

Jeevan Rath 2.0

Support to Migrants with immediate cash transfer, Grievance Redressal with end to end tracking, and facilitating transport

As of 23rd May 2020, The Jeevan Rath initiative by the MAHA C19 PECONet partners with technical support of UNICEF Maharashtra, had reached a total of 59900 migrants with food, water and other essentials. This was a significant achievement by the group given that the initiative was conceived and implemented within 48 hours.

Our partners and volunteers on the ground have faced multiple issue but the commitment to the mission has kept everyone going and together to provide as much relief as possible to the migrant travellers adapting with fast changing scenarios. With the welcome directives by the Supreme Court that the government has to provide for buses and trains for the migrants, the number of migrants walking have reduced but on the other hand, there has been other challenges that are now emerging.

As most migrants are daily wage earners, they have been out of work for over two months. It is also known fact, that that they do not have access to money and food. Hence, there is a grave need to support the migrants with financial resources (both conditional and unconditional) which can then give them a feeling of empowerment.

In keeping with the mandate to support migrants and provide relief in these stressful times, the Jeevan Rath initiative enters its next phase of operations with a focus on transportation and cash transfers. Food provisions will continue, however our efforts will go beyond the destination point to an end-to-end tracking mechanism post inter state border with a grievance redressal system to understand ground realities that migrants are facing. This will help for long term solutions for their rehabilitation and re-absorption into the economy with social sector recovery.

In view of this, a meeting was held with representatives of Stranded Workers Action Network (SWAN), and the MAHA C19 PECONet partners to discuss and explore the way forward.

Challenges:

Some of the challenges that we see as a group as we move towards transportation management for migrants and some suggestions from partners are as follows:

1. **Train time tables** - Trains and buses are being organized at the last moment and the time table is not shared with public or supporting organizations. For this, we need to co-ordinate with the Government for advance notice of the train time tables. This will avoid miscommunication. We can also propose to use the IRCTC portal as people are used to that, with a special tab saying "Shramik Trains". This can also have confirmed tokens so that extra people do not turn up at the station based on rumours and false news. However it is found that if announced in advance, there are thousands turning up – resulting in a logistical nightmare. On the other, a bigger problem if trains are not going full or being filled by people known to police or officials etc leaving the really needy out of the system.
2. **Token system** - The token system is not clear and is confusing people, causing many people to be sent back from various check points. Many are not be aware of it as well and needs better communication. The e-pass forms are also extremely difficult for even educated people to fill. This has also caused insecurity and stress to the migrants as they are not aware of their status if they do not have tokens and are being exploited.
3. **Police Stations** – Migrants are expected to register at the police stations. However, they are being evicted by the police for various reasons. This causes fear and is stopping them from going to the police station.

4. **Facilities** – Government has not organised any specific facilities for travellers while they are waiting for trains with thousands waiting in the scorching sun with the hope of trains being announced and the chance to board them. Worse, even on the trains there are inadequate food arrangements with lack of water being the most distressful. Dirty toilets and other hygiene issues have been surfacing regularly. Women and children especially are struggling and it is worse if a woman has her menstrual cycle during travel.
5. **Co-ordination with Migrants** – From the Jharkhand and other partner experiences of interacting with migrants beyond the Jeevan Rath touch points, migrant phones not always available and so not always easy to reach and co-ordinate with for food or travel. Migrants are joining together to hire buses on their own, but this is turning out to be a very costly affair and also risky at two levels. First without all the proper permissions and screening, buses are being stopped or sent back, secondly the number of accidents and mishaps have led to additional misery and suffering for the migrant families.
6. **Rehabilitation** – AS migrants start moving to villages, there is a need to learn more about them keeping in mind the next phase of their lives and the changes that are going to affect their lives and livelihoods. However, there are other issues with both collection of data as well as resources to help them integrate.
7. **Data collection** – Police are not allowing to interact with the migrants at the train station premises, so taking information from them maybe very difficult. We will need police permissions to have data collections, it will be necessary to have permissions from the local and state-level police officers.
8. **Migrant mindset** – Migrants may also not be in such a frame of mind such that they will be willing to take a survey or give information fearful of it as an official record keeping for unknown purposes.
9. **Cash assistance** - All migrants may not have bank accounts, google pay, paytm and other digital options may be explored. Duplication of requests for cash transfers must be considered and a system to have a UID for every bank account where funds are transferred to avoid the same.
10. **Unique identification** - Barcode can be used to identify migrants as there is very little time to interact with the migrants, this could be done while they are waiting to board but police permission will be required as they do not allow anyone to come in the railway premises

Based on the above challenges, a number of solutions were discussed especially as we had the SWAN representatives who provided us information on their work to support migrants travel, food and cash transfers. They also informed us about the Covid Action Support Team (CoAST) online platform (facilitated by Azim Premji Foundation) to co-ordinate efforts at a national level between various CSO groups. A demonstration was immediately organised on the very same day with CoAST team and plans discussed about a partnership. It was decided that there was no need of an MOU between the two groups as CoAST and SWAN were volunteer driven initiatives with no organisation formally involved in the same.

Jeevan Rath 2.0 – Phase II of MAHA C19 PECONet collective efforts

Key Objective: To reach out to maximum migrants and support them to reach to their home district/state in a state of wellbeing with mapping of their skills.

Scope of activity: Migrants labour travelling out of Mumbai / Maharashtra to various states and districts
It was decided to focus our attention on :

- (i) Migrants on the ground where Jeevan Rath is physically present
- (ii) Migrant clusters that Partners are helping directly
- (iii) Migrant information being provided by partners, government, other groups and network for support and help

Interventions: Jeevan Rath 2.0 was immediately launched the next day to provide for the following key requirements:

1. War room with call centre to manage logistics. Documentation and communication
2. Ground assistance for migrant travel
3. Direct Cash Transfer in partnership with donors and other agencies
4. Case management

Currently, the Jeevan Rath activities on the ground are being supported by various partners as well as the Ketto fundraiser co-ordinated by RISE Infinity Foundation. . A petition by YUVA on Change.org has created substantial visibility for our efforts and the SOP required to ease the plight of the migrants as discussed and agreed in our first Partner Learning exchange meeting and report.

UNICEF has taken the lead to provide further funding through both employee participation to the Ketto platform as well as at an organisational level to RISE Infinity and YUVA. RISE Infinity Foundation was on-boarded as a partner to manage the first requirement in the role of a Secretariat as they have previous experience in this area and also demonstrated their expertise of a call centre approach for outreach with the stranded Jharkhand labourers problem, they helped to address YUVA was also on supported to continue their work to provide assistance to migrant travellers to the border region of Maharashtra from Nashik, Paplghar, as well as some food and ration requirements while they wait to travel. Both initiatives are for a period of a month so as to test our premises and pilot different approaches in alleviating the suffering of the migrant labourers and also identify long term solutions.

Key Considerations:

1. **Data collection and tracking** – It was agreed that both primary data and secondary data can be used to track migrants and understand their needs better for immediate and long term solutions. Data collected will include contact numbers, destination and occupation. A Call Center will also be independently established to track the migrant's movement. It will ensure that every one who has started has reached home safely. Calls will be made proactively to track their movement. RISE Infinity Foundation will operate the call centre as well as create appropriate mechanisms for collection of data at the Jeevan Rath touchpoints by on-ground data enumerators.
2. **Co-ordination with Authorities** - Government has started supporting the migrants to help them travel to their home states with no cost. Instead of tickets , 'tokens' are being issued based on the registrations made by anyone who wishes to travel to their home state. The tokens are issued by the local police station. Migrant labourers are reluctant to visit the police station, due to the fear of getting evicted for minor reasons. This is a fear which has evolved towards the

uniform through years of experience. As and when a train is announced, 50% of the population without any tokens reach the pick-up point with a false hope of getting a seat. They typically then travel by bus while a few may get some extra seats on the train. Trains are also being diverted from their destinations and quite often buses drop off the migrants to the state border and come back. Even when they reach their home state, there is an uncertainty about reaching home.

3. **Support** – Immediate assistance outbound travellers and wherever possible to inbound travellers and reverse migration within Maharashtra. Village level support could be provided by partners who are operating in those geographies. RISE Infinity Foundation will coordinate with SWAN and CoAST for technical support and on cash transfers. CoAST Methodology & platform training can be conducted to avoid duplication of efforts. CoAST has 14 partners across Maharashtra who can verify the lists and take responsibility of cash transfers. SWAN will be the key partner to facilitate and raise funds for cash transfers along with the CoAST platform. A Unique Identification Code will have to be generated for the migrants. This will ease the tracking and will also enable zero duplication in the fund transfer.
4. **Link to Railway Childline** - Utilizing Railway Child-line mechanism and connecting with local NGOs all along the train routes (major stations) was noted as a significant opportunity to address distress call for urgent support to migrant women and children. Railway childline stickers are expected to be in all the railway coaches. Stakeholders to verify if these stickers are indeed still there in the railway coaches. Local NGOs will be encouraged to direct the migrant attention to the railway childline number and the expected services.
5. **Communication & Advocacy** – There will be a need to promote the call centre to accelerate the assistance that can be extended to them. For this an online and offline strategy is required to be designed, developed and produced at the earliest.

Partner MOUs – RISE Infinity Foundation & YUVA

Based on the above considerations the following partner MOUs were agreed upon for immediate action.

RISE Infinity Foundation:

Rise infinity Foundation will work as a nodal NGO of Maharashtra Covid Platform to ensure distribution of protection gears of all the agencies engaged in food distribution, doing the insurances of volunteers of all the agencies engaged in food distribution, engage one full time dedicated person to manage the platform and coordination.

Geographic Coverage: Bandra (Mumbai -Suburban District), Thane (Thane District), Vasai (Palghar District), Nashik and Pune.

Activities:

1. Volunteer management

- Insurance of 50 volunteers
- Payment to 20 Volunteer Coordinators for 15 days to maintain social distancing and gather migrant data during food distribution
- Procurement of Protection gears like face shield, Googles, gloves, hand sanitizer for 50 volunteers

2. War room

- 15x7 migrants war room to track and coordinate with different transit points of 70000 migrants, their needs and connecting with local NGO network, other partners in Maharashtra and other states for support for 30 days
- 4 call lines with 3 shifts in a day
- Volunteers to get the data of migrant like phone numbers and occupation
- Documentations of specific case management

3. Secretariat

- Compilation of Rescue agencies such as NGOs and police and connect with them for assistance
- IEC on such call center with Government, IRCTC, CSOs and migrants directly
- Set up a protocol to register grievances and response
- Promote Railway Childline communication to avail of their services
- Partner co-ordination for resources and logistics
- Donor management for funds and in kind donations
- Financial management of funds through Ketto platform for disbursement to partners and expenses incurred.

YUVA

YUVA will provide Support for Jeevan Rath 2.0 – NFI (Non Food Items) and WASH Relief for Migrants Traveling to their Homes and support End to End Tracking with database management and support in tracking.

Geographic Coverage: Gujarat, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat

Activities:

1. 10000 migrants (outbound and reverse) data base captured as per the format developed under Jeevan Rath 2.0 and shared with RISE Infinity Foundation and UNICEF
2. 2000 migrants (it can be from the same group of 10000 migrants) are provided with NFI, Water and WASH essentials during their travel by Bus and any other means
3. 500 migrants are provided with Direct Cash Transfer (focusing on women and children) to reach their village or town from Border of Chhattisgarh, Gujarat and MP
4. 10 case management of inter border transfer, migrants tracking documented through photo essays, 2 minutes videos and testimonials
5. Support RISE Infinity Foundation to develop and disseminate IEC strategy on Call center and Grievance Cell