

COVID RESPONSE

JAN SAHAS



IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

Credible voice of the vulnerable

Overview

For the past 20 years, Jan Sahas has been working with socially excluded and marginalised groups.

It aims to end violence against women and children, ensure safe migration and worker protection. Its primary stakeholder groups are people working in manual scavenging, migrant workers and survivors of sexual violence.



The sudden lockdown impacted Jan Sahas' primary stakeholder groups gravely. Majority of them were left with uncertain livelihoods, increased indebtedness, hunger and extreme poverty.

Jan Sahas had been working with migrant workers for a long time. The magnitude and visibility of problems faced by migrant workers during the pandemic, needed Jan Sahas to significantly increase their reach and support as many vulnerable people as possible. Jan Sahas rose to occasion and was able to use its experience and new strategies to help over 1 million workers.

As soon as lockdown was announced, Jan Sahas realised that an assessment of the ground reality was important to deliver effective relief.

It conducted a rapid assessment with 3500 migrant workers. Within 1.5 weeks, it was able to publish a report, *Voices of the Invisible Citizens*, on the impact of lockdown on migrant workers. This was the first such report from India and was circulated widely across the world.

Jan Sahas galvanised its 800 full time employees, 4000 volunteers and 42 Civil Society Organisations across 19 states to provide dry food, cooked food, emergency transportation support, direct cash transfer, helpline support, mental health and legal support, personal protective equipment kits and documentation of deaths of migrant workers.

Through collaborations it expanded its reach to combat the sudden and unanticipated crisis. It worked with multiple departments and ministries of state governments, ensuring that services reach the needy.

Research by Jan Sahas showed that the cases of violence against women increased during lockdown. With its existing infrastructure, helpline and staff outreach, it was able to support 1237 survivors of sexual violence.

Jan Sahas also provided 12,480 safety and protection kits to health staff, police department, anganwadi workers, ASHA workers and sanitary workers. 21,765 safety kits were distributed to community members as well.

LONG TERM SHIFTS

Fundamentally change narrative of the socially excluded

Jan Sahas is now focussed on addressing resilience of migrant families so they can be prepared for multiple waves of Covid and a long period of economic recovery. Its immediate response to Covid led Jan Sahas to collaborate with multiple organisations, government and industry, which are now the foundation of a longer-term systemic platform – Migrant Resilience Collaborative (MRC).

MRC will focus on 4 key aspects to build resilience of 10 million migrant workers and their families in 100 districts over the next 5 years

1. Building a social registry of workers in states with high out-migration and in-migration
2. Delivering social security entitlements to workers
3. Strengthening worker protection – welfare, fair wages, redressal against exploitation
4. Working with industry to adopt responsible business practices – responsible recruitment, fair wage, shift from ‘charity’ to ‘good for business’ mindset

Jan Sahas is building a larger and diverse team which will grow to about 2000 fulltime people to action the new model of work.



Conclusion

Covid and the lockdowns provided a sudden impetus and opportunity to Jan Sahas to reimagine its work. The crisis made it clear that any intervention by an organisation working alone will not be fruitful to create national change and impact. Its work during Covid times organically opened collaborations with multiple CSOs, government, industry and philanthropies.

With Migrant Resilience Collaborative, Jan Sahas is institutionalising a new way of collaborative working for nationwide impact at scale. The reimagined scale will enable it to demonstrate and dialogue with several stakeholders. This, Jan Sahas hopes, will bring the much-needed changes in policy and implementation to ensure dignity and protection of workers and marginalised in the country.

