

# WELCOME TO THE GAME

## Background Information on Migrant Workers in India

### GENERAL OVERVIEW

Migrant workers typically face rain shortages, floods, or extremely high population densities in their home villages and therefore face major barriers for finding work and resources to survive. Urban centers provide job opportunities with higher wages and over 120 million individuals migrate from rural areas to these urban centers to find work (Aajeevika Bureau). One major urban center of migrant workers is New Delhi, a city that neighbors Uttar Pradesh (UP). UP and Bihar are major sources of rural migrant workers (Aajeevika Bureau). In this game, you will follow migrant workers on their journey from the urban center, New Delhi, to their rural homes or shelters in Bihar. Along this journey you will learn many of the challenges migrant workers face as a marginalized group in India. This letter provides information about migrant workers in India.



### LEGAL PROTECTIONS



There are few legal protections for the migrant workers. The migration between states makes it challenging to obtain current documentation of legal status within a state. The farther one works from their home state, the more difficult it is to establish residency and obtain documentation which makes it difficult to access governmental resources (Aajeevika Bureau). Although the Inter-state Migrant Workmen Act and the Code on Wages were created to ensure workers rights and establish standards for employers, the policies are rarely enforced (Inter-state, Code). The government does not adequately protect migrant workers, so they are often exploited and poorly treated in their workplaces. In the urban centers, migrant workers are employed at worksites with little personal protective gear or safety measures. Workers are exposed to injury and risk their health on a daily basis (Salve 2009). They lack proper shelter and access to basic resources such as food and water. Additionally, these shelters are often overcrowded and lack sanitation (Prakasam 2014).

### LIVING CONDITIONS

The living and working conditions make communicable diseases particularly virulent amongst migrant workers. For example, migrant workers in India are vulnerable to cholera because of areas of poor sanitation, overcrowding and unsafe drinking water. This vulnerability is exacerbated by the stress migrant workers undergo (Ramamurthy 2014). Acute stress can improve the immune system in the short-term, however, chronic stress is immunosuppressive (Vitlic 2014). Migrant workers face constant stressors that compromise immune function thus making them more susceptible to communicable disease. When faced with illness, they often lack the resources to seek treatment.



### HEALTHCARE



Most migrant workers do not have access to healthcare and the healthcare that is available is limited in scope (Behera 2019). Many of the government sponsored healthcare programs that are available are limited to individuals who have official state identification cards, which are challenging to obtain. Even with such cards, the available healthcare program, Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana scheme, only covers hospitalization expenses and does not cover basic outpatient treatments (Borhade 2020). Without adequate insurance, migrant workers must pay out of pocket for medical expenses or forgo treatment altogether. NGOs are able to provide some resources, but do not fully compensate for gaps in coverage.

### GAME PLAY

In this game, you will take on the role of a migrant worker living in New Delhi. Migrant workers are employed in many industries, such as construction, agriculture, transportation, domestic work, brick work, textile manufacturing and mining (Aajeevika Bureau). At the beginning of the game and throughout the game you will receive chance cards that reflect different situations and resources that migrant workers are exposed to. While the frequency in which resources are received has been increased for game play, we hope you are able to learn more about migrant workers in India. We are excited for you to take this journey and hope you learn something along the way. Good luck!

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