

YOUTH & DEMOCRACY (Y-N-D) FELLOWSHIP 2020-21

By Participatory Research In Asia (PRIA)



SOCIAL ACTION PROJECT FINAL REPORT

PROJECT TITLE: “RATION TO THE WORKERS OF DELHI”

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| Name of fellow | THRITI DAS |
| Project location | AZADPUR AND WAZIRPUR- NEW DELHI |
| Number of field visits made: | 7 |
| Number of hours spent in the field: | 5 x 7= 35 hours(for distribution drives) and 5 hours for collaboration meetings |
| Number of hours spent in the off-field work for the project: | 10 hours on conducting interviews and 5 hours for report writing TOTAL HOURS: 55 HOURS |
| Number of individuals from the target group engaged: | 175 (average of 25 people per day in 7 days of distribution drive) |

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OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

During the second wave of pandemic in 2021, the labourers of the country were again hard hit with issues of job loss, livelihood loss and food insecurity. Many migrants had gone back home in their towns and villages during the first wave of pandemic; while some had come back to their workplaces in the cities, some had stayed back in their villages. Many of them had also almost exhausted their savings, bringing them in danger of food and hunger crisis.

The comparative analysis between the migrant labourers of urban and rural areas aims to assess the real-time difficulties and challenges the labourers in Delhi and villages of Madhya Pradesh and Bihar have faced during the second wave of pandemic through participatory research.

Based on the research outcomes, the **social action project** has been designed to contribute in resolving **issues of food insecurity** that the daily wage migrant labourers in communities of Delhi like Azadpur and Wazirpur were facing due to loss and absence of their livelihood opportunities.

The social action project aimed to:

- Raise funds through crowd funding for arranging ration distribution drives in communities of Delhi for migrant labourers.
- Distribute ration kits to those in need through a week of distribution drives.
- The project aimed at reaching 25 people in average on a daily basis and a total of over 175 beneficiaries in a span of seven days.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN CHALLENGES OF LABOURERS OF RURAL AND URBAN AREAS IN THE SECOND WAVE OF PANDEMIC

The comparative analysis between the urban and rural labourers of the country aims at presenting an overall view of the challenges they have faced in the second wave of pandemic in terms of livelihood and food insecurity. There is an attempt to find similarities and dissimilarities in both of the contexts as well.

➤ METHODOLOGY OF THE PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH:

METHODOLOGY: Qualitative research

APPROACH USED: Comparative analysis based on inference

SAMPLE SIZE: 100 (50 from rural areas and 50 from urban area)

TOOLS USED: Interview schedule for telephonic interviews

SAMPLE POPULATION: Migrant labourers-

- i) Who are currently in the urban areas where they have migrated to for livelihood opportunities
- ii) Who were in their rural hometown during the second wave lockdown (but they might have returned to the locations where they had their employment based on relaxation of lockdown)

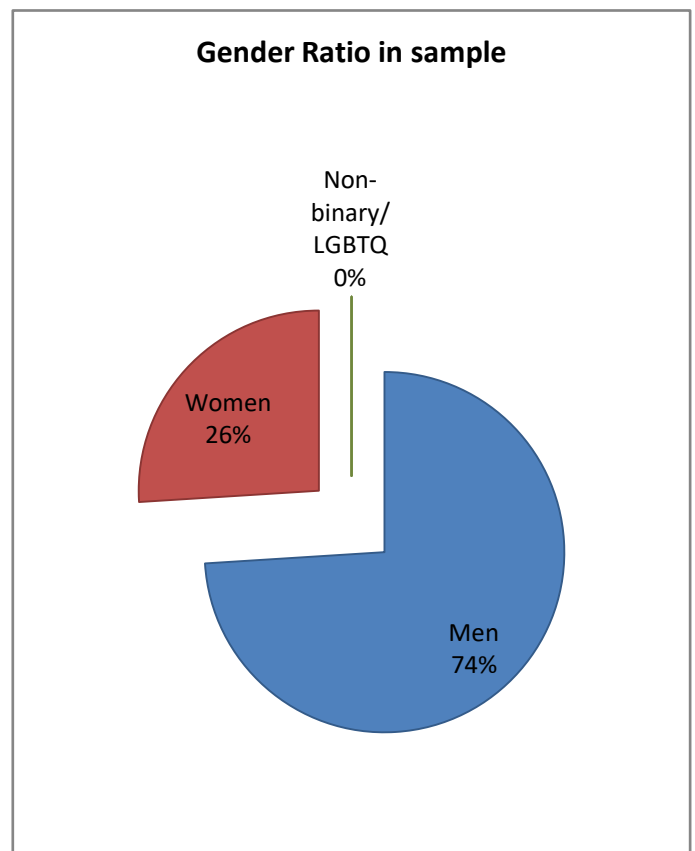
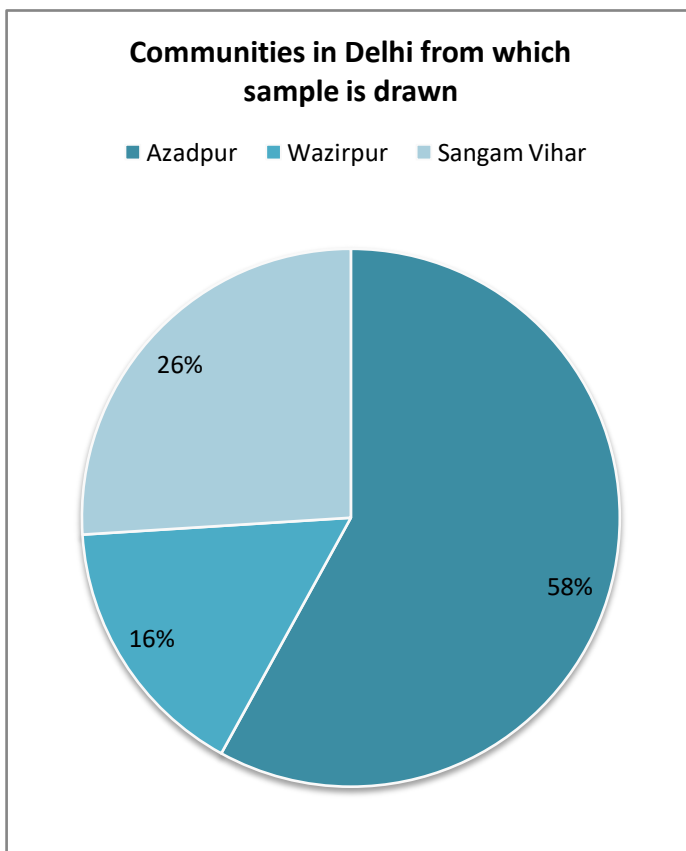
➤ **OBSERVATIONS FROM THE RESEARCH:**

Urban Community:

The research was conducted with migrant labourers in Delhi from the communities of Azadpur, Wazirpur and Sangam Vihar.

The number of people interviewed from each of these communities is: 29 from Azadpur, 8 from Wazirpur and 13 from Sangam Vihar.

Out of 50 people, 13 were women. Out of these 50 people, 1 person reported of himself being infected with COVID and another person reported about one of their family member's deaths in the second wave.



Major observations:

- Due to the Lockdown in the second wave of pandemic, there was no work in the Azadpur Mandi because no trucks came in with the agro-products. The other workplaces where they worked as daily wage labourers had also closed down, resulting in a loss of livelihood and food security in a span of 1-2 months
- Most of them are Daily wage workers and over the period of last one year and two waves of pandemic, most of their savings had exhausted.

Verbatim translation of Interviewee 1: "Earlier we used to earn 10-15 thousand rupees per month, now I am earning a maximum of 5-6 thousand rupees. Now we earn Rupees 400-500 per day, earlier we used to earn Rupees 800-1000 per day. We are earning less, hence, we can also send less remittance to our home."

Verbatim translation of Interviewee 2: "My earning has reduced to a great extend. We cannot afford to send my children to school at this point. My daughters had to drop out of the school, only my younger son is going to school now. I am also thinking of getting my elder daughter married."

- The statement of interviewee 2 has definitely highlighted the underlying gender issues that exist in the lower economic rungs of our society wherein in times of financial crisis, it is the girl child who is pulled out of their education and their marriage is somewhat seen as a solution and a way to reduce economic burden of bringing up one child in the family. It shows the engrained gender discriminatory behavior among people wherein daughters are still seen as an economic burden/ liability rather than an asset.
- They took up menial daily jobs to earn at least Rs 50 per day about which there was no certainty of getting them. Many people are staying in these communities for work and there was limited work, for example, only 1 truck was coming to the Mandi with 20 labourers waiting to unload the goods from it, thus, not all could get such works. Moreover, there is not enough money to pay so many labourers, hence, the palledars found it difficult to pay them.
- These people bought ration and food from the little that they could on any day or they used to buy food items on debt from nearby shops.
- In Azadpur, most of the men stay alone. In this community, the migrants did not have ration card of Delhi, also they didn't want to give up the minimum work they get every day for ration procurement from the Government distribution centres, hence, these posed as major challenges for them to procure ration in Delhi from the government institutions.

In Wazirpur, people had ration card of Delhi and procured ration from Public Distribution System (PDS).

- Almost half of these men said that work is slowly resuming now, but it is too scarce to get enough livelihood. There are 2-4 trucks every week coming in the Mandi which is not enough for all labourers to get work there. Some of them had gone back to their villages due to no work in the second wave. They also found procuring ration easier in villages through PDS as they had ration cards of the village. Rest of them said that they are still jobless and are looking for resuming of their work full-fledged to get better income.

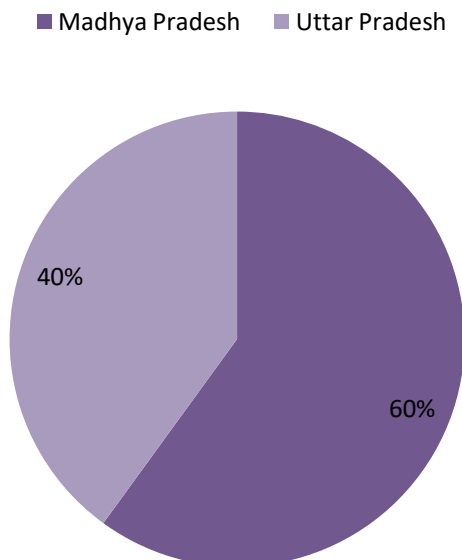
About the Women in the urban sample:

- The women stayed with their family members. Out of 13 women, 5 are single mothers.
- One of them worked as house maid, one worked as sex-worker, others work as daily wage workers.
- All of them had a loss of all sorts of livelihood, as of now, they are dependant on other family members (like fathers, brothers, sons etc who might be working) for monetary support.
- Some of them were getting less wages paid in their previous places of employment and there is lesser and uncertain work availability which results in fluctuation of the money they earn. They bought ration on debt from local shops or by loaning money from someone. Few of them do daily work available like selling vegetable, stitching in their parlour etc.

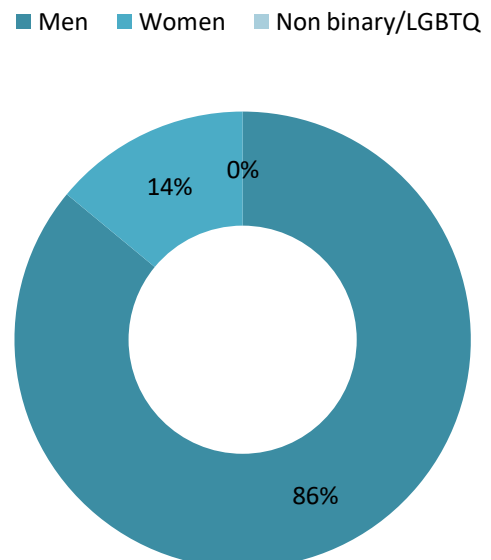
Rural Community

The sample for research on the rural community has been taken from states of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, 30 and 20 samples respectively. Out of 50, 7 were women.

States from which sample has been drawn



Gender ratio in sample



Major Observations

- Most of them said that they had returned back home during the second lockdown. They said that their workplaces had closed down and hence, they had no point staying in the cities where they worked, as the cost of living was expensive for them as well.
- They came back to the villages, with the little savings they had. Some of them said that they had to walk long distances on foot while on their way back.
- Reasons they stated for returning home as a stable option for them are-
 - 1) Some said that they had their own farm produce to feed themselves and also sell them for income generation
 - 2) They could continue the work they do (farm/ non-farm) in their rural home.
 - 3) It was easier to procure ration as they had ration cards with them at their villages.

Verbatim translation of Interviewee 4: "I used to work in Rourkela. The factory I worked in closed down during the lockdown, hence, I had to come back to my village. Staying there was not useful at that time as it is also expensive to bear my living cost there. In our village, we have our own farms and cultivating crops here was a more stable option in lockdown. I will go back to my workplace as it reopens."

About the Women-

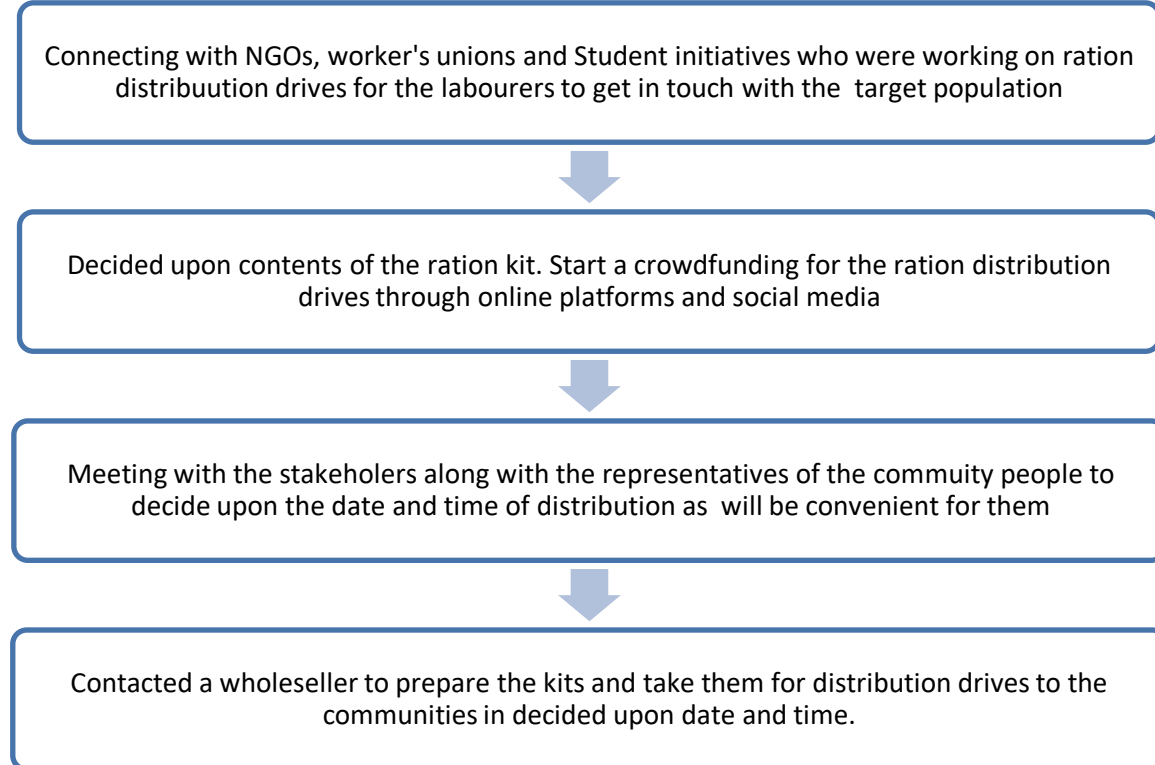
- They stayed with their families in the cities; they worked as daily wage labourers but primarily shifted there to take care of the household chores of the family. They had to come back to the villages when most of the workplaces shut down and also their family members were returning to the villages.
- None of them mentioned anything how they returned back; however, this is an important observation that for women, to stay in a city or when they have to return, is highly linked to how their male counterparts decide about it. Not only that, they have to bear the additional responsibilities of cooking, feeding and of that of child rearing. The assigned gender role of women regarding taking responsibility of specifically the household chore and taking care of the husband and children is also seen here.

| COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF OBSERVATIONS FROM RURAL AND URBAN MIGRANT LABOURERS | | |
|--|--|---|
| PARAMETERS | URBAN COMMUNITIES | RURAL COMMUNITIES |
| LOSS OF LIVELIHOOD | Loss of livelihood was observed in the entire 50 people for a span of 1-2 months. Uncertain source of income. | Loss of livelihood has been observed during the months of second wave of pandemic due to closing down of workplaces. |
| FOOD INSECURITY | Loss of livelihood led to income for stable food procurement. They bought food items on debt. | Faced food insecurity while in cities as cost of living was unaffordable for them. |
| OUT-MIGRATION OF PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT | Most of the people stayed in Delhi during the lockdown, 3 of them went back to their villages. | Most of the people went back to their villages at the time of lockdown as they had options of farming/non-farming work in their villages and could consume food they had already cultivated |
| RATION PROCUREMENT FROM PDS | Above 50% had challenges in procuring ration from PDS as they did not have ration cards of Delhi and also did not want to miss out on the little work they could get each day. | Ration procurement through PDS was possible in their villages as they had ration card of the village. |

STEPS AND METHODOLOGY FOR EXECUTING ACTION PROJECT:

The social action project “RATION TO THE WORKERS OF DELHI” aimed to address the issues of food insecurity that is evident among the labourers of the urban community. It aimed at distributing ration kits to the labourers in communities of Azadpur and Wazirpur who had immense need for assistance in procuring food for daily consumption.

The steps and methodology followed for designing and executing the action project are as follows:



The designing of the project began in April after the onset of the second wave of pandemic with the issues of food insecurity and livelihood loss resurfacing among the labourers in Delhi. In Azadpur, due to prior engagements with student groups and civil society organizations working with the labourers there, there was a convenient source of information regarding the present conditions of the workers there as well as to contact those in need for ration for daily consumption. There were meeting held with civil society organizations, trade union leaders and student initiatives to help out in executing the project.

The ration kit was supposed to suffice for 2-3weeks for a single person and comprised of 55 kilograms (kgs) flour, 5 kgs rice, 2 kgs sugar, 1 litre oil, 3 kgs pulses, 1 packet of salt and 50 grams of 3 essential spices (turmeric, chili powder, coriander powder).

The next step was to start crowd-funding process to raise funds for the distribution drives which was started on online platforms by sharing details of contributory account. Digital Posters were made for the same explaining the purpose of the fund raising and through personal requests, and help from collaborating student initiatives the needed sum of money could be raised. The drive aimed to reach out to 25 people on an average on each day of distribution drive, hence, over a span of 7 days, it was 175 people in average Each kit was estimated to cost around Rs 400, and the target fund hence was Rs. 70,000. The student initiative of “Feeding workers of Delhi”

contributed a part of their collected funds and rest was contributed by known acquaintances and crowd-funding.

Next, while the crowd funding was going on, meetings were held with the different stakeholders and we met the community members of Azadpur and Wazirpur. Through these meetings, the labourers were asked when it would be suitable for them to collect the ration kits so that they do not have to miss out on their daily work. Through discussions and participatory decision making, the date and time for the distribution drives were fixed. The local community leaders were helpful to provide with a community common space as the venue for the distribution drives.

Once all this was decided, as funds were being collected, distribution drives were held in Azadpur and Wazirpur on the decided upon dates. Before that, a wholeseller was paid to pack and prepare each kit. The distribution drives were held over a period of seven days in three weeks (from mid march to early June).

OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT

- The project could meet its objective of conducting distribution drives over a time period of seven days.
- The project could reach out to an average of 175 labourers in Azadpur and Wazirpur at the end of its execution.
- The project entailed collaborative efforts from stakeholders who had agreed to join hands for a similar cause of providing ration to the workers in need. This also helped in coming together of different civil society initiatives and platforms for addressing the basic needs and concerns of a small section of the working class of the country.
- The project was designed and rolled out with participatory approach in every step with meetings, discussions and collaborative efforts between different stakeholders who were an essential part to make this initiative a success. Even the dates and venue for distribution drives were set after and as per the opinions of the community of labourers in the targeted communities.

CHALLENGES AND DIFFICULTIES IN THE PROCESS:

- 1) There were student campaigns and civil society organizations already working and planning for similar drives in these communities, which made it a challenge to access contacts and reach out to people of these communities for the distribution drives, even though, it was a challenge to convince them to support this project and work on it together as they were already working on similar initiatives. Although, after repeated meetings and discussions, they agreed to collaborate as it would have ultimately helped to reach out to more people.

- 2) To raise funds was a big challenge. It was definitely a large contribution from the student initiatives that helped cover a large chunk of the fund need. To convince people to help reach the needed target fund, was the most difficult part.
- 3) The packing and transportation of the ration kits needed assistance from the different stakeholders as it was quite difficult to arrange it single handedly. To maintain a count of kits received and to account for the funds used on a daily basis was a difficult task as well.
- 4) The several meeting with the different stakeholders to decide upon the details of the drive needed a lot of time, effort and patience. To start such meetings and assemble the workers was a major difficulty as well as it had to be kept in mind that these meetings should not hamper their daily work.

WAY FORWARD

The two waves of pandemic has brought a clear picture in front of us that the unorganized labour force of the country lives much outside the realms of social security. Their socio-economic condition in general is comparatively much poorer, hence, during any such emergency like that of the pandemic, they are pushed to even more vulnerable positions with no job security, no guarantee of having rights to economic security. It pushes them to the risk of hunger , livelihood and health crisis.

The best way forward to create a positive impact on the condition of the unorganized labour force is to make structural changes in policies and provisions for these workers. There needs to be a uniform social security net and provision for the same which in times of crisis will act as a blanket of economic support and basic need access for the hardest hit population group.

Secondly, the already existing structures like Public Distribution System need to be implemented more effectively so as to ensure that these population groups get access to ration at affordable prices in times when they have loss of livelihood. There also needs to be a provision to check the quality of ration provided. There needs to be a mechanism to ensure that the migrant labourers can easily apply for and procure ration cards even in the cities to which they have migrated and this process should be made more effective and sped up. In absence of such documents, there needs to be alternative ways like using Aadhar Card to procure ration from PDS as was done by Delhi Government in the recent months for ration distribution to the labourers and the poorer economic rungs in Delhi.

Most importantly, there needs to be a revival in the job opportunities that these labourers have lost given the pandemic. There needs to be creation of more and alternate means of livelihood for the unorganized labours so that they can have a secure means of livelihood and security in terms of basic needs of food. There is a need for large scale advocacy for labour rights and need for

structural changes for the unorganized labour force in the country so that their livelihood opportunities, social dignity and economic rights and security can be ensured in the longer run.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am immensely thankful to all the stakeholders who have been a part of the journey of making this project a success. Firstly, I would thank PRIA for the support and encouragement to start and carry on a project which is relevant in the current times. Next, my sincerest gratitude to team “Feeding Workers of Delhi” who have helped me in collaborating with the different stakeholders and even contributed a major share of the needed fund as well as helping in raising funds through social media platforms. Also, I would thank the civil society organizations and worker’s unions who have eagerly joined hands to help me reach out to the labourers in need in the communities and have facilitated in having purposeful participatory meetings with them. The local community leaders and people of the community have been very cooperative and helpful during the distribution drives and decision making process.

To, all those who have donated funds for the process and everyone who has supported this project in one or the other, I express my heartfelt gratitude and thankfulness to you.
