

# Rissho Kosei-kai Donate-a-Meal Fund for Peace

## Final Report

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> June 2021

Name of organization: : South Asian Network for Social & Agricultural Development (SANSAD)		
Representative : Anil K Singh		
Title : Secretary General	Signature :	
Name of project: Provision of employment to internal migrant workers through MGNREGA		
Period of project: November 15th 2020 to May 15th 2021		

### 1. Project outline

Amid the Corona Pandemic, the States and Central governments in India are trying to resume the usual economic activities. However the unemployment in all sectors continues to be at its highest. The constant efforts of the government in employment generation is yet to show some ground breaking change. On a plane evaluation it can be seen that the unemployment is at 21.3% whereas over 100 million people are out of jobs.

Since India witnessed lockdown due to the Pandemic, It affected mostly the daily wage workers in both urban and rural areas. Initially, it looked as if the remote rural areas would be untouched from the pandemic. But soon, cases emerged in rural areas as well as in semi-rural pockets following the return of the migrant workers, leading to social panic. The workers who migrated to cities for employment had to come back to their native places where they had no work opportunity. As per the Union Skill Development Ministry's preliminary estimates, 67 lakh (6.7million) workers have returned only in 116 districts of 6 States (Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Jharkhand). Since there was limited resource and employment opportunity in rural sector outside agriculture and limited inter-state mobility of workers, a sudden surge of the demand for work under MGNREGA was observed.

Post-COVID-19, several newspapers have reported that around 25 to 30 lakh migrant workers have returned to Bihar. A CMIE survey pegged unemployment in Bihar for April 2020 at 46.6% (or 20% above the national rate). According to the National Survey Organization's Report (2019), the unemployment rate in Bihar (7.2%) was already higher than the national average (6.1%).

There is no doubt that Bihar is one of the worst affected states because of reverse migration, and during discussion with migrants, it was clear that most of them did not want to return to other states at least for some time. So providing employment to these people was of immediate concern.

Similarly, Odisha has more than 2.5 million migrant workers according to informal estimates. In April 2020, data collated by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) showed that the unemployment rate in Odisha was 23.8%, higher than the national average of 23.5% for the period. The sudden increase in unemployment was due to reverse migration in the state.

The state of Jharkhand received the maximum number of returning migrant laborer's after the pandemic-induced lockdown. Most of them were informal workers and had to deal with loss of income, food shortages and uncertainty about their future. Their journey back home was not

comfortable and a large number of these workers suffered from starvation, exhaustion, police brutality, atrocities on women and denial of timely medical care.

The need of the hour was to generate employment for the reverse migrants, and in the short run, the maximum employment-generating prospects appeared to rest in MGNREGA only. MGNREGA, which promises 100 days of employment each year to every rural household in demand of work, has seen a steady increase in its budget allotment ever since its introduction. The scheme was allotted Rs 61,500 crore in the last Union Budget. But, as the government battled the harsh impact of the pandemic that led to job losses and also forced migrant workers to return home, the rural distress scheme was given an additional allocation of Rs 40,000 crore, taking the total amount to a massive Rs 1 lakh crore.

MGNREGS, the single largest government sponsored scheme aimed at providing employment and reducing migration, if properly leveraged can provide some support to the poorest in attaining their squire meal and their livelihoods. This is possible only when community access to the schemes is ensured through proper facilitation, be it by CSOs or Organizations at community or village level. Nationally, under the scheme, the average wage paid per-day per-person is Rs 182, which has increased by 17% since 2015. Between individual states, the wage varies from INR 151 in Rajasthan to Rs 288 in Haryana. MGNREGS is an inclusive scheme benefitting India's rural workforce including women by statutorily ensuring a minimum of 33% participation. Participation of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) households has also been fairly consistent at 22% and 17%, respectively, during the last five years.

## **2. Purpose and background of project**

During the Pandemic when the first unlock happened, a large number of reverse migrants did not prefer to go back to the cities, which raised the requirement for employment generation within the villages itself. More working days under MGNREGA needed to be incorporated to absorb the returned migrants. Besides, identifying the knowledge and skill, skill development trainings needed to absorb them in local industries was needed so that more opportunity would have been created. Agri-allied activities along with related infrastructural development also needed to be undertaken along with the storage and value addition of the agri-products. At panchayat level, a system was to be created for the registration of every migrant worker so that it would help the government to extend benefits to the workers during any crisis like the COVID-19.

With this idea, the project was introduced to address the issues of migrant workers and daily wage laborer's in rural parts of Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha which were the worst affected states, in terms of migrant laborer's and employment generation. This led to the formation of this intervention with the goal to do advocacy for employment generation for 9000 daily wage and migrant laborers.

SANSAD proposed, with the help of community staff in 3 states, to mobilize thousands of migrant workers and link them with MGNREGA so that they can get employment for at least 70-100 days. SANSAD was to work directly with the migrant workers in Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha to help them in employment generation through MGNREGA. The idea was to create job for 9000 daily wage migrant laborer's and generate assets out it for them. It will also help these migrant workers to fill the form developed by the government as well as go along with migrant workers to apply for job with concerned local authorities. The project will include the following:

- Mobilisation of 9000 workers and facilitation of employment opportunity under MGNREGA
- Development of a mobile app for data collection, monitoring progress and watch on all staffs working under the project. A data base of 9,000 migrant workers is available.
- Organising orientation and training to all staff and State coordinators

- 70-100 days of work for 9000 workers. In monetary terms, employment worth 9000 labourers x 80 days average work x Rs. 200 per day equalling to Rs 14,40,00,000/- (144 Million Indian Rupees) is availed by the migrant workers.
- Creation of public and private assets through MGNREGA
- Conduct Weekly Labour Day celebration in order to generate demands
- A Labour Union is formed with these 9,000 migrant workers to sustain, assert and access their rights and entitlements.
- This initiative will be self-sustaining with just Rs. 100/- contribution from each migrant workers.

**3. Description of implementation.** (Please attach more than five pictures of the project.)

The implemented project was found very instrumental in combating the adverse impact of Covid-19 and reverse migration. The project delivered threefold benefit for the community resulting in following outcomes.

- Meeting the immediate food need for vulnerable population: Initially, under the project sincere efforts were geared up to connect the rural community with MGNREGA with view of securing food security for the families adversely affected by Pandemic. Several meetings were conducted in the intervention areas to generate awareness about the program. In the meetings, work plan was prepared in close consultation with Gram Sabha (Village Committee) and forwarded to Panchayat to include in MGNREGA plan and simultaneously most needy community members were facilitated to get enrolled under the scheme as wage labourer. Apart from this during weekly "Labour Day Celebration" MGNREGA officials were sensitized to release the dues and ensure time bound payment of wages, as labours are undergoing tough time. Among all 3 states i.e. Jharkhand, Bihar and Odisha, a total of 110 weekly Labour Day celebration was conducted to generate demands which engaged more than 9000 people in intervention areas. During these meetings the panchayat was also sensitized about the different provision of MGNREGA. This initiative helped community members to get money to meet their immediate need.
- Assets Creation for Livelihood Support- Ensuring project Sustainability: Strengthening farm and non-farm livelihoods can pave the way for food and nutritional security which can be effective in fighting the pandemic and ensuring a robust rural economy. Under the project, efforts were made to strengthening rural livelihood through utilizing MGNREGA provisions. The Gram Sabha was motivated to consider the activities to address the issue of land and water that directly or indirectly impacts the rural livelihoods of the community.

Since Jharkhand is hilly region, intense soil erosion, lack of source of irrigation and facilities, runoff loss of rain water and resulting soil erosion, water body siltation, collectively declines the agricultural productivity rendering the efforts put by farmers useless. Water harvesting structures, water source creation for irrigation (pond & well), plantations, land development activities, support for animal husbandry / livestock farming, conversion of barren lands into culturable lands were priorities and accordingly worked upon. These activities definitely strengthen rural livelihoods, and benefits can be derived over period of time.

Similarly in Bihar, the village connectivity seems to be very poor and hence the connectivity was undertaken and worked upon. Though the monsoon or rain is not an issue in Bihar but still due to lack of irrigation facility is an issue for farmers and cultivators. So villagers took upon the work of micro irrigation. Land development was also under taken and converted into cultivable land.

In Odisha, the most common type of works carried out through MGNREGA were road construction and digging of ponds. Conservation of water through various water management works were taken up, which comprises drought proofing, exploring irrigation sources, which enables the small land holders more stable by creating productive assets such as land, livestock and irrigation works related to agriculture.

Under the project, efforts were made to develop community assets within the framework of MGNREGA. In this regard, several assets like Wells, Ponds, Fruit Orchards, Sheds for livestock farming were created as well as barren land were converted into culturable land through land and water management. Some of the intervention areas are also drought prone, hence drought proofing work like water conservation and harvesting was taken upon. With the help of this project we were able to create assets such as Land development, Rural Connectivity, Micro irrigation, Conservation of traditional water bodies, and rain water harvesting. These created resources will generate ample livelihood opportunity for them in field of agriculture and allied activities and ultimately promote local economy. These assets are also helpful in ensuring sustainability of the project as community can earn on their own and became capable enough to meet their need from their available resources which eventually will stop labour migration as the employment opportunity will be generated within the community.

- Policy Level Intervention under the project: The government is relying heavily on the MGNREGA MIS to show that “All is Well”, while it should actually review MIS system itself and correct the present gaps in implementation. The performance of MGNREGA is far from the reality. Although the government has tried its level best for a robust the MIS to measure the effectiveness of MGNREGA but at the ground level some challenges are yet to be addressed. While addressing the challenges, role of CSOs and VOs cannot be denied. The following challenges were taken up to address at state level.

- ✓ Low wage rate
- ✓ Insufficient Budget Allocation
- ✓ Regular payment delays
- ✓ Administrative lapses
- ✓ Compensation for delayed payment
- ✓ Indifferent attitude towards local priorities

The project strengthened the ongoing efforts of advocacy on the issues mentioned above at the state level. During the project period, efforts were made frequently to bring the issues under the notice of the office of the MGNREGA Commissioner. Even though our intervention period was short, still we managed to bring some positive changes at policy level through our dialogues with concerned officers. These changes were notified through official orders by office of MGNREGA.

In Bihar, during the project, the wage rate was revised by 13% and sufficient fund allocated to the district. Gram Sabha mandates were given priorities while selecting the schemes for the concerned villages. The MGNREGA official were given strict instruction to pay the wages timely to the laborers and failing which, compensation will be paid as prescribed in the Act.

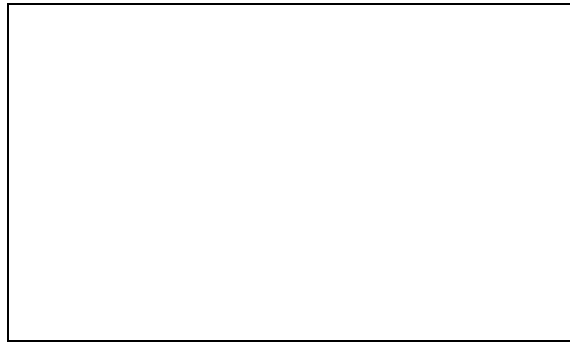
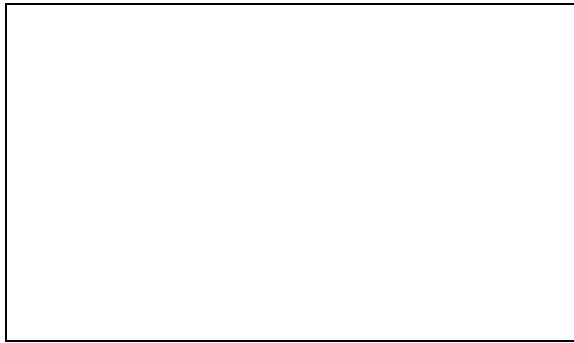
In Odisha, on account of policy intervention, the wage was increased from Rs 207 to Rs 215 via official order of concerned department. The due wages from Dec 2020 to March 2021 was also released by the department with late payment interest.

In nutshell, state level advocacy for policy intervention significantly contributed to the project and brought relief to the extent in the life of migrant workers.

- 9075 migrant workers were mobilized.
- A mobile app was developed to create a data base of migrant workers.

#### Pictures with Descriptions:

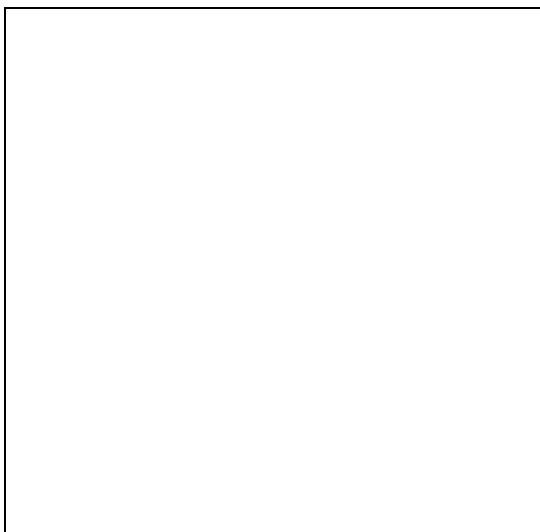
Sanjit is a Physically Handicapped person. In the year 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic he didn't get any job. So he started begging and when the Job Card work started he worked there. In March - 21 with the help of Officials of Labour Office, he received an amount of Rs 40,000 for opening of a Cycle Repairing Unit. Also, Labour Officer released his due Job Card wages which he added in that Cycle Repairing Shop.



Mina Tigga belongs to Odisha Tribal Community. Previously he was working in Mining Field. In the year 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic he didn't get any job. So he started working in his village as a daily labor and when the Job Card work started he also worked there. He asked us to provide him some livelihood support for better life for him and his family. In March - 21 with the help of Officials of OTELP Plus, ITDA-Panposh and Labor Officer, he received an amount of Rs 40,000 for opening of a Tailoring Shop. Also, Labor Officer released his due Job Card wages which he added in that Tailoring Shop.



***Conduct of weekly meeting with migrant laborers in Jharkhand***







### ***Field MGNREGA Activity at a Glance in JHARKHAND***



### ***Field MGNREGA Activity at a Glance in Bihar***





### ***Field MGNREGA Activity at a Glance in Odisha***



### ***Meetings in ODISHA***



(1) Please describe and explain any changes in the project after your application was approved.

No such change has been done after the application of the project but the second wave of pandemic in India did affect its implementation to extent.

#### 4. Schedule of activities

- Mobilization of migrant workers: 256 meetings were conducted for labor mobilization by community staff. The community staff under the project mobilized migrant laborers weekly and discussed their issues and demands. Community staff also had these meetings to review previous activity also planned next demand generation through conduction of weekly Labor day celebration.
- Conduct of community conference for demand generation: 30 Community Conferences of migrant laborers were organized in all 3 states with the help of 9 community staff.
- Mobile App was developed for regular monitoring of the work and progress.
- Capacity building and training of staffs for 4 days to make them efficient to implement the project properly on the following topic
  - a. Rights and duties granted under the MGNREGA for daily wage laborers and the provision of the schemes in the favor of migrant laborers
  - b. Training and orientation on implementation of the project
  - c. On account of keeping on the project
  - d. Training for filling up the data and information of each worker on the mobile app.
- Public and Private Assets were created in rural part of intervention area through proper implementation of MGNREGA
- 100 weekly labor day celebration were organized in 3 states

#### 5. Result (as specific as possible)

- Through our intervention, we were able connect **9075** beneficiaries to the MGNREGA, and each of them were able to get work for 60-80 days of work in 3 states of India.
- We were also able to create both **public and private assets** through water harvesting structures, water source creation for irrigation (pond & well), plantations, land development activities, Support for animal husbandry / livestock farming, conversion of barren lands into culturable lands.
- We were successful in holding **100** labor day celebrations that helped the migrant's workers to generate the demand for more work through the scheme.
- **A data base** of 9075 migrant workers is available.
- The total amount received through wages in 3 states was **Rs 9,86,55,956/-**. The details are given below.

SI	DISCRIPTION	
<b>1.</b>	<b>Labour Day Celebration</b>	
	Bihar	14
	Jharkhand	32
	Odisha	54
	Total	<b>100</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Total number of workers mobilized</b>	
	<b>Bihar</b>	
	Schedule Caste	1827
	OBC/Economically weaker section	1173
		<b>3000</b>
	<b>Jharkhand</b>	
	Schedule Caste	486
	Schedule Tribes	1170
	OBC/Economically weaker section	1357
		<b>3013</b>
	<b>Odisha</b>	
	Schedule Caste	1061



	Schedule Tribes	518
	OBC/Economically weaker section	1483
		<b>3062</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9075</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>How many days works they have received due to our intervention</b>	
	Bihar	141156
	Jharkhand	189158
	Odisha	148124
	<b>Total</b>	<b>478438</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>How much wages they have received during project period</b>	
	Bihar	Rs 2,69,41,034
	Jharkhand	Rs 3,66,96,652
	Odisha	Rs 3,50,18,270
	<b>Total</b>	<b>Rs 9,86,55,956</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>What kind of assets created due to our intervention</b>	
a	Land development	203
b	Works on individual land	4326
c	Micro irrigation	109
d	Rural Connectivity	315
e	Drought Proofing	170
f	Renovation of traditional water bodies	79
g	Water Conservation and Water Harvesting	103
<b>6</b>	<b>Any policy change due to our intervention</b>	
a.	Jharkhand	Increase in Wages. Wages were increased by 13%.Release of pending wages.
b.	Odisha	Pending payment released. Increase in wages From Rs 207/- to Rs 215/-). Released the due wages from Dec 2020 to March 2021 with late payment Interest

## 6. Remaining problems

- In the intervention area, through our advocacy we did manage to resolve the issue of late payment and proportional wage. Now there is need for regular advocacy and monitoring to maintain the same.
- Though MGNREGA provides employment opportunity for daily wage laborer but it has still failed to identify between skilled and non-skilled laborer, hence the distribution of job is not properly done.
- Government has to focus on consistent job creation in rural part of the states through MGNREGA so that labor migration could stop in future.
- With consistent job creation there is also need for proportional wage for the work and the time the daily wage laborers put in every day's work.
- The migrant workers were able to get only 60-80 days of work, and due to the second wave of the pandemic, there was no work done for a complete month due to total lockdown. Due these, the total amount received through wages is only Rs 9,86,55,956/- as against the project target of Rs 14,40,00,000/-.
- It was also proposed to raise Rs. 100/- contribution from each migrant worker to make the intervention self-sustaining in the future. This collection was not possible because of newspaper report about collection of funds by another organization. This created fear among the workers. Due to this and along with the pathetic condition of workers and their

inability to contribute, this action was not pursued.

- Also, the formation of Labour Union of migrant workers to sustain, assert and access their rights and entitlements could not be achieved. It was felt that since wave after wave of the pandemic is creating enormous hardships, it is too early to unite the workers through unionisation.

## 7. Future prospects

- For proper wage flow, there is need to provide more discretion to line department.
- As it is mentioned, there is need to bring consistency in job creation.
- One of the biggest issue that has been aligned with MGNREGA is timely payment of the laborers for their work. So the payment structure has to be strengthened in such a way that within 7 days everyone should be paid for their week of work.
- The trend of middleman intervention has always been an issue for daily wage laborer as sometimes it affects their payment. So there is need to minimize the role of middleman in job distribution and wage payment.
- The kind of jobs daily wage laborers are assigned are accident prone and there have been such instances too. The MGNREGA does not identify the accidental insurance and hence there is need for the same.

## 8. Beneficiaries' comments

(Comments from more than two beneficiaries would be appreciated. Please send us their pictures by e-mail or ordinary mail.)

Name: Daulat Devi; Age: 62; Sex: Female

***'Daulat Devi will not go to cities for work now'.***

Daulat Devi is a resident of Rohua Panchayat in Sheohar district, Bihar. Her husband, Isri Ram had gone to Punjab four years ago with the intention of earning. He died there a few months later. After this his son Motiram also moved to Punjab for a living. Daulatiya Ram couldn't earn a single penny. Daulatiya also used to earn a little bit by doing household work in the neighborhood. Son's earnings stopped in Punjab during this period of lockdown. Motiram returned to the village. He was introduced to the workers of the organization.



The workers called Motiram and Daulatiya (Daulat Devi) to the village meeting. In the meeting, it was discussed that even if the job card is there, but no job was given under MGNREGA. After the meeting, when the demand for work was made from the employment servant and the pressure of the workers started building up. So the scheme started in the village. His family got 105 days of work during this period in earth filling work and Rs 20,370 was paid. Now a little happiness has returned to this family. Similarly, the process of putting pressure on the leaders of MNREGA continues and continues to get employment

Name: Meena Kumari & Ganesh Ram ; Age: 56 & 63; Sex: Female & Male

***'Meena's husband will stay with her now'.***

Meena Devi is a resident of Bahuara village of Dumri Katsari block (Shivhar district), Bihar. She comes from scheduled caste society. Her husband Ganesh Ram used to work as a laborer in Punjab. Due to the lockdown, the business was destroyed there. Somehow they managed to come to their native place. Same problem was being faced here as well. Even though they had job card but were not getting enough work. In the year 2018-19 and 2019-20, even after a lot of hustle and bustle, they did not get job under MGNREGA. On these days, the workers of the organization had called a meeting of migrant laborers. The organization's worker Vinay Kumar Ruchi Kumari explained the objectives of the meeting in detail



and suggested to join the MNREGA scheme for livelihood during this Pandemic. Then they started asking for work from there. The work was demanded collectively. Meena and her husband Ganesh Ram have been given 90 days of work due to this effort in earth filling and road construction. The villagers now say that they will earn, eat and survive in his soil. They are looking forward to more help from the organization.

Name: Pabitra Das; Age: 40; Sex: Male

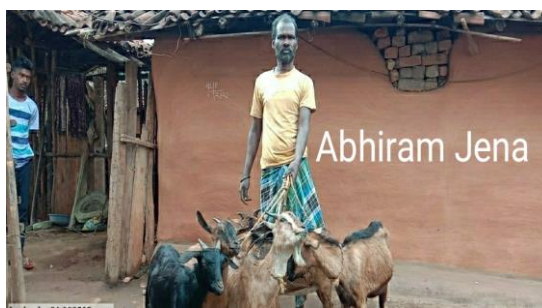


Pabitra Das belongs to very poor family and by profession he is a daily laborer. In the year 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic he didn't get any job. So he started looking after the cows and buffaloes of the villagers and when the Job Card work started he also worked there.

During our mobilization and data collection in his village we noticed that he is taking care these domestic animals properly. So we advised him to buy a cow and be a milk man. So that he can earn more. He agreed but his problem was lack of money. Also he told us that, he didn't even receive his Job Card wages since December - 2020. Then we discussed with the line department Officials, Labor Officer and tried to provide him his due wages. Officials assured us to release the due wages soon. In March - 21, after receiving all his due wages he bought cows and started milk business.

Comments of Beneficiary: Now he is very happy because he got his own business where he and his family members working prestigiously and earn some money and respect in the society. Also he will continue his Job Card work to earn some extra money. Also they thank us for the help

Name: Abiram Jain; Age: 45; Sex: Male



Comments: Abhiram and Shantlata are husband and wife. Both of them are daily labors and belongs to SC Category as well as very poor family. During the COVID-19 pandemic both of them didn't get any job and they didn't even provide two time food to their children during lockdown and asked villagers to provide them some food. After the lockdown, when Job Card work started both of them worked there and earn some money.

During our mobilization and data collection in his village, some villagers requested us to provide Abhiram and Shantlata some livelihood support. Then we spoke with both of them and they informed us that they are illiterate and can't start any business but agreed to start the goatery but their problem was lack of money. Also they told us that they didn't even receive their Job Card wages since December, 2020. Then we discussed with the BDO, Derabish, Labour Officer and

other Government Officials of Kendrapara. Labor officer issued Rs 8000/- to both of them on basis of their Labour card. Also BDO Sir released their due wages.

After receiving all their due wages and Labour card amount, they bought goats and started to looking after them. Now they are selling the goat milk and earning some money. Also they will continue their Job Card work to earn some extra money.

Comments of Beneficiary:

They informed us that, though they have the goats but don't have Bucks for which one day their goats will die and they don't have sufficient money to buy that. They requested us to provide a Buck from District Administration. Also they thank us for the help.

Staff member's comment

Name: Sumit Kumar, State Coordinator, Jharkhand; Sex: Male

Comments: This program helped in generating employment for the migrant laborer and helped them to get deployed in the scheme which eventually helped them to attain better standard of livelihood. This project also helped already registered laborers to get their due wage as well as ensured the payment of laborers in ongoing schemes which generated interest and engaged more labors to work under the MGNREGA. Staffs of the project helped migrant and existing laborer to get their job card and increase the work demand in their local areas; ensured conduct of weekly labor day celebration (Rojgar Diwas) where Migrants were helped to get their job card, Work Demand, Payment related issue, status of ongoing/approved schemes/completed scheme. During the project, staffs helped in individual and community assets like water harvesting structures, water source creation for irrigation (pond & well), plantations, land development activities, support for animal husbandry / livestock farming, conversion of barren lands into culturable lands.

Name: Ashutosh Hotta, State Coordinator, Odisha; Sex: Male

Comments: "The initiative of SANSAD for enabling the livelihoods of interstate returnee migrant workers by accessing the wage based employment under MGNREGA in the Indian State of Odisha has ensured their (migrant workers) rights to employment and helped them to live with dignity in the COVID-19 pandemic situation where everyone is losing their employment in global crisis."

In six months under the program 148124 person days generated for 3062 workers and they are paid for INR 3,50,18,270. Around 43% women workers were facilitated and engaged which is really an encouraging one. Still issues are there and local political systems and a part of the Government administration at grassroots level is a biggest hindrance to achieve the desired goal. Hence, we need to work collectively and make collectives of workers at Village/GP level as well.

Name: Nagendra Kumar, State Coordinator, Bihar; Sex: Male

Comments: This project has paved a new way migrant laborers in Shivhar and Sitamadhi. The migrant laborers have learned procedures and provision of the MGNREGA which has helped them to generate demand for jobs and eventually got the daily jobs and have got timely payments too. This can be categorized as the biggest achievement under this project in Bihar. This was very necessary step for intervention areas in Bihar.