہے ہیں۔
مزدوروں کے لیے
100 غیر متقیم مزدوروں کے
درمیان راحتی سامان تقسیم کیا گیا۔

آزاد سipaہی

8/12

From Food Grains To PPE Kits, This NGO Leaves No Stones Unturned To Help Migrant Workers Tide Over COVID-19 Crisis

مہیلا মুক্তি संस्था ने राशन वितरण किया

इचाक। महिला मुक्ति संस्था ने जन साहस ऑर्गनाइजेशन के सहयोग से प्रखंड के वॉरियर गांव में खाद्य सामग्री का वितरण किया। इसका...



प्रवासी मजदूरों में राहत सामग्री का वितरण

सकरी, प्रखंड क्षेत्र के बंधने पड़ाव स्थित खनगांव में मंगलवार को सामग्री का वितरण किया गया। राहत वितरण कार्यक्रम का उद्घाटन मधुबनी विकास युवा ट्रस्ट के द्वारा जन सहयोग से प्रवासी मजदूरों के बीच राहत सामग्री का वितरण किया गया। राहत वितरण कार्यक्रम का उद्घाटन मधुबनी विकास युवा ट्रस्ट के द्वारा जन सहयोग से प्रवासी मजदूरों के बीच राहत सामग्री का वितरण किया गया। राहत वितरण कार्यक्रम का उद्घाटन मधुबनी विकास युवा ट्रस्ट के द्वारा जन सहयोग से प्रवासी मजदूरों के बीच राहत सामग्री का वितरण किया गया।

गरीबों की मदद करने आगे आई जन साहस संस्था

श्रमिकों के परिवार को राशन किट का किया वितरण
प्रखंड क्षेत्र के बंधने पड़ाव स्थित खनगांव में मंगलवार को सामग्री का वितरण किया गया। राहत वितरण कार्यक्रम का उद्घाटन मधुबनी विकास युवा ट्रस्ट के द्वारा जन सहयोग से प्रवासी मजदूरों के बीच राहत सामग्री का वितरण किया गया। राहत वितरण कार्यक्रम का उद्घाटन मधुबनी विकास युवा ट्रस्ट के द्वारा जन सहयोग से प्रवासी मजदूरों के बीच राहत सामग्री का वितरण किया गया। राहत वितरण कार्यक्रम का उद्घाटन मधुबनी विकास युवा ट्रस्ट के द्वारा जन सहयोग से प्रवासी मजदूरों के बीच राहत सामग्री का वितरण किया गया।

विमुक्त किए गए 38 श्रमिकों को जन साहस संस्था ने वितरित किया राशन

कोविड-19 के दौरान लोक काल में लगे रहे जन साहस संस्था की टीम...
जन साहस संस्था ने 38 श्रमिकों को राशन वितरित किया। इसका...

फ्रीडम फाइटर्स

मजदूरों व युवतियों को मिली राहत सामग्री
जन साहस संस्था द्वारा कोविड-19 के दौरान लोक काल में लगे रहे जन साहस संस्था की टीम...
जन साहस संस्था ने मजदूरों व युवतियों को राहत सामग्री वितरित की। इसका...

जन साहस संस्था द्वारा पिछले 3 वर्षों से लगातार प्रयास किया जा रहा है

800 परिवारों को राशन बांटा

सुरक्षित समास एवं मा...
जन साहस संस्था द्वारा पिछले 3 वर्षों से लगातार प्रयास किया जा रहा है...
जन साहस संस्था ने 800 परिवारों को राशन बांटा। इसका...

Ration, masks distributed among 95 families

Pipalawan: Amid the lockdown due to Covid-19 pandemic, Jan Sahas Sansthan of Dewas distributed 20 kg flour, 10 kg rice, 2 kg pulses, sugar, masks including grocery among 95 needy families. On the occasion including Salim Mansuri, nab tehsildar Abhash Chaurasia, parwar Rampasad Rajoria, R Mahendra Perthi, Vikram Badolia and others.

गांव में जाकर प्रवासी मजदूर व गरीब परिवारों को बांटा राशन



प्रशासन का साहस बना जन साहस निरन्तर निभा रहा अहम भूमिका

जन साहस संस्था द्वारा कोविड-19 के दौरान लोक काल में लगे रहे जन साहस संस्था की टीम...
जन साहस संस्था ने प्रशासन का साहस बना जन साहस निरन्तर निभा रहा अहम भूमिका। इसका...

कोरोना वायरस के चलते जहां ग्रामीण परेशान हैं, उन जगहों पर समाज सेवा संस्थाएं राशन वितरित कर रही हैं

जन साहस संस्था द्वारा कोविड-19 के दौरान लोक काल में लगे रहे जन साहस संस्था की टीम...
कोरोना वायरस के चलते जहां ग्रामीण परेशान हैं, उन जगहों पर समाज सेवा संस्थाएं राशन वितरित कर रही हैं। इसका...

जन साहस संस्था द्वारा

जन साहस संस्था द्वारा कोविड-19 के दौरान लोक काल में लगे रहे जन साहस संस्था की टीम...
जन साहस संस्था द्वारा कोविड-19 के दौरान लोक काल में लगे रहे जन साहस संस्था की टीम...
जन साहस संस्था द्वारा कोविड-19 के दौरान लोक काल में लगे रहे जन साहस संस्था की टीम...

किस्ती ने फनी तक का नहीं पूरा, देवास आते ही मिला भाजन

जन साहस संस्था द्वारा कोविड-19 के दौरान लोक काल में लगे रहे जन साहस संस्था की टीम...
किस्ती ने फनी तक का नहीं पूरा, देवास आते ही मिला भाजन। इसका...

ग्राम विकास युवा ट्रस्ट ने प्रवासी मजदूरों के बीच राहत सामग्री का किया वितरण

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कलेक्टर ने बांटी राहत सामग्री

जन साहस संस्था द्वारा कोविड-19 के दौरान लोक काल में लगे रहे जन साहस संस्था की टीम...
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महिला मुक्ति संस्था ने बांटी राशन

जन साहस संस्था द्वारा कोविड-19 के दौरान लोक काल में लगे रहे जन साहस संस्था की टीम...
महिला मुक्ति संस्था ने बांटी राशन। इसका...

The travelers

the boatman delivers the promise
that floats between lovers' lips
the message that frees the prisoner
and stalls the onslaught in the dead of night.

everything is lost in translation.
in the Exodus, even god's message
needed the artillery of plagues
to convince the tyrant.

all that the messenger can call his own is the transit.

what is left behind was home, what is ahead
is a dream - that is why it is obscure.

and so the wanderer learns
the meaning of a friend, not what he
had left behind. not what is to come
but what is in between. under his chapped soles.

do you know what it is to surrender
to the expanse? to choose the companionship
of the road? to claim the half-bitten moon as a mother,
and lie beside the corpse of the wind under a torn headscarf?

do you know that a baby's unborn cry
stifled with the sound of our indifference
is a wee bit difficult to abbreviate
into the inked outlines
of a register?

maybe transit is our default state of being
maybe we are truly ourselves,
we are truly counted, only in death.
when we are finally still.

no wait,
not for them,
not even then.

- *Ajinkya*