

Capaturing The Journey of

Migrant

Women Workers



National Alliance of Women(NAWO) India

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Introduction

It is well-known fact that the Covid-19 has impacted every section of society and the impact is also not uniform for everyone. Understanding the trends of vulnerabilities, the responding ability of different categories of individuals differs- women are impacted differently, and various segments of women are influenced diversely. Our society's deeply ingrained patriarchal framework has traditionally assigned a subordinate status to women's economic roles, where they go unnoticed and unappreciated. In this context study conducted by NAWO has well documented the impact of Covid 19 on women, especially migrant women, and the visibility of their role as workers. From the study, the NAWO had also tried to capture the struggle and problem of the migrant women to maintain social and economic stability in the midst of the COVID-19 situation from three states – Jharkhand, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh. The case study on the impact of Covid 19 on migrating women includes both urban and rural situations.

During our study while we were interacting with the women migrant workers we could learn the amount of difficulties they face during the pandemic, especially while returning back to their native places. We could also see the grit and resilience of these women in the face of such an insurmountable crisis. We tried to capture some of these stories in 17/ 19

These case studies give glimpses of those women's sufferings, their coping mechanism during, and their resilience in the Covid-19 situation.

We are grateful to all these women despite their difficulties, they spared their time and discussed with us and shared their experiences. These case studies are dedicated to all migrant workers .

Kalahandi

1. **Rita Deep**, age around 39 is married and has a 8 year old son. She is the native of Bijapati village, Regeda GP, Karlamunda block of Kalahandi districts. She is illiterate. Her husband and she used to work as daily labourers. Then they heard about some work opportunity in Waltier (Vishakahapatnam) in a poultry farm from her sister and brother-in-law who also worked there. So both husband and wife went to the poultry farm leaving behind their 8 year old son with her mother-in-law with the hope that they would get some steady income and they don't have to look for work every day.

The farm was situated at Bhimabadi which is some 50 to 60 km away from Waltier. Though both husband and wife got the work in the poultry farm there was no provision for accommodation. So they made a make shift arrangement with mud as wall and palm leaves as roof in the open space near the farm. The farm for poultry purpose has borewell inside the farm. They use the water from that borewell and go out into the open for defecation. While her husband was involved in feeding the chicks, cleaning the place etc, she was involved in egg packaging. She was getting Rs 8000 per month and her husband Rs 10000 as monthly salary. For this work she was trained by the farm people for 5 days.

They had gone there in Nov /Dec 2019 and then they heard that everything is closed down as some diseases is spreading. They did not hear anything about Corona. So they thought this lockdown would be lifted within a week or couple of week's time. There was also no transportation. So they stayed there and managed with whatever savings they had. But after sometime they got panicky and the savings got exhausted. So Rita's husband called his parent and asked them to send some money for their sustenance. Rita's in-laws managed to send some money first.

At that time they heard about Odisha Government's plan to give Rs 2000 each who are registering themselves for coming back and staying in quarantine centre for 14 days. Thus they contacted the local Saroanch of their native place and got them registered for return. But till that time there was no transport provision. So they along with some other migrant families thought of hiring a private vehicle to come back. They did not have money for that. So again they called their parent and asked for money. Rita's mother-in-law borrowed some Rs 10000 from SHG and sent the money to Rita. Thus Rita's mother-in-law sent around Rs 15000 to them in two phases. Out of that they paid Rs 3000 each as hiring charge of the vehicle. There were 10 persons altogether in that vehicle. It took almost one day to reach M. Rampur.

Then they were put in the quarantine Centre at Bijapati. According to Rita, they were provided with mats, bucket, mug and soap. There was water and sanitation provision separately for both men and women. Food was not good. They were also not provided with Rs 2000 as promised by the government. Rita's husband has the labour card. But her husband did not get the relief money as construction worker as announced by the government. She also does not know about Jandhan account. So not aware that she has got money in her account. After the quarantine period was over when Rita and her husband returned to their village, the villagers protested their entry into the village fearing they might bring the virus in. After much negotiation they were allowed to enter their house but not to get out of their house for another 10 days. Rita's old in-laws had to provide everything, from water to food to the couple. Fortunately they had a toilet in their house. So they managed. According to Rita, we felt as if we were not wanted. Fear was everywhere.

After all these ordeal, when they get out they look for work. There was not much work, though they got two three days of work under MGNREGS. However from July they got work in the agricultural field of the landed farmers. But work is not regular. When asked whether they want to go back again, they were not sure. Rita said, "may be my husband would go, but I am not going as my mother-in-law is not keeping well, if I go who will take care of my son?"



Kalahandi

2. **Subhidha Chhatra** from Harishchandrapur of M. Rampur (both GP and Block) is the sole bread earner of her family. Her husband was sick and not able to work for last many years . The family also does not have any land. So, Subhidha has to work as daily labourer for their sustenance. She has a son , who stayed separately with his family. He is also work as a daily labourer , so does not/ could not help his parent.



Subhidha migrates outside the state for three /four month every year for last two years along with other migrant families from her village. Previous year she went to Ahmedabad and worked there in a salt factory. Her work is to package the salt.

In January 2020, she went to Kerala along with her niece Tara and worked in a fish packaging unit. She does not know the exact location or name of the place where she was working. The only thing she knew that the place was near the sea. She was getting Rs 8000 per month. She worked there for 3 to 4 months and during lock down time her husband who was staying alone in the village succumb to his illness. So she had to rush back. The employer gave her Rs 6000 and arranged her travel in special shramik train (which were arranged during lock down period to transport migrants to their native states). She got down from train at Kesinga which is some 50 km away from her village. However, the government arranged transportation from train to quarantine centres. So she from Kesinga she came to Bhalupiya quarantine centre and stayed there for 15 days. On the way she lost all her belonging along with the money which her employer gave her. She said for two days she did not take any food- she was anxious to reach her home. She knew she is not going to meet her husband ..but she had only one wish at that time to reach home. She is yet to get her balance salary of rs 2000 from her employer in Kerala. But, since she does not know the place or employer's contact detail she says she does not know how to get that money.

According to her there was no issue in the quarantine centre- running water tap was there. She was given mats, bed sheets, bucket, mug, soap etc. Fodd was good. However, she did not get the promised Rs 2000 from Sarpanch (State government promised to give Rs 2000 to each migrant who returns and stayed in the quarantine centre for 15 days as compensation to loss of pay). She also did not get the certificate as proof of her quarantine period. May be that is the reason she did not get the money also.

After coming out of the quarantine centre she is now living alone. The physical exhaustion coupled with mental stress due to pandemic, death of her husband, she is not able to do much work, though she tried initially to work under MGNRGS near her village. Now she is in absolute penury living with the rice from Antodaya card and Rs 500 which she is getting every month as widow pension

Kalahandi

3. Shipra Chhatria and Tapaswini Chhatria Harishchandrapur, M. Rampur.

Shipra Chhatria is a widow with two grown children – one girl – Tapaswini aged around 22 and one son aged 18 who is studying in 12th standard. Shipra must be around 37/38. Being dalit land less and without any earning member in the house Shipra was leading a miserable life. Then, her brother, who was working at a construction site in Rayagada, asked her to come over to Rayagada so that she could get some regular work. So she left for Rayagada along with her daughter Tapaswini leaving behind her son, who was studying in M. Rampur college. They went to Rayagada in December 2020. Like her brother she along with her daughter, constructed a makeshift house with polythene and mud and started staying near to the construction site. Like other labourers they also going out for defecation and using water from the roadside tap both for cooking, cleaning and bath. Life was not much better back in the village. Atleast here both mother and daughter were getting work in the construction site for almost 20 days in a month and they were paid Rs 200 per day's work each. With this they could manage to spend something on their own food and send some money to her son for his sustenance. But by March 2020 lockdown was declared and all work stopped sometime. They stayed there and managed with whatever savings they had. But suddenly Shipra became very sick. The local doctor in Rayagada referred them to one doctor in Bolangir. They were really helpless as there was no public transport. Tapaswini managed to hire one private vehicle paying an exorbitant price of Rs10000 and shifted Shipra to Bolangir. But then that doctor referred her to Bhawanipatna district hospital. Again they had to hire another private vehicle and shipra was shifted to Bhawanipatna district hospital. There the doctor said Shipra needs an operation.

Tapaswini has studied upto + 2 and undertook training on patient care under Odisha skill development scheme. So, she has some exposure to health issues. She managed to get a loan of Rs 50000 from the SHG of their native village, managed to get a loan of Rs 20000 from bank. Finally Shipra got operated in June 2020. Now they are back in their native village. After operation Shipra is no more capable of doing physically strenuous work at construction site. She also not willing to leave her grown up daughter alone to work at construction site. She also does not want her son to discontinue his study and work. Though Tapaswini is trained on patient care she is not able to get a job till the time met her in January 2021. She has applied for the job in couple of places in Bhawani Patna. Right now the only source of sustenance is the rice that they get under PDS(Antodaya) and widow pension.



Kalahandi

4. **Sarita Deep** – Girls from Kalahandi goes independently without also in search of work

Bijapati, GP – Regeda, Block – Karlamunda

Sarita aged around 25 has studied upto 10 class. She is unmarried. At home she has her father, mother two sisters and two brothers. She is the eldest.. Her family has some agricultural land where her parents work. But the earning from agricultural field is not sufficient. So she has to work and that compelled her to search for work. Thus from 2018 she is going to Aswini Prawn Factory based at Bheemavaram, AP. She goes and comes back working there for some months, when the fishing is not allowed in the sea, she usually come back home.

She and her friends came to know about Ashiwini Prawn factory from a man from nearby Siripur village. His wife was working as a Scook in the factory's mess. She and her husband contacted girls of our village and told us, of any girl wants to work in prawn factory they can come with them to Bheemavaram factory. Since Sarita was looking for work, she went along with 7 more girls to Bheemavaram.

There she got the work of prawn packaging. She got the training on prawn packaging in the factory itself, basically watching others work for two three days. Initially I was paid Rs 8000 per month. But after one year I started getting Rs 9000. She along with other women workers were staying in factory owned hostel.

During the first wave of Covid-19 and subsequent lockdown though the factory was closed down, her employer allowed them to stay in company hostel. During the entire lockdown period she was paid Rs 3000 per month as living allowance. So, she was not able to send money back home but not faced any problem in terms of food and accommodation.

But in last August (2020) I wanted to come back home. But there was not much transportation facilities. So I could not come till November 2020. In November 2020 when the lockdown was lifted I came back. Though I have to pay for my travel, yet the factory people helped me and three of my friends from our village to get the train tickets. From the factory location to Bheemavaram railway station we came bay bus and then we boarded the train to Waltier. Again from Waltier we took another train upto Kesinga. From Kesinga station one of our relatives picked us up and brought us to our village. I spent around Rs 900 for my travel.

Since I returned in November, there was no government quarantine centre. I stayed in home quarantine for one week. People in the village were suspicious and not very happy when we came back and stayed inside the village, as no quarantine centre was there. The fear of Corona virus made them stay away from us almost for 15/ 20 days. We felt unwelcome in our own village

Back in village I am not able to get any work. The time is such that (Nov= Dec) not much agricultural activities are there in our locality.

I am planning to go back, but a bit hesitant as I heard from my friends who had gone back, there also once reached has to stay in quarantine for 15 days. That means no work for 15 days. All my savings are gone, now I can't afford to bear 15 days' expenditure in a new place- food, accommodation. Also Aswini Factory has not asked us to go back. So there is great uncertainty.



Kalahandi

5. Madhumita Swain – Harischandrapur. GP – M. Rampur. Block M. Rampur age 26 unmarried. She has studied upto 10th class. She is the only child of her parent. Since , her parent do not have any land they earn their livelihood as daily wage earners. They also get some income from two three goats that they are rearing.

Obviously after she passed her 10th standard she wanted to do something to help her family. After passing her 10th standard she could not pursue her higher study. Rather she went for a month long tailoring training from a government tailoring training Institute. She heard from her friend that she can get job in garment factories outside Odisha.. Some friends who took tailoring training with her were previously working in Sai Sports Export – garment factory in Bamanhalli near Bangalore. They said she can get work in that factory. So, in 2018 December she along with some of her friends went to Bamanhalli. She was working there till the lockdown in 24th March 2020.

She was working in cutting section of the factory. Initially she was getting only Rs 4000. But after she got trained (hand on training on the work site itself) her salary was increased to Rs 7000. She was managing her own expenditure with Rs 3000 and rest of the amount she was sending back home. She was staying in the factory owned hostel .

The factory was closed down from April 2020. So we did not get any salary. The factory also did not support us. We stayed almost for two month with whatever savings we had. But after that it became difficult to manage our food expenses. So one of my friends and me decided to come back. We were anxious to come back and did not know about migrant workers registration. So, I borrowed some Rs 1000 from one of my friend and bought a unreserved train ticket paying Rs 850. I hired an auto from Bamanhalli to Bangalore railway station and paid Rs 380.

After paying the auto and buying the train ticket I did not have any money left with me. So in the whole journey I was only having water. In one or two stations people distributed some dry food like biscuits. I managed with that. The whole time I was very scared as I did not have any reservation. However, no Ticket collector came . I got down at Kesinga station. My father came to pick me up. So, I did not go to government quarantine centre rather went straight to my home. I stayed for 7 days in home isolation. Tested myself for Covid-19 infection.

Coming back home, I am not able to get any work. During July - August I got some in others agricultural field. Sometimes I am going for earth work under MGNRGS. So far (till December 2020) I have got some 15 to 20 days of work under MGNRGS and paid Rs 200 as wage. But this is very uncertain and I need regular income. But no regular work is available near our home. I am not sure to go back again as the fear of pandemic is still there.



Kalahandi

6. Drupati Kumar At/Po Regeda Block Karlamunda

Drupati is 34 years old and married with 4 children. She studied upto 10th used to migrate seasonally along her husband for work outside the state. The local labour contractor usually arrange work for them and wherever he said they go. Last time also she went to Jam Nagar Gujrat in December 2019 along with her husband and two young children, leaving behind the two elder daughters with her in-laws.

There they were working in a construction site. However when Covid -19 came and government declared lockdown, the construction work stopped. Once the work stopped after couple of days it becomes difficult to arrange food. Only once they got some dry ration, but after that there was no relief for people like them. Even, because of lockdown they could not go far in search of relief or food. The house owner also started nagging for rent. It became difficult to stay back with two young children there. So, they decided to comeback. With the help of their family members back home they could manage to register them selves to come back.

Though they register to come back they paid Rs 1500 to a middleman for arranging seat in the train. They spent rs 500 for hiring an auto from their place of living to railway station. Thus they spent around Rs 2000 which they borrowed. According to Drupati it was an harrowing experience to travel with two young children. Inside the train everybody was suspicious about others and afraid ..There was not enough food and the train journey was for two days. They were getting some food for lunch and dinner, but children were crying all the time for some extra food. The only thought in the mind was how to reach home

The train left us at Jharsuguda . From there they came by government arranged bus to a point. From there they took an auto to the Sapalhara Quarantine Centre as they heard that they might not be allowed to enter their own village . The auto charged them another 1500. At the quarantine Regeda Sarpanch met them and put them in the quarantine centre.

The quarantine centre was okay. There was separate arrangement for male and female migrants. There was separate toilets, water facility and electricity. From 11th of June to 25th of June they stayed in the quarantine centre. The food was okay. They had to clean their own toilets. There was no bathing space, so women were taking their bath inside the toilet while men were taking bath outside. They were provided with mats , bedsheets, soap, bucket, mug, sanitizer etc. She and her husband got Rs 2000 each as an incentive for staying in the quarantine centre for two weeks (That has been declared by Govt of Odisha)

Even after staying in quarantine centre for two weeks, when they reached their village nobody seemed very happy. People treated them as " Untouchables' . They were not allowed to use public water sources. "Even the other family members were behaving strangely as if we have Covid -19 along with us!"

Now both Drupati and her husband are working as wage labourer and sometimes getting work under MGNRGS. Since she also know a bit tailoring, she bought a tailoring machine with the none which got as incentive for staying in quarantine centre. She is getting some tailoring work with that she is managing.

Though both husband and wife were working as construction workers they don't have labour card. Only now they have given some money to a local person for registering them as construction worker so that they can get labour card and get the social security benefits as construction workers. She is thinking of not going out anymore, but not sure. According to her if she is not getting work here she may think of going back again.

Ganjam

1. Dharitri Jena : Nuagaon, Bhanja Nagar, Ganjam

Dharitri age around 20 ,is newly married and gone with her husband to Bijay Nagar, Surat. Her husband works in a elastic factory there. After going there she also looked for home based work and usually women's hands are required for sequen fitting, stone pasting in fancy sarees and dress materials. So she got that work in piecemeal rate easily and she was mostly setting stones in the sarees and earning per saree Rs 20.00. In this way she was earning around Rs 3000 to Rs 4000 in a month. Her husband was getting Rs 22000 per month. Thus, they were managing their family.

When lockdown was declared, all factories got closed and all work stopped. Initially they thought this closure would be over soon. But that did not happened. Whatever savings they had they managed with that. However, she said they to face lots of problems in buying rations, getting out to fetch water. The factory owner / employer did not help. But local groups sometimes distribute dry rations.

After May 2020, they thought they should go back home and should not stay in uncertainty. By that time Dharitri was in her advance pregnancy. So they frantically tried to get tickets in Shramik train. Though they registered themselves for getting tickets back home, but they were not sure whether they will get the tickets or even if they get when it would be, so they paid Rs 5000 to a middleman for ensuring early tickets to them . They managed to get to tickets and came back . On the road they were provided some biscuits and water by some people who were distributing dry foods to passengers in the station. But it was not enough. Since she was in her advance pregnancy, they could not bring any luggage with them. So they had to retain their place of accommodation. Hey have one room accommodation and have to pay Rs 2000 as monthly rent. That means for all these months from June 2020 to Nov2020 (till her husband back in Surat) they had to pay rent. The Central Government appeal to waive two month's house rent (lockdown period) was not honoured. So once her husband went back to his work and got his first salary, he had to shell out Rs 18000 to the land lord towards 9 month's house rent .

Around June , the government of Odisha was asking for 7 days stay in institutional quarantine and after that 7 days of home quarantine. So first they stayed at nuagaon school for 7 days. Dharitri said there was not much issue at quarantine centre. Food was ok and there was good facility for water and sanitation. After 7 days of institutional quarantine, they came home and stayed for 7 days in home isolation.

Back home they need to work for their survival as all their savings were gone in these 7 to 8 months. Her husband went for MGNRGS work that were there in their panchayat. But he had never done such hard physical work under the sun. So, after two , three days' work he fall sick and did not go for MGNRGS work. He was waiting desperately to go back to his work in elastic factory. And in



November 2020 his factory owner contacted him and asked him to return back to work. On the top of it he said he is sending the flight ticket for him so that he could reach as soon as possible to resume work.

Dharitri and her husband were very excited as it would be her husband's first experience of flying. Infact the entire village was excited as none have seen an areoplane from near – what they have seen is areoplane on the sky. They were all praise for the employer and praised his magnanimity. Finally the airplane ticket reached and Dhaaritri's husband flew back to Surat.

In the meantime Dharitri gave birth to a baby girl. Now that her husband resumed work Dharitri was a bit relaxed. She right now was not prepared to go with a young baby to Surat as there would be none to help her. Here at least her in-laws are there. At the same time the fear of uncertainty – not sure when again the disease will spread, when again there would be lock down, so she thought it would be good to wait for at least 6 /7 months before going back to her husband.

When Dharitri and her family were thinking that everything will be ok, her husband in January first week asked his family to send some money as his salary was all gone ! They were perplexed how could he finished all Rs 22000 in two three days of getting the salary.

Then they realized the reality of his employer's magnanimity of sending air ticket. The house owner took away Rs 18000 towards his pending house rent and employer cut Rs 3500 towards his flight cost. He would take back the entire ticket cost (according to the employer the cost of the flight ticket was Rs 7000 and he would cut that from his salary)in two instalments. So Dharitri had to mortgage one of her ornament and sent Rs 5000. Hopefully they would come back and start their life afresh from January onward.....

Ganjam

2. Nalini Sabha Sundar from Gaudogotha village/GP of Ganjam district aged around 26, studied up to class 7. She went to Mumbai way back in 2008 and for last 11 years she is working as a domestic worker staying with the employer's family. She comes back every year once during festivals like Christmas. But in 2019 she did not come for Christmas, but came in Feb 2020 to attend one local festival. And staying for about 20 days she left for Mumbai again in end of February 2020.

She was happy with her employer. She was getting Rs 18000 per month for cooking and cleaning the house. But with the spread of Covid-19 and subsequent lockdown she became anxious to come back home, to be near her parent and siblings.

So she decided to comeback. Around end of April 2020 she heard about registration of migrant workers who wanted to comeback home. So she registered herself online. She had some savings worth Rs 18000 with her (perhaps her salary for April) She gave a middleman for early train ticket in Shramik Special train around Rs 2000. Her chance of travelling came after a week of her registration.

She came to a point from where the government bus picked her up along with other migrant workers, then she boarded the train. In the train they were given food twice and two water bottles. She bought some dry food from the station wherever available. The train was over crowded and a sense of fear and mistrust prevailed all over. Nobody was talking to each other. Though there was hardly any space (required to maintain social distance) everybody was cringing within the self as if that would save from infection! Somehow the train journey from Mumbai to Berhampur ended in one and half days time. The train did not come to the main station i.e. Berhampur. Rather the train stopped two stations before and they were asked to get down. From there the government vehicle took them to the nearest bus stop at HaladiPadar. From there Nalini hired a private vehicle and reached her village Goudagotha. She gave Rs 2000 for that.

Once she reached her village she was instructed to go to the Panchayat quarantine centre which happened to be in her own village. She stayed there for 14 days. When she was staying in the quarantine Centre, there were 14 other migrants out of which only two were women. There was no separate toilets for women inmates, though water supply was there. There was a single toilet, which all the 14 were using. Food that was served in the centre was not good. However they were provided with mats, bucket, mugs, soap etc.

Once she completed the quarantine period, she returned home. She also got the promised Rs 2000 from the Odisha state government towards compensation of wage loss during the quarantine period.

From May 2020, till Jan 2021 she stayed at her village. Now she has contacted one placement agency called S.M. Maid Services. That placement agency has found a job of domestic worker in Mumbai. When I was interviewing her in 2nd week of January, she said she had already booked the ticket for 25th January 2021 to Mumbai, Nalini contacted her brother who was working in Kerala at that time. He gave his friend's contact detail who was staying in Mumbai. Nalini was quite confident and not much bothered what would happen to her once she is in Mumbai. Maybe her stay outside home in far off places for last 11 years made her more confident to take risk.



¹ Government of India started Shramik Special Trains to send back stranded migrant workers to their native places during lockdown period. Initially the decision was the migrant workers who wanted to travel has to pay the train fare or the respective state would bear the cost. But after SC instruction Central Government made

Ganjam

3. Jharana Sualsingh, Jarana aged 27 also belong to Goudagotha . Way back in 2007 she went to Kerala and work as domestic workers for 10 years in one family. At that time she was getting Rs 8000 per month. When asked how she went to Kerala, she said many girls were going to work in various missionaries, so I went with them. But since my employer did not increase my salary , I left the work in 2017 March. She came back home and stayed at home for three months. Then with some friends went to Mumbai . There she worked for three months in a family as a domestic worker. She did not like the family so she left the job and came back to her village again. She stayed back this time for six months and then left for Mumbai in July 2018. This time she found a job of domestic worker through a placement agency.



She got the work with a family which is a female headed family. The employer is a police officer in police department and she stays with her mother and two young children. She said there was no problem till the pandemic. She was managing the entire household – cooking and cleaning the house, washing dishes and clothes. Managing the help who was coming everyday to look after the children and employer's old mother. She said there was no restriction on her using washroom or there is no distinction on food. She used to eat what others in the family were eating. For her work she was getting Rs 16000 per month. Everything was fine till the sudden declaration of lockdown .

The employer, being in police was on duty most of the time because of lockdown situation . She was leaving home very early and coming back late in the evening. Because of lockdown and fear of spread of Covid-19 the employer asked the help who was looking after the children not to come. That meant Nalini had to work more and look after the two children and old mother. That made her tired physically . She was also not allowed to go outside the flat where they were staying. On top of that all sorts of news about Covid-19 made her extremely afraid. She thought perhaps she is not going to meet her family. So, she said her employer around end May 2020 that she would like to go back home. The employer was unwilling to leave her at this time and after much insistence she said to wait till she arranged one substitute for Nalini.

The relation became sour. The employer behavior became very cold and Nalini could hear every time she calls somebody she was asking for a helping hand and telling bad about Nalini. That made Nalini more upset and sad. So she thought to leave the place as soon as possible. She was also very much scared lest her employer being a police could put her in false case and detain her. So, she was desperate. She contacted her brother who was in Kerala at that time . He gave her the contact detail of one of his friends in Mumbai and said he would help her in coming back.

She contacted her brother's friend. He helped me arrange a train ticket as well as arranged accommodation in a lodge for two days (till her journey date) . Once , the ticket was done and accommodation arranged, she left her employer's house one afternoon without informing her. In the mean time she was constantly in touch with her brother and his friend. She was scared that her employer might trace her out and take her back. However, after staying in the lodge two days she boarded the train and came back home in October 2020. Her employer had to give her RS 22000, but since she came without informing her the money is still with her employer. Now she is planning to go back again along with other girls from the Panchayat.

the travel free. However, unscrupulous elements took advantage of the situation and bungled money from desperate migrants in the name of ensuring early travel dates or a seat in the train.

Ganjam

4. Ranjita Nayak Goudagotha, Soroda, Ganjam

Ranjita is aged around 34/ 35 , married and has 4 children. 3 of them are in a residential ashram school . She has studied upto class seven. All these times she left her youngest child with her mother Both husband and wife used to go outside the state for work. She first went in 2017 to Kerala and stayed there for 11 months. At that time she was placed in an orphanage as a cook while her husband was working as a mason. Again in the beginning of 2019 she went to Kerala and stayed in a family as a cook. But she came back while her husband stayed back in Kerala and worked as mason. Coming back to Odisha, again she went to Mumbai and stayed in a family to look after their ailing father. The family was from Surat and the family came to Mumbai for father's treatment. When the lockdown was a little bit relaxed, the family went back to Surat. Ranjita also went with them.

While in Surat, she was infected by measles. The employer's neighbors started opposing the employer and forced him to put her in a hospital. Once the employer admitted her in hospital, he did not contact her. She informed her husband over phone who was at that time in Kerala. He in turn contacted some people of their village who were in Surat. These people helped her a lot, brought food and medicines for her.

Once she was discharged from hospital, she did not want to stay back with the employer. So she went to employer's house and asked for her dues. She was there in Surat for two months and the rate of Rs15000 per month (that was the amount fixed as her salary) she was supposed to get Rs 30000. Employer cut Rs 7000 as medicine and health expenses and only gave her Rs 10000.

I was desperate to get back home. So I gave a middle man Rs1800 for a train ticket. After two days the middle man said he needed Rs 2000 more for arranging a seat in the Sharmik Special train. However, She got a seat in shramik train and came upto Khurdha. On the entire train journey she managed with some food distributed by some people. She did not know whether that was given by government or local volunteers. That was not enough to appease the appetite, but enough to survive. From Khurdha she has to come to Soroda. She took another train upto Berhampur and from Berhampur she took a bus upto Soroda. From Soroda , she took an Auto to reach gaudogotha. In the entire journey from Surat to her village she spent almost Rs 7000. Coming back in July 2020, she heard that an agency which has taken the contract to manage the Goudagotha Community Health Centre (CHC) is looking for cleaning staff. She applied and got the job as a sweeper in the CHC in September 2020. Though her salary is Rs11000, yet the agency cuts its own service charge and gives her Ts 7500. However , when I met her in January, she said she had not got her salary for last two months. But she was happy as she is now staying near her children , though getting less salary. She also hoping that one day her job with the CHC would become permanent and she would become a government employee.



Jharkhand

Case study -1

Dukhni Samad, Age - 21 years, Village – Baljudi, Panchayat – Baljuri, Block – Sonua, District-West Singhbhum, Jharkhand

21-year-old Dukhani Samad hails from Baljudi village of Sonua block. Dukhni is the daughter of a poor potter family. Dukhni's parents used to take care of themselves and their children by working as wages labour, but the village did not have enough income that the house and family would run properly, so Dukhni's father used to go out of the village to earn. Due to poverty, Dukhani Samad was able to teach only 5-6 classes in his education, and the rest with his mother used to work in the fields of others in the village.



During the work, Dukhani met a boy living in the same village, who belonged to the tribal caste, both of them grew up and then they got married. After marriage, both of them started living happily, and later on, Dukhni became the mother of a child.

Family expenses also increased as the family grew, Dukhni's husband moved out of the village to Chennai to work somewhere else and in 2-3 months he came back home. The time passed slowly and Dukhani's son became 1 year old. The child had to read, write and fulfill all his needs, so Dukhani also left her child with her mother and went with the villagers of Orissa Pampali to do the stone laying work in the third line of the railway (The South Eastern Railway (SER) accused of hindering integrated growth of the Rourkela Smart city, has hinted at adopting a soft approach to complete its key third line project on Howrah – Mumbai main line).

For the future of their child's, both husband and wife started working in different places. Both husband and wife used to talk to each other and come back to the village at the same time and then leave when the work started. As the life progressed, time passed and Dukhni's son became 4 years old.

All was going well, but suddenly the Covid-19 epidemic struck and the work was stopped. There was not even a transport so that would come back home. Dukhni continued to panic for her child, but there was no means to return home. The villagers were also very upset with him but nothing was being done. In the first lockdown, as soon as it passed, all the money that was saved and the ration that was left, all went together but after few days there was no food left or no money left. When all the people got together and informed their boss about their situation, the owner paid Dukhani and the villager, and told him to go back to the village.

Everyone talked among themselves and thought that there was going to be more trouble ahead, we also had women and children in our team and all decided to return to the village on foot together.

The next morning the whole team got out on foot, while walking along the railway line, the condition of these people was also getting worse. After walking all day, everyone spent the night in a small station and they slept after drinking water. To walk again the next day, one village stopped near Pathorbasa and the villagers refused to give drinking water after seeing a new face, they tried to explain something to the villagers but did not agree to listen. Those people again rested on the way to the railway line.

Most of the Dukhni's team members were deteriorated their health and condition of Dukhni's also

deteriorating and she was suffering from hunger herself, no food or no water have got in the way. Same time there was a wound on the foot but still somehow everyone was walking.

It was getting evening, the team of Dukhni wanted to stay in a village, but the people of that village ran into the stone in the hand, people were made to explain it, but people did not believe them. That time it was only necessary to save their lives and leave this place.

Three days passed and, in the morning, the people reached their village.

After coming to the village, Mundaji and the people of the village were first reported, they advised us to have quarantine in their homes, but before that we were told to bring to the Panchayat Bhavan to rest. All of them were tested for Corona in villages and all people were asked to quarantine for 14 days in their homes. When Dukhni reached home, she felt that she returns from fighting with death, then when she saw her child's face, all the pain was gone.

Dukhni's had so many wounds in the foot while walking due to which she took a month's rest.

After Dukhni's return to the village, her husband also came back to the village in same lock down period. Both husband wife and children started living together. Time was passing slowly and both the husbands and wife were waiting for unlock, but due to no money they started the fighting between each other. The women members went to convince them to end their fighting, but still the fight continued. Her husband went to work in August 2020 to other state. Dukhni's husband came back once in October 2020, and again he went out to work with a girl from the adjacent village.

After her husband left, she took her child and started living at her mother's house and took care of her child by working as a laborer in the village. But the village does not get work all the time and neither does it get enough wages that it could live well.

After the unlock, Dukhni leave her child at her mother's house and has again moved to work in the third line in Pampali, Odisha. In this lockdown, Dukhni has also returned to her village.

Jharkhand

Case study -2

Name – Ludgi Diggy, Age - 45, Village – Nuvagaon, Lagyasain, Panchayat – Baljodi, Block – Sonua, District – West Singhbhum, Jharkhand

Ludgi Diggy was born in a farmer family and she was very hardworking and intelligent, when Ludgi was very young that time her parents passed away. After that Ludgi started staying with her two brothers. Time passed at its own pace and after some time Ludgi's two brothers got married, and they have stopped caring Ludgi. Ludgi started working as a labour in her village to maintain herself, but in her village did not always get work nor did the same amount of wages.



Ludgi started migrate to Chennai, Orissa and UP from the age of 15, sometimes with the people of the village and sometimes with the middlemen. Ludgi did not get married yet because her brothers did not pay attention to her and she did not find any good person as a life partner for marry.

In 2015, when Ludgi's health became very bad, she started living at her elder brother's house, her financial condition had become very bad, she was living a life of helplessness in her brother's house, due to which she again moved to a nearby house and started living in the village. 2020 went to work with the woman in Rae Bareli, UP.

Ludgi always used to call his friends in the village from Rae Bareli, UP, but suddenly the call stopped and there was no news of Ludgi, then suddenly one day two women went to work with him. Called in the village and said that Ludgi has gone mad, what happened to her, how her mind got spoiled, no one knows anything but she doesn't talk properly, always says something in reverse. Ludgi's brother and the lady of the group tried hard to contact him but could not get through to Ludgi.

Ludgi's elder brother and the women of the group informed the Gram Sabha about this, then those four women, 2 from Ranchi and 2 from the adjoining village were contacted by the Gram Sabha and they were asked to talk to Ludgi. Those women said that they do not want to talk. The gram sabha wanted to know where Ludgi is working, then those women said that she is working in Rajesh Builder. Those women were asked to keep in touch but those women switched off their phones and later could not talk to them either.

Due to the Covid-19 epidemic, the Gram Sabha, the women of the group all tried again and again to get the news of the ludgi but no news was received. Suddenly one day Ludgi's brother got the news that Ludgi had returned to Ranchi, at the same time Ludgi's brother went to Ranchi to pick up Ludgi and took him back to the village. Looking at Ludgi, it seemed that his condition was not well. She kept quiet and was not talking much to anyone. Her brother and the women of the group got her checked up by the doctor and took her home.

Ludgie was asked several times what happened there, how you lost your mind and how did you recover, but Ludgie clearly answered nothing. Many times, it was tried to know whether someone had hurt Ludgi, what happened there but they did not tell anything, his companions who went with him were also asked, but those people also did not say anything. Now no one asks Ludgi because she is not ready to tell, Ludgi is always silent now, doesn't talk much.

45-year-old Ludgi is an unmarried single woman who currently has no work, sells leaves and mahua from the forest and when work is not available, she sells bones in the village, from which she takes care of herself

Story -3

Subhasini Nayak, Age – 45, Husband –Bishnu Nayak, Village – Bankisole Panchayat- Bankisole, Dumuria, E,Singhbhum

Subhasini Nayak and her husband live in Bankisole village, Subhasini's mother's house is also in this village. Subhasini has a son and a daughter. Subhasini's husband is always fighting in the house after drinking alcohol. He used to beat Subhasini and did not even pay expenses at home. After a few days, Subhasini's husband Bishnu Nayak got married again and threw Subhasini out of the house. Subhasini came to mother's house with her daughter. Subhasini's daughter studies in school, it was getting difficult for Subhashini to bear the expenses of school and run the household expenses. Many women from Subhasini's village and neighbouring villages go to work in other states. In 2019, Subhasini left her daughter with her mother and agreed to do fish packing work in Andhra. Subhasini's daughter used to study in school, so she wanted to save some money for her further studies and marriage.

Subhasini went to work in a fish packing company in Andhra with the women of her village, where she got the job of packing fish. She says that there was no fixed duration of work, working 8 hours would fetch Rs 8000 and working 12 hours would get Rs 12000. Food, health and other expenses had to be done with his own money. The company had made arrangements for living but there was no facility of water or toilet in front.

When the first lockdown started, he was not allowed to go anywhere, food and other expenses were going on with his own money, later it became very difficult. Everyone started trying to go home, but due to non-running of trains and buses, they were not able to return home. Losing 21 people together booked the bus from East Singhbhum. They paid 1 lakh 40 thousand rupees for this, for this everyone had to pay more than 6600 rupees. Whatever money he had in the form of savings was spent at the time of arrival.

Subhasini returned to her home and staying in the quarantine centre for 14 days.after that doing whatever work she was getting in the village, but due to lack of proper work in the village, Suhasini is ready to go again, she has now made all the preparations to go to work in Trichur's Suta factory. Her daughter has now passed matric.



Jharkhand

Story -4

Lakhi Nayak, Age – 51, Father – Late DurgaNayak, Village – Bakulchanda Panchayat- Bankisole, Dumuria, E, Singhbhum

Lakhi Nayak is an unmarried single woman, some years ago the villagers had thrown her out of the village by calling her a daiyen (witch). She was not married, she lived alone away from the village. Lakhi had a mother and her father, but she was unable to live with her parents due to opposition from the villagers. The villager had made her family an untouchable house. Nobody talked to him. After a few days Lakhi's father was died, now there was no one to look after her old mother. Lakhi shared the problems with the women's group of her village, after which the group helped those families. She came back to the village and opened a small shop in the village and started selling Muri and Chuda. But still her family could not survive on it. Her mother had a small land but she was not able to cultivate it due to poverty. Due to this, Lakhi decided that she would go to work in another state, so that she could save some money and return to her village to make a good living with her shop and farming for both Lakhi Nayak and her mother. She started working in a thread making company in Trichur, Tamil Nadu along with some people from the village. There he was getting 6000 rupees a month.

Meanwhile, from the month of March of the year 2020, everything stopped due to Corona epidemic. People got stuck where they were, Lakhi Nayak also got stuck in Trichur in the same lockdown. The company made arrangements for food and accommodation for a few days but later the owner closed everything. Lakhi and others who had gone from their village to Trichur to work were all worried about how they would return to their villages. After one and a half months, when the unlock started, people started trying to return to their homes. Lakhi Nayak and her other companions all started trying to return to the bus and train, after a few days they got the bus and they paid the bus fare at their own expense (6000/-) and returned to their villages.

The purpose for which Lakhi Nayak went out to work was not successful, she is very sad because he was getting ready to go out for work, at the same time the second wave of CORONA -19 came, now both he and her mother farming and selling by making mudi and chuda. Lakhi says that once the second wave of corona subsides, she will go to Trichur again.



Jharkhand

Story -5

Name – Budhni Kumhar, Age – 36 years, Husband – Hindu potter Village – Baljudi, Panchayat – Baljudi, Block – Sonua, District – West Singhbhum, Jharkhand

Budhni Kumhar and her husband Hindu potter are very poor, they did not have a house to live or land to cultivate. They did not even have any relatives in the village, so both of them used to go to work outside the state after marriage. Due to work, he used to make his living by working in Kolkata and sometimes in Patna brick kiln and used to come to the village for a few days during the festival.



Similarly, time passed, Budhni now became the mother of 4 sons. Budhni's family got bigger and the expenses started getting more, but the earning was less and somehow, she was running the household expenses by doing wages. Budhni's eldest son turned 17 years old, he used to help his mother and father in the work.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused the entire country to stop work, Budhni and her husband, where they worked in Kolkata (Kestopur), their boss asked her to pay and go back to the village, so Budhni and Budhni's husband was in Kolkata. After the lockdown, he returned to the village in the month of May. The headman in the village asked him to do home quarantine.

But Budhni's house was broken, there was no place to live with 4 children, at that time they started living in a neighboring house in the village. After the quarantine, the people of the village together decided to give him a land which he could live in by building a new house.

The very next day Budhni and her husband, a Hindu potter, started building a house by bringing wood from the forest. Budhni and her husband worked day and night to build the house, made their house by putting leaves and straw on the roof, now they started worrying about food, contacted Mukhiya and Munda and they got free ration and reduced their problem food for a few days

Job cards, ration cards and labor cards were made for Budhni's family. When the lockdown end in October 2020, Budhni's husband again went to work in the third line in Orissa as wages were not available in the village, so he again left the village to run the family and Budhni and her 17-year-old son started work as an agriculture labourer. They had a small farm, they started farming in it.

In the month of October 2020, when the effect of Corona subsided, Budhni's husband again went to work in the third line (The South Eastern Railway (SER) accused of hindering integrated growth of the Rourkela Smart city, has hinted at adopting a soft approach to complete its key third line project on Howrah – Mumbai main line) in Orissa because he did not get that much wages due to living in the village, so he again left to run the family and Budhni and her son's age of 17 started working in another's farm in the village itself, but still, not getting regular wages, Budhni again went to work in Orissa. In 2021, when the government again imposed a lockdown on the second wave of corona, Budhni had to return to her village again. Budhni is yet to make her home.

Jharkhand

Rita Nayek

Many people from West Singhbhum (Jharkhand) move away from their home village to work in another state as they get higher wages from the destination state. These people get work as agricultural and MNREGA laborers in their villages. Once a year, when they are cultivating paddy, they get employment, then migrate for the rest of the year. They go to different places to work alone or with their family, friends and neighbors.

One of them is a girl, named Rita Nayak, age 21 years, hailing from Karasuva, Post - Bari, Thana - Sonua, District - West Singhbhum (Jharkhand). Rita's family takes care of her family by farming, but now that Rita's parents are old, they are no longer able to work as before. All the responsibility of the house has come to Rita and her brother. Rita and he started working hard in their village. Rita used to get low wages by working in her village, due to which Rita was not able to improve the condition of her family. One day he heard from his neighbors about the work of another state, he and his brother were ready to migrate to Mumbai for better employment. In March 2019, he went to Bombay with his brother. Both Rita and her brother started their work in shipping circles in Bombay and cook for the employees of the company. Rita, who was studying till 10th, was doing well. The company provides them with food and room to live. As time passed, the Corona epidemic devastated the entire system. At first people were not taking Corona disease seriously, then as the days passed Mumbai took a terrible form of this disease. People want to return to their ancestral homes. The government announced a lockout and all modes of transport were halted. Rita and her brother have lost their jobs. Thousands of people became unemployed together; Rita was also among those who went from her home for work, now she too started trying to return to her home. It was necessary to register to return, somehow he and his brother also got registered. Every day they waited for the train and expected to arrive. After a few days the train came and they rode in it but the train remained halfway and on the rest of the way they returned by bus and on foot. Rita came to the village and met Munda, then stayed at the quarantine center at Kasruva, the primary school in the village for 14 days.

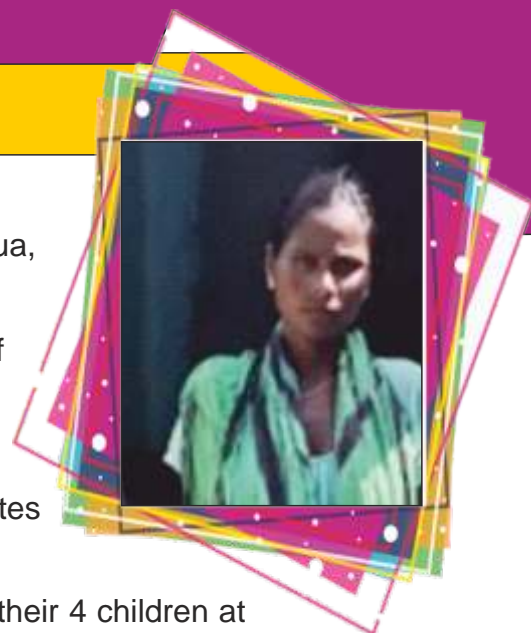
The villagers kept Rita and her family isolated as they came from Bombay where the corona virus was the highest. Now Rita is unemployed, Rita tells that if she wants to get any training from a government or private institute. She also wants to do agriculture and animal husbandry, so that it can get its employment opportunity and secure its future. She wants to go out again after everything is normal.

Jharkhand

Name – **Jamuna Samad**, Husband - Mangal Singh Samad, Age - 26

Village - Baljodi, Tola – Mundasai, Panchayat – Baljodi, Block - Sonua, District - West Singhbhum

West Singhbhum is the second tribal dominated district of the state of Jharkhand, and mostly Kol (Ho community) and Munda community tribes live here. The tribal and primitive tribes communities mostly depend on forest and farming for their livelihood. A large number of people from the district (Women and men) go to other states for employment.



Jayanti Samad lives with her husband Mangal Singh Samad with their 4 children at Mundasai Tola in Baljodi village. Jamuna has her own house in the village and 1/2 acre of land which is mixed with the family.

While living in the village with her 4 children (3 daughters, the elder daughter 8 years, the second daughter 7 years, the third daughter 6 years and one son 4 years) were not being properly nourished by farming and employment was not available in the village. So Jayanti and her husband had to go in another state for earning.

Jamuna Samad and her husband Mangal Singh Samad had been going to other states with the villagers since last 7-8 years. This year also, after Makar festival (last week of January) they went to work to build the third line of Pampali railway station, before Jharsuguda Railway station in Orissa. She left her three children to her in-laws and took the younger son, who was 4 years old.

Suddenly a lockdown started due to Covid 19. Everyone from the team of Jamuna Samad asked their contractor, how long it will be closed, what we should do, the owner did not get any answer and neither were they given wages. 10-12 days have passed, but now people were having problems in gathering food. Everyone together helped each other, but now everyone's condition was getting worse and the owner was not even paying wages. People had living arrangements. , We were given a house to stay.. Even after doing so, neither the picker was picking up the phone nor giving wages. The ration they had was also exhausted and there was no money left. People were calling the contractor again and again, but he was not picking up the phone nor paying wages. One day suddenly he came to shout and went to his house by giving them Rs 1000 / - 1000 / -. Now they faced a big problem, they had neither ration nor any means of traveling back home, so everyone together who were 28 to 30 people took a decision to come back on foot.

Jamuna Samad decided to come back on foot after walking, but forgot that she is 2-3 months pregnant, but she has to go home in some condition because she had to die of hunger while living here, and somehow she will alive Reach home.

The next morning the entire team set out on foot, walking along the railway line, the condition of these people was also getting worse, but there was nothing else to do. After walking all day, it

happened at night and it was necessary to rest, then the people spent the night in a small station and slept after eating curled and drinking water. The next morning, after eating something, people continued to walk throughout the day, while walking and stopped in a village near Pathorbasa. The people of that village, seeing a new face, refused to provide water. Those people tried to convince the people of the village, but no one was ready to listen. Those people started walking again and at night, they rested on the way along the same railway line but they had nothing to eat. Many of the team's health were deteriorating and the condition of Jamuna Samad was also deteriorating, despite being pregnant, she was suffering from hunger herself and was not getting water on it. Jamuna was accompanied by his small child who was crying with hunger. Somehow, the third day passed by night, everyone got up early in the morning and if they used to get water tap somewhere on the way, then they used to drink water and fill water in the bottle so that they could drink on the way. It was going to be evening while walking, if one wanted to stay in the village, but the people of that village ran the people with stones, an attempt was made to convince the people of the village but the people did not understand. At that time it was only necessary to save life. While walking, people got a wound in the leg, it was felt that they would not be able to walk but it could not happen. Life was fighting to the death that no one knows when it happens. As three days passed and people entered their villages in the very morning

After coming to the village Munda of the village was first reported, after that people were brought to the Panchayat Bhavan and rested, then Corona was checked and all of us were asked to do quarantine in our respective houses. Coming out fighting with death and then seeing all of your children, all the pain and suffering have gone away. On the second day, a checkup was done with Dr., I got relief after taking medicine and the baby growing in my womb was also fine. There was a dire need for rest and there was no lockdown anyway.

Ration was arranged by the panchayat, which led to 1 month. In kharip sessions Jamuna planted some crops that produced some grains, it provided some food for few days, and now Yamuna wants to go out to work again.

Jharkhand

Name – Jayanti Samad, Village – Balijudi, Panchayat – Balijudi, Block – Sonua, District - West Singhbhum, Jharkhand

Jayanti Samad age 45 and her husband Soma Samad is a resident of village Balijudi, at Sonua block of West Singhbhum. Jayanti has a house to live but there is not much land for farming. Husband wife used to spend his food comfortably earlier.

But gradually the family grew up and then started having trouble eating food. Jayanti's husband in views of family's condition sometimes went to Chennai or sometimes to Gujarat to earn money. Every year they come to their village for 20-25 days to celebrate the festival. As time go on and Jayanti's family also grew up. Jayanti has three sons - elder boy Shibo Samad of 17 years old, second boy Shankar Samad of 16 years old, younger boy Jaganiman Samad of 11 years old, then expenses also increased It was difficult to run the family with the earnings of Soma Samad. So Jayanti left all three children with her mother-in-law for go to work in 200 km far from Kolkata, West bengal in brick line.

Time passed and then one day Jayanti's mother-in-law died. Now, who would take care of the children and Jayanti would stay at home and take care of her children, the financial condition of the house would deteriorate, yet for a few days Jayanti stay at home, but the condition of the family was deteriorating, then she again left the children at home and went to earn, her elder boy Shibo Samad had grown and was also sensible, so he would have fed his younger brothers by cooking and neighboring. People used to look after him. The younger son was so young and also a little fickle, that he could not handle anyone and he used to keep moving around and he would have hit on his head. Some how these three brothers are a bit older. Gaya the little boy is 11 years old without his mother but he has started having epileptic seizures due to head injury, he is having epileptic seizures every day. By seeing the condition of the house and seeing the illness of his brother the elder boy of Bhima went to work in Gujarat.

Jayanthi and her husband get stuck at the place of work in this Covid-19 epidemic lockdown. The owner of the place where Jayanti used to work in first and second lockdown had got all the laborers working in the brick kiln during at night, so for these people. There was no problem, but when the third lockdown was imposed, then the owner of the bhatta got all the laborers to reach their village center and along with all the laborers, Jayanti also reached home. In the third lockdown, her husband also came home but his elder boy I have not come home yet.

For the last 7-9 years, Jayanti was going to work in another state, but now Jayanti came home but the worry of the house was haunting her, because Jayanti had a house to live but she broke down due to being outside. Gaya and since she went to work in the other state, she was not doing any farming in her land. She did not have seed to put in the field. Somehow the head of the village was allotted and she was given ration by the ration shop. But in the house, money and work were needed for oil spices and for cultivated seeds.

Seed was distributed to the migrant laborers through the Shramjivi Mahila Samiti and Jayanti was also given seeds from the organization. Presently both Jayanti and her husband have planted their fields with seeds, picked up a corn crop from their fields and sold it to some local haats



Uttar Pradesh

Devi Paswan Village Karouli, Pipargaon, Bidhnu, Kanpur Devi is 19 years old and studied upto class 8. She is unmarried. She was living in the village along with her parent and one younger brother. They were very poor and landless. In the village there was not much work. Somebody from their relatives told her father that in Madurai, Tamil Nadu they will get work in brick kiln. So in December 2019 the entire family along with some other villagers left for Madurai. In Madurai they were working in a brick kiln. She could not tell the exact location of the brick kiln in Madurai.

They got the work. Since they were working as an unit in the kiln, and her father was primary employee she said she was not aware how much they were earning, but one thing was clear to her, she was getting square meal a day and she and her brother did not have to sleep hungry. They were staying near the brick kiln by constructing a mud hut. Almost after 3 months the brick kiln was closed due to Lockdown. Infact they did not know about it. But one day the supervisor of the kiln went away without informing them. So there was no work. They stayed there for 3 /four days thinking the work would start when supervisor will come. But supervisor did not turn up. By that time whatever ration they had were finished. They did not have money, also there was no shop opened for buying ration. So all of them including 8 others who went with them, thought of returning back to their village. But they heard that there was no train or bus. However, luckily the kiln was adjacent to a railway track and they noticed one day one goods wagon came to that place. Devi's father and other villagers desperately requested the goods wagon driver to take them in. They did not know where the goods train was going. After much request the goods train driver allow them to sit in one of the wagon . They did not have anything with them. Near the kiln there was a guava orchard and there was guavas on the trees. So they brought with them quavas and some water to have on the raod. Somehow , the goods wagon brought them upto Jhansi and it took them almost three days to reach Jhansi. All these days they were huddled in the wagon and surviving consuming one or two guavas.

Reaching Jhansi, they were a bit confident – at least they were in their own state and can speak and get help. Language would not be barrier. But here also they did not get any help. So they decided to walk back to Kanpur. They walked for 6 days to reach their village which is in the outskirts of Kanpur city. On the road wherever they saw any dhaba (roadside hotel) they were requesting for some food, some were giving, some were chasing them away. In the night they used to sleep on the road side. Devi said, " in these six days' time my father did not sleep an wink as he was concerned about my safety. So he was sitting whole night beside me while my mother and me were sleeping. "

Once they reached Kanpur the government officials took them to Naraina health centre. There they stayed for two days. Covid -19 tests were done . After two days they were sent to Karouli Primary school which was used as quarantine centre. They they stayed for 2 weeks. In that school there were 10 rooms. One family was given one room each. Thus she stayed in one room with her parent and brother. Inside the school there was no water provision, but just outside the school boundary there was a government water tap. They used water from that tap for there daily chores. There was separate toilets for men and women. But we have to claen them. But since there was no provision for running water inside the toilets, the toilets were always filthy. We covered one space with sarees and using that covered place for taking bath as there was no bathroom in the centre. Soap, sanitizer ,bed sheets , mats etc are not provided. Our relatives brought those daily use items and gave us to use in quarantine centre. Food was provided by Pradhan only one day. Rest of the days our own relatives from the village were providing food to us.

After getting out of the quarantine centre , her father was killed in a community brawl . Now she and her mother are staying alone. The brother has gone somewhere whose where about they don't know. Coming back they get work in agricultural fields of big land lords as that was the time for wheat harvesting. Now also she is working as agricultural labourer and her mother got a job of assistant cook in the nearby temple.

Uttar Pradesh

Sunita Gosai and Amoli Gosai Sahaddulapur, Kanpur City, Sunita aged around 50 and her daughter-in-law Amoli aged 22, both are widowed. While Sunita is illiterate, Amoli studied upto class 5. Amoli has daughter who is 6 years old. Once Amoli's husband died two years back, her parents who stayed in Delhi called them to Delhi. So both Sunita and Amoli along with the child went to Delhi and stayed in a jhuggi near Pahadganj. Both could say only that much about their address in Delhi.

In Delhi Sunita was going to couple of houses for washing dishes and Amoli was going as casual labourer in construction sites. But that was not regular. With that they were managing their lives. But once Corona broke out and lockdown was declared there was nothing to do for survival. There was no wage work. The employers of my mother-in-law also asked her to come for work. They stayed for an week, but it became difficult to manage food. So they decided to come back to Kanpur thinking that they might get some work and relief from UP government – their own state.

They, like many others walked back. It was extremely difficult to walk without food. "If we were lucky we were getting some cooked food from some kind people. Otherwise we have to manage with water. My daughter was crying all the time. Half way through my daughter became extremely sick. We did not know what to do. My relatives who were coming with us helped in getting some medicine and managed a trolley to carry us some distance. However after 5 days' walk we reached our home in Kanpur" – says Amoli. That is the most harrowing experience of my life time added Amoli.

Once they reached Kanpur city area, they were taken to Krishna Nagar Quarantine Centre. The Centre has separate rooms for men and women, however there is common toilets and there was no bathroom, so everyone had to take bath in the open near the water tap. No basic utility items like bed sheet, mats, soap, bucket or mugs were provided. Neither there was any cleaning materials – phynile, toilet cleaner etc. Though there was electricity and provision for running tap water, yet since there was no regular cleaning of the area and no space for waste disposal, especially liquid waste the surrounding became extremely dirty. Most of the time the toilet was very dirty. According to Amoli she had to flush two bucket of water each time she goes use the toilet.

In the quarantine centre they were provided with food only once in a day and that also not sufficient – 4 pieces of poori and one subji. There was no extra provision for young children or lactating mothers. "My grand child was crying for some extra food all the time. Since we also did not have money with us, we could not meet her needs also" said Sunita.

However, after 14 days they were tested for Corona infection and then allowed to go back to their home.

Since they have PDS card, they got free ration for few months and with that managing. Till now they are not able to get any work. Sunita is ready to go and work as domestic help, but nobody is willing to take maid for fear of Corona infection (as if only maids are infection carriers!). Amoli also did not get any work. Amoli said she would love to do some work sitting at home and earn, but she does not know what. But she is interested to go back to Delhi. According to Amoli, "I love Delhi and I get work easily there" So while Amoli is keen to go back to Delhi, her mother-in-law is not ready to go back. She said, "here at least I get some ration and once corona is over, with god's grace people will call us to work in their house"

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