

WOMEN MIGRANTS DIALOGUE ON **SAFE MIGRATION TO COMBAT TRAFFICKING**

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Date: 29th July, 2024 | **Time:** 3:00 PM

Venue: W-34, Okhla Phase II, New Delhi



CONTEXT

On July 29, 2024, India Child Protection (ICP) organized a crucial dialogue titled "Safe Migration to Combat Trafficking" at their office in Okhla Phase 2, New Delhi. This initiative was driven by ICP's recognition of the complex challenges faced by migrants and the persistent threat of trafficking. The dialogue was a strategic step in ICP's ongoing efforts to address migration-related issues and combat trafficking effectively.

INTRODUCTION

The dialogue brought together 19 female migrants from various districts across Delhi, creating a platform for firsthand insights from individuals directly affected by migration and trafficking issues. The primary aim was to understand the broader implications of migration on families, particularly women and children, and to explore effective strategies to combat trafficking. Gunjan Ma'am initiated the dialogue, introducing the topic and encouraging participants to share their experiences openly. This approach aligned with the project's output goal of understanding and recognizing the needs of highly vulnerable migrant women and children.

PARTICIPANTS PROFILE

The 19 female participants represented a diverse range of migration experiences, from recent arrivals to those who had been in Delhi for up to 20 years. Their backgrounds varied, with some migrating for employment opportunities, others relocating with employed spouses, and some moving in pursuit of quality education for their children or to join relatives who had found better employment. Despite the varying durations of their stay, many continued to struggle with basic issues and access to essential amenities, highlighting the persistent nature of challenges faced by migrant communities.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of the dialogue were:

- To gain firsthand insights from individuals directly affected by migration and trafficking issues.
- To understand the broader implications of migration on families, particularly women and children.

- To empower migrant women in confidently raising issues of safe migration and trafficking in their communities.
- To explore effective strategies to combat trafficking.
- To identify persistent challenges faced by migrants, even years after their initial relocation.
- To raise awareness about government schemes and support available to migrants.

Highlights of the dialogue

A key highlight of the dialogue was the revelation that many migrants continue to face significant challenges even years after their initial relocation. These challenges span various aspects of life, including documentation, education, housing, and access to basic amenities. The dialogue also served as a catalyst for empowering migrant women, aligning with the project's outcome of increasing their confidence in discussing safe migration and trafficking issues within their communities.

Viewpoint of participants on migration

The participants shared their experiences and perspectives on migration, revealing a complex tapestry of challenges and aspirations. Many spoke of the hope that initially drove their migration - dreams of better employment, improved educational opportunities for their children, or reuniting with family members who had found success in urban areas. However, these aspirations were often tempered by the harsh realities they encountered upon arrival in Delhi.

Documentation emerged as a critical issue, with numerous participants recounting their struggles to obtain essential documents such as ration cards, PAN cards, Aadhaar cards, income certificates, and voter ID cards. This lack of documentation created a domino effect, limiting their access to government schemes and services, and often forcing them into difficult situations. For instance, some participants shared how they had to enroll their children in expensive private schools due to their inability to provide the necessary documents for public school admission.

Housing concerns were another prominent theme in the discussions. Participants described living in cramped, inadequate accommodations that sometimes led to painful decisions, such as sending children back to their villages. The lack of proper sanitation facilities in many migrant-dense areas was also highlighted, with women expressing concerns about the health and safety implications for their families.

Employment issues were widely discussed, with many participants lamenting the lack of regular, fair-wage job opportunities. Domestic workers, in particular, spoke about the absence of standardized wages and the resultant financial insecurity. This economic instability was often cited as a factor that increased vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking.

The dialogue also brought to light the specific challenges faced by families with special needs children. Several participants shared poignant stories of struggling to find adequate support and resources for their disabled children in the urban setting, feeling often overlooked by both the community and the system.

Throughout the discussions, a recurring theme was the difficulty in integrating into their new communities. Many women expressed feeling isolated and uninformed about their rights and the services available to them. This lack of community integration was identified as a significant barrier to addressing issues of safe migration and trafficking effectively.

CASE STUDIES

Several case studies emerged from the dialogue, illustrating the specific challenges faced by migrant women:

Case Study 1: Laiba Noor's Struggle with Single-Parent Documentation

Laiba Noor's case highlighted the bureaucratic challenges faced by single-parent families in the migrant community. Following her parents' recent divorce, Laiba found herself unable to apply for a single-parent scholarship due to the requirement of her father's signature on the application form. This situation underscored the need for more flexible and inclusive documentation processes that account for diverse family structures. Laiba's case exemplified how rigid administrative requirements can inadvertently discriminate against vulnerable individuals, potentially pushing them towards riskier situations in their quest for financial support.

Case Study 2: Kanchan Jha's Education Dilemma

Kanchan Jha's experience shed light on the educational challenges faced by migrant families. Due to a lack of proper documentation, Kanchan was forced to enroll her children in private schools with significantly higher fees. This situation not only strained the family's already limited financial resources but also highlighted the systemic barriers that prevent migrant children from accessing public education. Kanchan's case emphasized the need for more inclusive education policies that accommodate the unique circumstances of migrant families, ensuring that children's right to education is not compromised due to documentation issues.

Case Study 3: Tarannum's Long-Standing Educational Hurdles

Tarannum, who migrated from Darbhanga, Bihar in 2008, reported facing significant issues during her children's school admissions process upon arrival in Delhi. Her story was particularly striking as it demonstrated that these challenges persist even years after initial migration. Tarannum's experience highlighted the need for long-term support systems for migrant families, as well as the importance of streamlining school admission processes to be more accommodating to migrant children.

Case Study 4: Nisha's Family Separation Due to Housing Constraints

Nisha's case from Assam poignantly illustrated the impact of inadequate housing on migrant families. Due to insufficient space in her small rented accommodation in Delhi, Nisha was forced to send her eldest son back to their village. This heart-wrenching decision highlighted the severe housing crisis faced by migrant families in urban areas and its potential to fragment families. Nisha's situation underscored the urgent need for affordable and adequate housing solutions for migrant communities in cities.

Case Study 5: Ms. Rinki's Challenge with Special Needs Support

Ms. Rinki, originally from West Bengal, shared her struggle in finding appropriate support for her child with a disability. Her experience highlighted a significant gap in the support systems available for migrant families with special needs children. Ms. Rinki's case emphasized the need for specialized services and increased awareness about the unique challenges faced by families caring for children with disabilities in a new and often unfamiliar urban environment.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The dialogue yielded a wealth of suggestions and recommendations to address the challenges faced by migrant women and children. Participants emphasized the need for a multi-faceted approach that addresses immediate concerns while also working towards long-term, systemic changes.

In the realm of employment, there was a strong call for the regularization of domestic worker salaries, aligning them with daily wage standards. Participants suggested the creation of a formal system that would provide job security and fair wages for domestic workers, many of whom are migrant women. They also advocated for the development of sustainable employment opportunities that could provide stable income sources for migrant families, reducing their vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking.

Housing and basic amenities emerged as critical areas requiring intervention. Participants proposed the implementation of government housing schemes specifically tailored for migrants, addressing the unique challenges they face in securing safe and adequate accommodation. They also suggested the establishment and enforcement of fair rent regulations to protect migrants from exploitation by landlords. Improving sanitation facilities in migrant-dense areas was identified as a pressing need, with participants recommending community-based initiatives to address issues such as water logging and mosquito control.

Addressing documentation and legal status issues was seen as fundamental to improving the lives of migrant families. Participants suggested streamlining the process for obtaining essential documents such as ration cards, PAN cards, Aadhaar cards, income certificates, and voter ID cards. They emphasized the need for special provisions for single-parent families in documentation processes, reflecting the diverse family structures within migrant communities.

In the area of education and social support, expanding scholarship programs for migrant children was a key recommendation. Participants also suggested developing targeted support systems for families with disabled children, recognizing the additional challenges these families face. Simplifying school admission processes for migrant families was seen as crucial to ensuring that migrant children have access to quality education.

Community support and awareness were identified as vital components of any comprehensive strategy. Participants recommended establishing migrant facilitation centers that could serve as one-stop shops for information, support, and services. They also suggested conducting regular awareness camps on migrant rights and available services, and promoting community-level dialogues to increase understanding and support for migrant families.

Throughout the discussions, participants emphasized the importance of involving migrant women in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. They suggested creating platforms for regular dialogue between migrant communities and local authorities, ensuring that policies and interventions are informed by the real experiences and needs of migrants.

CONCLUSION

The "Women Migrants Dialogue on Safe Migration to Combat Trafficking" marked a significant step towards understanding and addressing the complex issues surrounding migration and trafficking. It successfully achieved its output goal of recognizing the needs of highly vulnerable migrant women and children, providing a nuanced understanding of the challenges they face.

Moreover, the dialogue made substantial progress towards its outcome goal of empowering migrant women to confidently raise issues of safe migration and trafficking in their communities. Through open discussions, information sharing, and collective problem-solving, participants gained knowledge, confidence, and a sense of solidarity that they can carry back to their communities.

The insights gained from this dialogue will be invaluable in shaping more effective, informed, and compassionate interventions. As participants return to their communities with new knowledge and support, they carry the potential to create positive change, acting as ambassadors for safe migration practices and anti-trafficking efforts.

Moving forward, ICP committed to arranging tailored follow-up sessions, aiming to equip participants with practical skills for accessing schemes and spreading awareness in their communities. This ongoing engagement will be crucial in sustaining the momentum generated by this dialogue and translating insights into tangible improvements in the lives of migrant women and children.

By amplifying migrant women's voices and fostering their empowerment, this dialogue has laid the groundwork for a more inclusive and effective approach to addressing migration challenges and combating trafficking. It stands as a testament to the power of community engagement and participatory approaches in tackling complex social issues.



Moderator encourages women migrants to share their experiences



Women migrant sharing the hardships faced by her due to migration



Women migrant sharing her life circumstances after migrating from her hometown to Delhi



Moderator seeking suggestions from the participants after listening to their concerns