

2021

CO-CREATING FUTURE STRATEGIES FROM GRASSROOTS STORIES: COVID-19 AND INTERNAL MIGRATION



A PROPOSAL FOR IATSS FORUM
ALUMNI ACTIVITY

Submitted by:
IATSS Alumni Association of India (IAAI)

Background to the Project

The National lockdown, announced in March 2020, displayed the extreme vulnerability of migrant workers in India. Every year around nine million workers move from rural areas to urban cities in search of work within construction sites and factories in the country¹. A staggering 77% of India's workforce (3 out of 4 workers) falls under the category of vulnerable employment (World Bank, 2019). One of the largest and most vulnerable workforces of India is seasonal migrant (workers who migrate temporarily). Globally, the increase in migration is the result of widening gap between agricultural and non-agricultural sectors along with unequal distribution of resources and economic opportunities. India is also not an exception to this trend.



The plight of migrant workers

A total of 64 thousand people from Assam working outside the State are living in Karnataka. While Kerala has 34,000 temporary workers from Assam, Tamil Nadu has 33,000. Among other states, 21,000 people working in Maharashtra and 16,000 in Telangana hail from Assam. About 22,778 people are scattered across Gujarat, Goa, West Bengal, Haryana and New Delhi. A vast majority of people working outside the State hail from Nagaon district. The State Government estimates about 15 lakh people will return to Assam from hotspots across the country once lockdown is lifted.² Over 2.5 lakh people have returned so far to the State, which has seen a sudden spike in the number of

COVID-19 cases, a total of 2,565 during the month of June 2020.³

¹ Voices of the Invisible Citizens A Rapid Assessment on the Impact of COVID-19 Lockdown on Internal Migrant Workers : Recommendations for the State, Industry & Philanthropies, 2020

² <https://www.firstpost.com/health/over-4-lakh-stranded-assamese-eligible-for-subsistence-allowance-verification-process-underway-says-himanta-biswa-sarma-8275541.html>

³ <https://indianexpress.com/article/north-east-india/assam/database-skill-training-how-assam-plans-to-absorb-returning-workers-6447755/>

The Assam government decided to provide job cards to all migrant workers who returned to the State and give them work under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).⁴ Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal stressed on the need to focus on providing job opportunities to migrant workers who have returned to the State. Considering various schemes being implemented at the villages by the Panchayat and Rural Development Department, the Chief Minister proposed to provide job opportunities to the youth who have returned to their villages. The Chief Minister reviewed the progress of various schemes being implemented by the Panchayat and Rural Development department. The Block Development Officers are being asked to carry out schemes, which would create assets in society and provide job opportunities to the returning youths. The Chief Minister also directed the Deputy Commissioners to identify skills of the migrant workers who have returned to their respective districts and engage them in schemes suitable to their capabilities.⁵ The Deputy Commissioners of all the districts of Assam were also supposed to take steps for settlement of all land related disputes for expeditiously carrying out PMAY and MGNREGA works, besides evaluating utility of assets that have already been created under different schemes of P&RD department.

The Central Government recently launched a scheme '*Garib Kalyan Rozgar Abhiyaan*' for the returned migrant workers of six states – Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Odisha. However, Assam does not figure in the list.⁶

There were many anomalies related to the distribution of job card under MGNREGA to the migrants returning home as reported in regional newspapers. According to a reply given by the Hon'ble Minister, Panchayat & Rural Development Department of Assam, Mr. Nabo Kumar Doley, to a question raised in the Assembly about the migrant labourers, 1,33,000 job card were being distributed to the families out of which 33,717 job card have been received by the migrants coming from outside the state. He also added that, out of 33,717 job cards, only 2000 of the returnees are being provided jobs of mason under PMAYG scheme. The newspaper reports also stated that there are 1,73,363 workers who returned back to Assam because of the pandemic.

⁴ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/assam-to-give-job-cards-to-returnee-labourers-minister/article31618924.ece>

⁵ <https://www.outlookindia.com/newscroll/provide-jobs-to-migrant-workers-who-have-returned-to-the-state-sonowal-to-bdos/1838765>

⁶ <https://www.thequint.com/my-report/assam-hojai-migrant-workers-job-loss-coronavirus-outbreak>

Project Details

“CO-CREATING FUTURE STRATEGIES FROM GRASSROOTS STORIES: COVID-19 AND INTERNAL MIGRATION”	
Origin	IAAI and Radio Brahmaputra, Dibrugarh, Assam
Beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Makers • Government • Development Agencies • Migrant workers • Employers
Partners	Radio Brahmaputra, Grassroots Community Radio Station
Duration	6 (Six) months
Budget	3540 USD
Theme	Documenting the stories of migrant labourers from the state of Assam in pre, during and post Covid-19 pandemic situation and co-creating future strategies of coping in emergency situation.
Priority Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping of socio-economic conditions of the migrant labourers. • Strategizing future plans to cope during an emergency for migrant labourers. • Mapping of locally available resources vis a vis the reason behind large number of internal migrations.
Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amplification of unheard voices of the migrant labourers from the State of Assam through storytelling. • Creating agents of change. • To co-create strategy for better coping in such emergency. • To create learning materials including awareness campaign for issues related to labour rights, financial management, health issues of the labourers, available government scheme etc.
Objective(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the demographic profile and socio-economic condition of the migrant labourers.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping the existing skills of the migrant labourers. • Mapping the locally available resources related to them and to analyze the reason behind internal migration • Understanding their strategy of coping with the socio-economic crisis during and after the lockdown • To co-create recommendations for a long-term plan for advocating towards a better solution.
<i>Location</i>	Dibrugarh, Dhemaji and Sivasagar districts of the state of Assam – Tea Garden, Riverine, Mainland village areas.
<i>Activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary Data collection • Secondary Data analysis • Data entry and analysis • Report development • Audio visual documentation • Publication and dissemination of the deliverables
<i>Action Needed</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Radio Programme, • Print Document Publication, • Dissemination through audio visual format, • Community Screening of the stories, and • Developing future strategy to cope in such emergency <p><i>The findings will help to co-create solutions for issues related to migrant labourers</i></p>
<i>M & E Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fund will be disbursed in two installments • Monthly reporting from the implementing partner • Visit to the project area by one IAAI member • Audit of the activities by the IAAI member • The in-charge of the IAAI will keep the stakeholders in the loop and update on regular basis • Communication through email and other online means will be taken care of by the project in charge of IAAI • The second installment may be released upon the successful submission of the three-monthly report to IAAI
<i>Project Team</i>	Headed by Dr. Alankar Kaushik with the IAAI members and Radio Brahmaputra as the implementing partner.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Banerjee', written over a thin horizontal line.

PRESIDENT
IATSS Forum Alumni Association of India (IAAI)
India

ANNEXURE – 1

PROPOSED BREAKDOWN OF THE PROJECT BUDGET

TOTAL COST ESTIMATED: **3540 USD**

SL. NO.	PARTICULARS	RATE (IN \$)	AMOUNT (IN \$)
1	Data Collection (09 villages in 3 geographical locations will require 10 data collectors)	3 per person per day for 60 days	1800
2	Documentation (A/V format) will require 04 persons	5 per person per day for 30 days	600
3	Printing	400	400
4	Photo and Video editing for dissemination and packaging	270	270
5	Travelling and accommodation of one IAAI members to the site for discussion and audit	400	400
5	Miscellaneous	70	70
Total			3540

The budget requested for the IATSS Forum is USD **2300**.

Note:

The human resources for the same will be mobilized by the implementing partner Radio Brahmaputra, a grassroots community radio station in Dibrugarh, Assam, India.