

Impact of Covid-19 on internal migrant workers in India

18:30-20:00 (Bangkok time, GMT+7), 9 June 2020

United Nations Virtual Forum on Responsible Business and Human Rights

New Challenges. New Approaches.

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Background

Hundreds of thousands of Indian workers who live in cities other than their own have been forced to return to their towns and villages after the Indian Government declared a lockdown which closed many businesses and the workers felt that in the absence of a social safety net they had no choice but to make their home. The government has since acted to provide train and bus transport for some of the workers, but many workers have suffered. Companies that employed them have said relatively little. Indian workers, like other workers from South Asia, have also been left stranded in the Gulf region. The Indian government has arranged flights to bring some of them home, but there are reports of lack of corporate commitment to address the challenges. Some companies in India have acted proactively to help the workers through philanthropic actions, but much more is needed.

Session Description

In this panel discussion, **Salil Tripathi** of the Institute for Human Rights and Business will be in conversation with **Shubhabrata Roy** of **Behavioural Insights, Architecture And Strategy (BIAS)**, a behavior science consultancy that has studied migrant workers in India, **Vani Saraswathi** of Migrant-Rights.org, a content-based NGO that advocates for the rights of migrant workers in the Gulf region, **Priya Naik** of Samhita, a consultancy that assists businesses, donors, and NGOs to work together to develop effective CSR strategies, **Sudarsana Kundu** of Gender@Work, **Chinmay Tumbe**, who teaches at the Indian Institute of Management and has written a major study on internal migration in India and **Chandan Kumar**, National Coordinator, Working Peoples' Charter, a coalition of over 150 workers collectives organising informal workers across India.

Session Objectives

This session aims to:

- Highlight emerging research about migrant workers impacted by Covid-19 in India
- Share experiences about emerging best-practices
- Explore the gender impacts and impacts on vulnerable groups, including minorities

Questions

- What have we learned from the experience of migrant workers?
- What regulatory reforms should be explored and implemented?
- What are the responsibilities of employers – individual or business?
- What can be learned from other good practices?
- What is the role for big business?