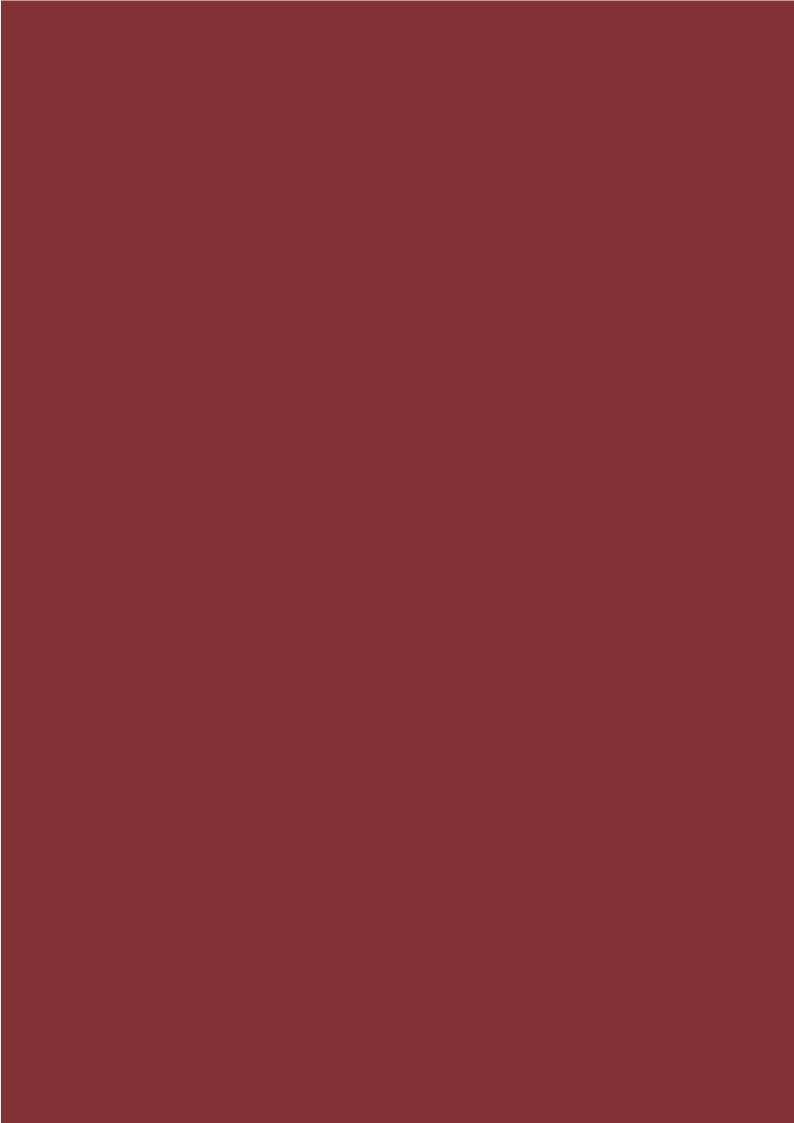


**EVOLUTION OF THE** 

# STATE MIGRANT CONTROL ROMAN





# Background

As per Census 2011, there are about 41 million inter-state migrant workers in India, who make up the majority of India's informal economy. Rapid urbanisation across major cities in India demands a huge workforce, although this has been mostly in the form of unorganised and informal work. While the differential development of these urban centres acts as a pull factor, the lower socio-economic growth in rural India accompanied by insufficient employment opportunities, low agricultural output and a mismatch between skills and employment pushes the rural workforce in search of better livelihood opportunities. Their contributions are significant in infrastructure development, food processing, manufacturing, textiles, security forces, domestic service, etc., contributing around 10% of India's gross domestic product (GDP)\*. Despite being an integral part of the nation's workforce and growth trajectory, migrant workers have remained on the margins of India's political and policy discourse. An unfortunate corollary of this state of affairs is the complete lack of any credible data on the number and mobility of migrant workers within the country. Exclusionary urbanisation, along with minimal provisions for state support, creates an unsafe and unregulated environment for the migrant workers in the economy (Kundu & Saraswati, 2012).

As a response to the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of India announced a stringent national lockdown on 23rd March 2020 to contain the COVID-19 outbreak, resulting in a severe crises for migrant workers in the country. Millions of workers having lost their livelihoods in a single stroke coupled with the cessation of all transportation services, were then forced to walk, cycle, and hitchhike in dangerous conditions for thousands of kilometres to prevent themselves from dying from hunger or debt while stranded across silent cities and megalopolises of the country. The containment strategies and relief measures designed in the wake of COVID-19 induced lockdown were oblivious to the plight of the migrant workers. It can be argued that with lack of credible data on the actual number of migrant workers, there was bound to be an adverse effect not only on the success of these strategies but also on the implementation of relief and rehabilitation measures. In 2020 and 2021, the Supreme Court of India made extremely sharp observations in this regard highlighting the lack of data and worker registration as one of the main causes of their precarious situation.



Jharkhand & Migration

Carved out as a separate state in 2000 in eastern India, the state of Jharkhand, with 33.5 million people including 27% indigenous population, accounts for nearly 47% of India's mineral reserves. Yet, it faces the classic 'resource curse' conundrum with low human development indicators and one of the highest outflow of the working-age population in the country. Economic Survey of India 2016-17 showed that Jharkhand is a major source of migrant working population in the country. The state has lost about 5 million of its working-age population to migration every year between 2001 - 2011 - about 5 % of the working age population of the state. Between March-July 2020 during the multiple phases of COVID-19 induced lockdown, over a million migrant workers



# Evolution of the State - Migrant Control Room

# PHASE 1

- Helpline to support the safe return of migrants
- Coordination of the provision of welfare benefits to returning migrants

# PHASE 2

- Grievance Redressal of returning migrants and their family members
- Supporting the Department of Health in tracking COVID-19 patients
- Involved in Skill mapping exercise
- Repatriation of international migrants

# PHASE 3

- Registration of workers in in E-shram and Shramadhan portals
- Data Collection & revalidation
- Grievance Redressal national & international





While the immediate state response was to ensure a safe return of the migrant workers to their respective source regions, the medium-term response was to generate employment opportunities and absorb the returning migrants into the state's economy, thereby, securing their livelihoods. In order to address these issues, the Government of Jharkhand adopted a collective action approach by bringing in various stakeholders, such as government officials, elected representatives, and representatives of local and national Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), to deliberate, design and provide operational support for the implementation of various initiatives which ensured the safe return of migrant workers. While every state in India was devising coping strategies to help the migrant workers stranded at various destinations, the Government of Jharkhand established a COVID-19 Response Team on 27th March 2020, four days after statewide lockdown was announced in India, to tackle with and respond to the evolving migrant worker's crisis.

### Phase 1

On 26th March, Partnering Hope Into Action Foundation (PHIA) submitted a proposal of starting a helpline to support the state in combating the migrant worker's crisis. Under the direct supervision of the Chief Minister of Jharkhand & the Department of Labour, Training, Employment, & Skill Development, Government of Jharkhand, a helpline was set up with 10 volunteers on 27th March 2022, at the State Secretariat, Nepal House. On the first day, the control room was flooded with around 7000 calls requesting for safe return to the state. As part of the agile approach of the government, it was immediately decided to scale up the helpline to handle the large number of calls it was receiving.

A pool of volunteers from various government departments like the Department of Labour, Training, Employment, & Skill Development; Jharkhand Urban Infrastructure Development Company (JUIDCO), Jharkhand Agency for Promotion of Information Technology (JAP-IT), Jharkhand Education Project Council (JEPC), Jharkhand Police; were inducted to manage the calls. From a team of 10 volunteers, the number rose to 190 within 4 days, expanding the helpline into COVID-19 Response Team-Control Room. The control room was operating 24/7 in three shifts and 10 Toll Free numbers along with 40 hunting lines and 5 WhatsApp Numbers got assigned to the control room where migrants could call and register their grievances.



### Extending support through CSO Networks

The entire operations and management of the control room was managed by PHIA Foundation, which had been working on migration and human trafficking issues in Jharkhand. They harnessed their local and national networks & the Government-Civil Society Organisation (GO-CSO) collaboration established at Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS) under the aegis of Department of Rural Development, Government of Jharkhand, to facilitate better coordination between the government and the civil society organisations while reaching out to migrant workers for all possible relief services. In each state, two to three anchor organisations were identified and empaneled, and their networks were deployed to reach and provide relief to migrant workers in the places where workers from Jharkhand were stranded.

However, the volunteers have also revealed instances when they could not aid certain individuals in dire need due to their inability to produce the necessary paperwork or bank details so that they could prove themselves as residents of Jharkhand or have the financial aid transferred to their bank accounts. There were also instances when the workers did not have smartphones or access to phones altogether and struggled to get themselves registered and get the benefit of the schemes. In such cases, the control room relied on local NGOs and other CSO partners to



# State support for safe return of migrants

The control room responded to the needs of the migrant workers from Jharkhand by facilitating emergency provisions, providing relief measures, financial and health aid, rescue and transportation through state sponsored buses, trains and flights. Working round the clock the control room volunteers not only responded to incoming calls from distressed migrant workers but also facilitated the delivery of dry rations to migrants and provided them necessary medical support either via the state apparatus or the network of NGOs, grassroots workers, CSO networks, or religious institutions.

#### Data based monitoring

The information from the calls was digitally fed to a system to create datasets to analyse, and create daily reports which were monitored personally by the Hon'ble Chief Minister. The data of stranded migrants were shared with the concerned nodal officers assigned per state to coordinate in arranging safe return of the workers to the state of Jharkhand. These datasets were crucial for the state since very little was known about the population that engages in circular/seasonal migration. Lack of a robust database on this huge section of the most vulnerable workforce meant that the issues and concerns of this section of population did not get addressed in official government policies.

### Support in facilitating socio-economic aid

After the launch of the Mukhyamantri Vishesh Sahayta Yojana (Chief Minister's Special Assistance Scheme), a state government scheme to provide one-time monetary assistance of ₹1000 to stranded migrant workers, the control room supported in verifying the identity of the workers and registering them to transfer the amount to the workers. This scheme benefitted 2,63,337 migrant workers. Many migrants have stated that this money allowed them to pay rent and buy necessities during the lockdown when there was no source of earning or employment. The control room also coordinated in the Mukhyamantri Didi Kitchen (Chief Minister's Didi Kitchen) which was started by SHGs across all 24 districts to provide meals to all the distressed

# Removing Cultural barriers in an alienated space

people including migrant workers. More than

these Didi kitchens.

12 lakh people were being fed everyday through

Migrant workers face immense disadvantages in the form of cultural and language barriers, which impede their access to informal as well as official assistance in the destination states, especially during times of crisis. The volunteers of the control room were dealing with cases of workers being stuck in 'alien' spaces, from where they could neither escape (due to lack of capital and social support systems) nor survive (due to lack of provisions and inaccessibility of support provided by the state as well as civil society). Subsequent conversations with the volunteers at the control room made it clear that the immediate help in the form of monetary assistance and dry ration, responding to the emotional need of the workers was significant for the survival of stranded workers and their families with limited means.

#### **Impact**

Through adopting a collaborative action approach, the control room was able to reach and assist migrant workers stranded in 28 states across 676 districts, with the support of a strong network of 220 Civil Society Organisations. It played an instrumental role in coordinating with the Indian Army, Border Roads Organization, other state governments, CSO's and grassroots activists to organise seven airlift missions undertaken by Government of Jharkhand to evacuate over 650 workers from remote regions including Leh-Ladakh and Andaman & Nicobar islands. They also coordinated with foreign embassies in safe repatriation of workers stranded in Nepal, Middle East, Bhutan, Myanmar, Bahrain, Sweden, Nigeria, South Africa and Malaysia. Between 27th March to 24th November, 2020, the total number of migrants registered with the control room was reported to be 10,47,711.



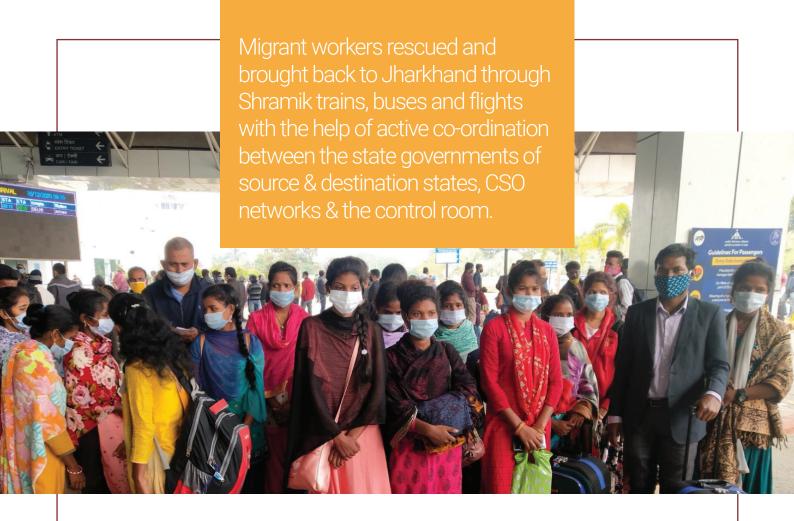




















# Phase 2

As the country underwent the subsequent 'unlock' phases and the economy unpaused, the role and scope of the control room also changed. From a team of 190 volunteers, the control room engaged 20 dedicated professionals to redress grievances of migrant workers from Jharkhand. The nature of the calls coming to the control room changed from distress calls in the short term to inquiries related to employment within Jharkhand and often also to understand and enquire about the COVID vaccination in the medium term.



# Involvement in tracking COVID-19 patients

The scope of work of the control room followed the trajectory of the pandemic. With the aim to ensure strict monitoring of COVID-19 patients under home isolation, the control room was given the responsibility of managing a health helpline-104 to support the Department of Health, Government of Jharkhand. For this operation, the control room hired 15 counsellors who were trained by the Department of Health in addressing issues and concerns of patients. The Department of Health would share a list of COVID positive patients with the control room and their role was to call each and every patient from the list to learn about their symptoms and categorise under asymptomatic, mild, moderate and severe. Health parameters of the patients like oxygen saturation level (if available), fever, cough & temperatures were noted by the team. They would then guide the patients depending on their severity and connect with doctors for online video consultations. If a person needed hospitalisation, the team would provide assistance for the same by notifying the concerned authorities and arranging for ambulance and hospital beds. Each patient was tracked for 10 days and the control room would collate daily status reports of the patients and share these with the Department of Health. These calls included tracking misinformation around home isolation, COVID protocols, vaccination, and allaying worries among the general public. 3,70,092 outbound calls were made by the team, during the period from 21st April to 30th June 2021, to track COVID-19 positive patients for.



# Skill Mapping for better alignment of opportunities

The Government of Jharkhand was committed to generate employment opportunities and absorb the returning migrants into the state's economy to secure their livelihoods and protect them from the extreme precariousness they had to face during the pandemic. Following an agile approach, the control room was enlisted to undertake a skill mapping exercise in September 2020. To provide an early head start, it used the data collected during the lockdown in order to understand the existing skill set of the workers. Out of 1 million migrant workers registered during the pandemic, the control room reached out to 34,570 migrants and created a database about the workers and the skill(s) they possess. The data revealed that the workers from Jharkhand migrated majorly to the states of Maharashtra, Telangana, Karnataka, Haryana, Gujarat and Delhi and were engaged in building and construction work, textile and apparel industry, brick-kilns, security services and daily wage labourers. The data was shared with district administrations and Government departments to

identify opportunities within the state to support the migrant workers who had returned. The control room supported 681 migrant workers to find jobs in Jharkhand by linking them with opportunities under the Skill Development Mission. A significant contribution of the control room was the aid it provided to 365 girls working in the textile cluster of Erode, Tirupur, to return back to Jharkhand and find employment in the state-owned textile centre after undergoing appropriate skills training.

#### Support in Repatriation of International Migrants

Apart from internal migrants, the SMCR also caters to the needs of international migrants. It communicates between the Government of Jharkhand, the Ministry of External Affairs and Indian Embassies in the destination countries, thus arranging for safe repatriation of international migrants. During the recent Ukraine War, the control room successfully repatriated students from Jharkhand stuck in Ukraine.



#### Rescued by control room

"I had ventured outside Jharkhand for the first time, and this will be the last time," said Manoj Hansda (32), a resident of Lakra village of Dumka's Jarmundi block who was among 32 labourers and their five children, who arrived in Dhanbad after being rescued from Idukki in job by a middleman who took their Aadhaar card and ₹1000 per person. They were promised work in a cardamom plantation, but were asked to work in a tea plantation. The condition of the tea plantation was humid and it was difficult for them to work together. However, when they refused to work they were asked to deposit money. They reached out to the control room for help. To verify the condition of the workers, control room team members spoke to the labourers through video conferencing and ensured their safe return. The control room got in touch with an NGO to arrange food for the workers who travelled for two days in the train.





were working on the payroll of a private mining company near Nagpur, Maharashtra. The company temporarily closed and workers were left unpaid. All the 40 migrant workers returned to their hometown. The SMCR team co-ordinated the release of the due payment of all 40 migrant workers. SMCR reached out to the company officials via proper channels to secure due payment accruing to the workers. A total of ₹28,27,600 was disbursed to the workers as two month salary against the due payment.

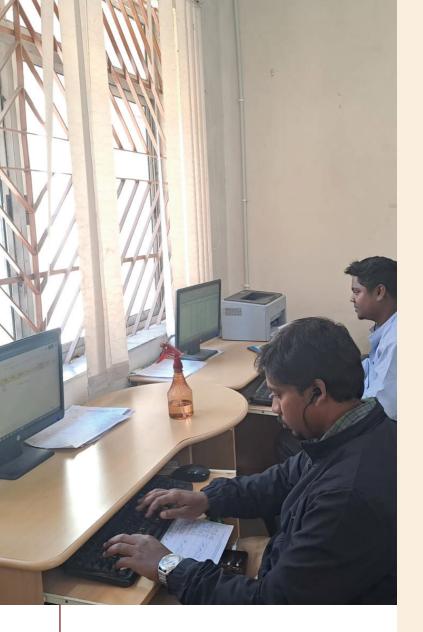


### Phase 3

# Evolution of the COVID-19 Response - Control Room as the State Migrant Control Room

With the pandemic demonstrating a sustained long-term effect, there was need for robust governance measures to safeguard long-term economic and social security of the migrant workers. Despite all the measures and efforts undertaken by the state governments, it became clear that institutional policy action at scale is needed to drive a sustainable macro framework securing the rights and welfare of migrant workers, particularly inter-state migrant workers. The crisis also demonstrated the need to have a dynamic cooperation and coordination mechanism among source and destination state governments to establish institutional frameworks ensuring the safety, dignity and social security of migrant workers. In order to address these gaps, the Safe & Responsible Migration Initiative (SRMI) was conceptualised and operationalised within the Department of Labour, Employment, Training and Skill Development, Government of Jharkhand. SRMI aims to operationalise a data-driven decision-making framework on inter-state migration for the Government of Jharkhand through systematic registration of migrant workers, extensive Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaigns, monitoring and mapping of intra-state and inter-state migration, demonstrating and institutionalising inter-state coordination and appropriate mechanisms to facilitate grievance redressal towards the issues faced by the migrant workers. SRMI is also conducting a first of its kind statewide migration survey to understand the dimensions and magnitude of migration from the state.





### Registration of Workers on Government Portals

One of the goals of SRMI is to map evidence on migration and its effective utilisation for robust monitoring and facilitation of access to social welfare benefits for both inter-state and intra-state migrant workers. In this regard, the data of migrant workers collected by the SMCR during the lockdown period is a huge asset to the state. This data is being verified through the Data Revalidation exercise conducted by the SMCR with a total of 12 enumerators carrying out Computer Assisted Telephonic Interviews (CATI). The objective of the exercise is twofold, one to revisit the data collated during the pandemic and second, to generate further insights on the migrant workers for conceptualising further activities under SRMI. These will include linkages to welfare schemes and generating awareness amongst unorganised sector workers with respect to safe and responsible migration practices highlighting the importance of registration of workers. Upon completion of each phase of the revalidation exercise, due lists of eligible workers for various social protection schemes are generated and shared with the district administration for verification. Post verification, migrant workers are linked with appropriate social security schemes of the state and union government. As part of registration of workers on the Shramadhan portal, a Single Window Registration system has been developed which will act as a dual functionality gateway to create and manage a database of migrant workers registering through SMCR and to monitor the registration process and identify key trends on a real time basis from the data. The SRMI migrant registration system has been developed to address some of the gaps and bottlenecks of the existing Government of Jharkhand's 'Shramadhan' portal. The SMCR will be using the platform to register the migrant workers, for grievance redressal and for generation of schematic due lists. Thus, the platform would act as a one stop solution to address the issues of migrant workers.

#### Grievance Redressal

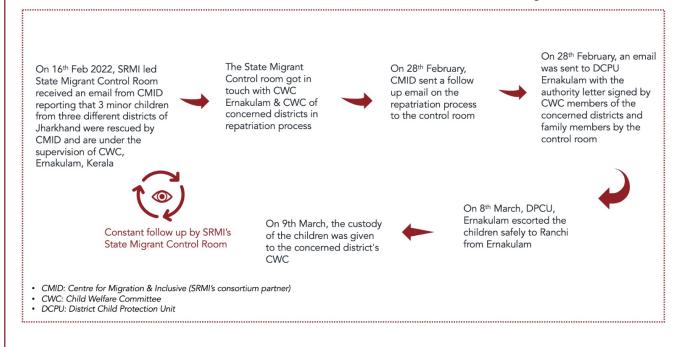
Currently, SMCR is providing counselling and legal support to the workers along with issues of non-payment of dues, child labour, violation of rights, abuses and atrocities, home return, emergency needs, deaths, compensations, etc. Along with redressing grievances, they are also registering workers in the Government of Jharkhand's Shramadhan Portal. A monthly report is being generated and shared with the Department of Labour for better coordination and liaisoning.

Coordinator & Labour Superitendent of the district Verifications of the case and related documents written explanation/query/com Data entry operator Cum Discussion with the family and Takes around one week plaint sent to Labour officer and Counsellor enters details in the related verifications by the to resolve the employer through database police at the source official email Identify the thematic areas and Verification by the state Actions are addressed and an prioritise the cases Wage violation, Emergency, migrant control room action taken report is prepared Deaths, Compensations, Legal Support, Home return, Rescue, Rehabilitation plans, Verification at the destinations Atrocities etc., Complainant is updated on the Grievance Received by the employer/ contractor/ case progress mates and agencies Grievance Resolved and closed Labour Court If grievances not redressed Grievances Redressed

Address to District Helpdesk

Grievance Redressal Mechanism of SMCR

#### Interstate coordination between Jharkhand & Kerala to rescue minor children working in Kerala



### Expansion in Scope of the Control Room

The control room which was established just as a helpline to aid migrants under distress during the pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns has now evolved into the State Migrant Control Room (SMCR). It became an integral part of the Safe & Responsible Migration Initiative (SRMI).

#### The current scope of work of the SMCR involves:

- Redressing grievances of inter-state/intra-state /international migrant workers.
- Register workers under E-Shram portal and Shramadhan portal.
- Coordinating with the District Administration & other departments such as Social welfare Department, Anti-Trafficking Unit, Police in cases related to migrant workers.
- Advocate on behalf of the workers with employers and administration at the destination states.

- Help the workers in availing outstanding dues and coordinating the return of the mortal remains of workers who lose their lives in other states for a dignified funeral.
- Conducting data revalidation exercise across three phases using the data of migrant workers collated during 2020. The exercise includes conducting personal interviews with the migrant workers using Computer Assisted Telephonic Interviews (CATI) through a structured questionnaire.

#### Impact

Since its inception, the SMCR continues to play an instrumental role in addressing the issues of the migrants both nationally and internationally. The work of SMCR under SRMI will help strengthen the data and policy infrastructure of the state through regular collection of relevant and disaggregated data. It will also play an important role in establishing institutional mechanisms to facilitate coordination among various stakeholders including the government, policy makers, employers, migrant workers and their families, so that their concerns can be better addressed by the state.



# Key Accomplishments

11,51,728

**Workers** 

Migrants facilitated to return to Jharkhand

**8,445** 

Cases

Registration of cases related to grievances and rescue

52,853

**Workers** 

Registered and issued Labour Cards & linked with Social Security entitlements

**INR** 

30.87<sub>mn</sub>

Due Payments of the migrants/ labourers disbursed

1,02,810

**Workers** 

Awareness and Counselling for Employments in textile, construction, retail sectors INR

73.95<sub>mn</sub>

Death compensation of migrant workers disbursed

1,557

Repatriation

Support provided to International Migrants from Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Myanmar, Bahrain, Sweden, South Africa, Dubai, West Africa, Malaysia, Srilanka, Kuwait, Mali, Iran, etc. **RETURNED** 

179

**Students** 

184 Students registered during the Ukraine war crisis & 179 returned to Jharkhand

Data till 31st January 2023



Rescue

A case was registered on 10th June, 2022 by the State Migrant Control Room. 30 migrant workers including a teenager had migrated to Tamil Nadu in April 2022. They migrated with the help of a middleman who promised them a better future and a high paying job. After reaching Tamil Nadu these workers felt cheated as the wage was far lower than the amount they were promised. In addition, they faced physical abuse whenever they sought clarification about their wages from the management. Hence, they decided to return back to Jharkhand. They were sacked from the job without being paid. Due to the lack of money for train tickets, they were stranded in Tamil Nadu.

After registering the case the SMCR reached out to the Labour Superintendent of West Singhbhum and was informed about the incident. An FIR was also lodged at the Dumaria Police Station. The Control Room team reached out to the relevant authorities of the Department of Labour, Tamil Nadu and informed them about the situation and requested for help. The Department immediately took action and a team of officials reached the location and rescued them on 13th June 2022. The employer paid the due salary of 27 migrant workers. The company also paid for their train tickets. All the migrant workers were safely brought back to Jharkhand on 17th June 2022.



Latika, a resident of Latehar district of Jharkhand was one among the many Indian students stranded in Ukraine. On 26th February 2022, her repatriation was transferred to the Control Room, which was in constant touch with her and tracked her movement in the war torn country. On 6th March, she took a flight from Budapest to Delhi and on the same day she returned to Jharkhand.

#### International Cases

A video of workers was shared on Twitter tagging the Chief Minister and Minister, Department of Labour, Government of Jharkhand stating that 33 individuals from Giridih and Hazaribagh districts of Jharkhand were taken to Mali, Africa in early 2021 to work in a power transmission project run by a private company. They were assured quarterly payments, however, they were not compensated for the October-December 2022 quarter. With due payments not being released by the employer, the workers gradually started to struggle in meeting the expenses for their food and accommodation. The contractor who had taken them to work as fitters ran away with their passports. The issue was escalated to the Department of Labour, Jharkhand which forward-

ed this case to the State Migrant Control Room on 17th January 2022. The SMCR immediately verified the workers' details. After due verification the Control Room contacted the employer and intimidated the Indian Embassy in Mali. The Indian Embassy, Mali instantly responded and after a series of discussions held by the Indian Embassy with the Company's representatives, a tripartite agreement was signed on 18th January 2022. The agreement to disburse the outstanding wages of October and November 2021 was binding on the parties. After necessary clearance and completion of all formalities, all the workers were safely brought back to Jharkhand in February 2022. The SMCR was in constant communication with the workers ensuring their safety and wellbeing.

























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