



## Migrant Assistance and Information Network

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*The Jesuit Conference of South Asia (JCSA) has set up a national helpline to respond to the needs and urgent dire situations of migrants in distress in India.*

Migrant Assistance and Information Network (MAIN) is a collaborative venture initiated in the post COVID-19 scenario by the Jesuit Conference of South Asia (JCSA) to accompany and serve the migrants in distress across India, and to advocate for them. It is the outcome of the felt-need for a collective and innovative response to reach out to the distressed migrants.

### **A national helpline accompanying migrants in distress in India**

MAIN primarily operates through a national helpline (toll free number 18008912995) system wherein a distress migrant, his or her family member or close associate calls to seek critical assistance, information and guidance. The team at the central hub in Delhi assesses the call received and

routes the information to the respective zones and hubs for further action and follow up. It is operationalised through 21 hubs in 15 Jesuit Provinces (Andhra, Chennai, Karnataka, Kerala, Goa, Bombay, Pune, Gujarat, Dumka, Ranchi, Jamshedpur, Hazaribagh, Madhya Pradesh, Patna, Calcutta & Darjeeling) covering 15 Indian states, and through two zonal hubs in *Indian Social Institute Bangalore* and *Bagaicha, Ranchi*.



From May 2022 to January 2024, MAIN received some 555 distress calls. These calls included events linked with accidental deaths of 59 migrants, 23 cases of wage theft, missing cases of 16 migrants, and 32 cases of bonded labour, child labour or human trafficking. Through the partners of MAIN, 75% of the calls were addressed successfully, 936 persons benefitted from the Network, and facilitated recovery of the equivalent of 200,000 USD to the migrants and their families.

### Some cases

Sonot Tudu, a Santhal tribal man from Dumka, Jharkhand, travelling to Kerala, was found dead beside the railway track in Erode, Tamil Nadu, on 24 August 2022. Based on the information received, MAIN zonal hub in *Indian Social Institute Bangalore* with the collaboration of a local organization found out that body was in mortuary at Government Hospital in Perundurai. The Network helped to bring Sonot's son Seven Tudu to claim the body. His body was cremated and the ashes in an urn were taken to his

native place for the rituals as per the Santhal tradition.

Anesha Soreng, a tribal girl from Sundergarh, Odisha, was trafficked and forced to work as a domestic worker in Hyderabad. Based on her distress call to the MAIN helpline, our team in Telangana, with the help of local police, reached the house, released her and facilitated her return to her native place as per her desire.

Asni Pahadin, a minor girl from Pakur in Jharkhand was forced to work as a domestic worker in Delhi. MAIN central hub in Delhi filed a case with Child Welfare Committee in Delhi. The MAIN Dumka team reached out to her parents to give a police complaint at the local police station. On 3 September 2023, Asni was traced and brought to the MAIN office in Delhi. Our network facilitated her accompanied return to her native place in Jharkhand by train.

Vinay Ekka, a tribal man from Gumla, Jharkhand, was travelling on a train to Nagercoil and accident-

ly got separated from the group after Ernakulam station. Later he was found near the railway track in Kollam, Kerala. Finding Vinay mentally and physically not well, the local people informed the police. Based on the information from Fr. Sushil from Arouse-Gumla of MAIN Ranchi, Fr. P.S. Antony took Vinay to Trivandrum by ambulance where he was admitted in a medical college hospital in Trivandrum. The MAIN Kerala team facilitated Vinay's return with his relatives to his native place in Jharkhand.

### Future plans

MAIN is planning to increase inter-province collaboration through exchanging Jesuit personnel between source and destination provinces of migration. The network will expand to new states, new districts and remote villages with new partners and associates in the coming years. MAIN is a pertinent response from the Jesuits to the internal migrants needs in India.

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MAIN volunteers recovered the body of Sonot Tudu and handed it over to his family.

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