

GOALS Reintegration Pilot Initiative

*Lessons Learned, Best Practices &
Recommendations from IOM*

March 2024



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IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

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Women returnee migrants at a garment making class

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List of Abbreviations

ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
BCC	Behavioural Change Communication
BYST	Bharatiya Yuva Sakti Trust
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CESS	Centre for Economic and Social Studies
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease of 2019
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DEO	District Employment Officer
LETF	Labour, Employment Training and Factories
DMRC	District Migrant Resource Centre
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GM	General Manager
GOALS	Governance of Migration in South and South-East Asia
HMV	Heavy Motor Vehicle
iCALL	Initiating Concern for All
IEC	Information, Education & Communication
ILO	International Labour Organization
INR	Indian Rupee
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MHSS	Mental Health Support Services
MMRC	Mobile Migrant Resource Centres
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NAC	National Academy of Construction
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRI	Non-Resident Indian
NWWT	National Workers Welfare Trust
PGE	Protector General of Emigrants
PLF	Poverty Learning Foundation

PMEGP	Prime Minister Employment Guarantee Programme
POE	Protectors of Emigrants
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PSC	Project Steering Committee
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SETWIN	Society for Employment Promotion and Training in the Twin Cities
SHG	Self Help Group
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
T-Hub	Technology Hub
TIDES	Telangana Institute of Driving Education and Skills
TISS	Tata Institute of Social Sciences
TOMCOM	Telangana Overseas Manpower Company Ltd
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
USD	United States Dollar

INTRODUCTION

REINTEGRATION PILOT: GOALS PROGRAMME



The Governance of Labour Migration in South and South-East Asia (GOALS) Programme is jointly implemented by IOM (International Organization for Migration), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women). GOALS aims to ensure that labour migration is safe, orderly, and regular for all women and men from the Colombo Process Member States through strengthened collaboration and effective labour migration governance. Supported by the SDC (Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation), the programme responds to the current context, achievements, gaps, and challenges relating to labour migration in the Asian countries of the Colombo Process. The Programme was implemented between August 2020 and January 2024.

Under Output 2.3 of the GOALS programme, several activities focusing on the return and reintegration of labour migrants in South Asia were

The Governance of Labour Migration in South and South-East Asia (GOALS) Programme is jointly implemented by IOM (International Organization for Migration), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

planned. These were related to developing and adapting regional frameworks and guidelines on reintegration for operationalization at the national level to generate improved labour migration policies and practices on sustainable reintegration in South Asia. A comprehensive regional mapping and assessment in five South Asian countries of origin (Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka) and the development of a regional model on reintegration was accordingly completed. Based on the regional reintegration model, the manual was launched in December 2023.¹

IOM implemented country-level pilots of the regional model on reintegration in Sri Lanka and India, building on the existing policies and practices to address social, psychological, and economic opportunities and challenges for returning migrant workers. The pilot in Sri Lanka contributed towards Sri Lanka's efforts to operationalize the updated national migration policy, focusing on the reintegration-related areas and supporting the sustainable reintegration of returnee migrant workers in the country.



In the case of India, IOM and ILO implemented a sub-national pilot in the State of Telangana, working closely with the government to fortify and capacitate the existing provisions within Telangana for the benefit of returning migrant workers. Since

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India follows a federal system of governance, with decentralized administrative machinery across the states, a sub-national pilot was deemed most suitable in the case of India. Under the GOALS programme, IOM and ILO worked closely with the Telangana Department of Labour, to adapt the South Asian Regional Reintegration Model and provide contextualized framework for the State to develop its own reintegration guidelines

Inception Stage

To enable an evidence-based approach to designing the pilot project in Telangana, IOM India conducted a rapid assessment during the period November 2022 – January 2023.

The rapid assessment study was conducted in three districts of Telangana (Hyderabad, Rajanna Sircilla and Nizamabad) and, identified the key stakeholders involved in the return and reintegration project. The inception report of the rapid assessment serves as a comprehensive guide to the rapid assessment study, outlining the scope and key areas of focus towards understanding the return and reintegration policies in Telangana.

¹ <https://publications.iom.int/books/manual-inclusive-and-sustainable-reintegration-returning-migrant-workers-south-asia>

Objectives of the inception stage rapid assessment

01

Highlight the broad challenges impacting migrant workers' ability to sustainably reintegrate into Telangana upon return, from social acceptance to livelihoods, ensuring that gendered challenges and needs are articulated.

Identify the possibility and nature of disparate access to overseas employment among men and women to enhance the understanding of their situation before returning to the community of origin.

02

03

Identify the current and planned Government of Telangana initiatives and ongoing schemes to support the reintegration of returnee migrants, from social welfare schemes to skills and investment frameworks, including specific support for female returnee migrant workers.

Analyse the good practices from the efforts of the Government and non-government entities relevant to the reintegration of returning migrant workers.

04

05

Identify geographical areas within Telangana that present cross-cutting vulnerabilities for returning migrant workers.

Identify the ongoing and prospective role of the private sector, trade unions and civil society organisations, including women's organisations in complementing the efforts of the Government of Telangana.

06

Methodology

- Desk Research to situate the return and reintegration process in the larger socio-economic context.
- Key Stakeholder Consultations with experts across the fields of expertise (Government, Academia, NGO/CSO, Trade Unions and Industry).
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with international returnee migrant workers in Telangana. Two research consultants based in Telangana supported the process
- Feedback from a total of 44 returning international migrant workers (through five FGDs) were garnered.. For example, one FGD was conducted in Gudur village of Mustabad mandal in Rajanna Siricilla district of Telangana State and the other was conducted in Mustabad village and mandal in Rajanna Siricilla district of Telangana State. The third one was conducted in Sirnapally village of Indalwai mandal in Nizamabad district of Telangana State. The next two FGDs were conducted with returning



Telangana Map:
Districts included in the Rapid Assessment

women migrant workers in Sultan Shahi area of Old City, Charminar mandal, Hyderabad district. This region of Hyderabad is unique in its concentration of Muslim inhabitants who speak Urdu and Decani Hindi.

- The rapid assessment report findings were submitted in the stakeholder workshop held on February 23, 2023. The stakeholder workshop disseminated findings of the rapid assessment and gathered insights from the stakeholders on the work plan of the pilot project.

Stakeholder workshop

The findings brought out the commitment of the Government of Telangana towards economic reintegration, mainly in providing skills training, certification, and placement/entrepreneurship opportunities to returnee migrant workers. The state government has also prepared a draft NRI policy that focusses on skills training and entrepreneurship support to returnee migrant workers. One of the overarching and suggested objectives relates to the activities that are to dovetail with current and planned interventions of the Government of Telangana. Towards this end, the focus of IOM reintegration pilot was to implement pilot activities that support gender-responsive and evidence-based planning through:

- Conducting the first extensive survey of returnee migrant workers across three high-migrant sending districts of Telangana (Nizamabad, Jagtial and Hyderabad),
- Operationalising one-stop service delivery through Migrant Resource Centres (MRC),
- Provision of livelihood support through skills training, in partnership with Telangana-based skills training institutions
- Setting up of toll-free helpline in association with Mental Health Support Service (MHSS) providers to facilitate psychosocial, economic, and social reintegration support to international returnee migrant workers.



Operationalising one-stop service delivery through Migrant Resource Centres (MRC).

- Production of IEC materials to provide guidance and awareness to returnee migrant workers

Project Steering Committee Meeting

As part of the first stakeholder workshop of the GOALS pilot in Telangana, a Project Steering Committee meeting was held in the month of February 2023 when a committee was formed to oversee project implementation, discuss the progress made, key achievements, best practices, challenges, and other related matters. The PSC is composed of two members of the Government of Telangana/TOMCOM, two members from IOM and two members from ILO.

The first PSC held on 23 February 2023 with Ms. Naga Bharathi (General Manager, TOMCOM) discussed the workplan and activities across four main verticals with emphasis on gender-responsive planning: 1. To conduct returnee migrants' survey in Telangana, and support evidence-based planning; 2. Operationalising Migrant Resource Centres (MRC) in Telangana towards one-stop service delivery; 3. Livelihood support training to returnee migrants in partnership with multiple stakeholders, and 4. Setting up of toll-free helpline to support psychosocial reintegration of returnee migrants. The second and final PSC meeting was held on 17 January 2024, stocktaking the pilot initiative. The meeting discussed the pilot activities led by IOM and ILO, under the GOALS Reintegration Pilot in Telangana.

Overview of inclusive and sustainable reintegration of returning migrant workers in South Asia: **The Case of Telangana, India**



The Stage of Implementation

GOALS Reintegration Pilot IOM Activities in Telangana: Key numbers and reach of all pilot activities:

The pilot activities were finalised in close partnership with TOMCOM, the Government of Telangana's nodal agency for the reintegration pilot in Telangana. All the ongoing activities of the Telangana pilot have been implemented in close partnership with the Department of Labour, Employment, Factories and Training and, TOMCOM, Government of Telangana. Gender-responsive planning is identified as a critical enabler of reintegration across all the pilot activities in Telangana.

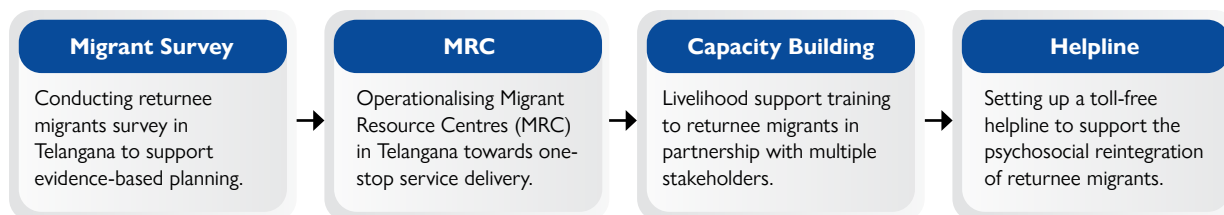
1. Conducting a Returnee Migrants' Survey to enable evidence-based planning and policymaking towards sustainable reintegration.

All the ongoing activities of the Telangana pilot have been implemented in close partnership with the Department of Labour, Employment, Factories and Training and, TOMCOM, Government of Telangana. Gender-responsive planning is identified as a critical enabler of reintegration across all the pilot activities in Telangana.

In collaboration with the Centre for Economic and Social Studies (CESS), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) completed the returnee migrant survey. The survey aimed to understand

the characteristics of returnee migrants' socio-economic status, skill set, employment status and the challenges faced by them in the local labour market.

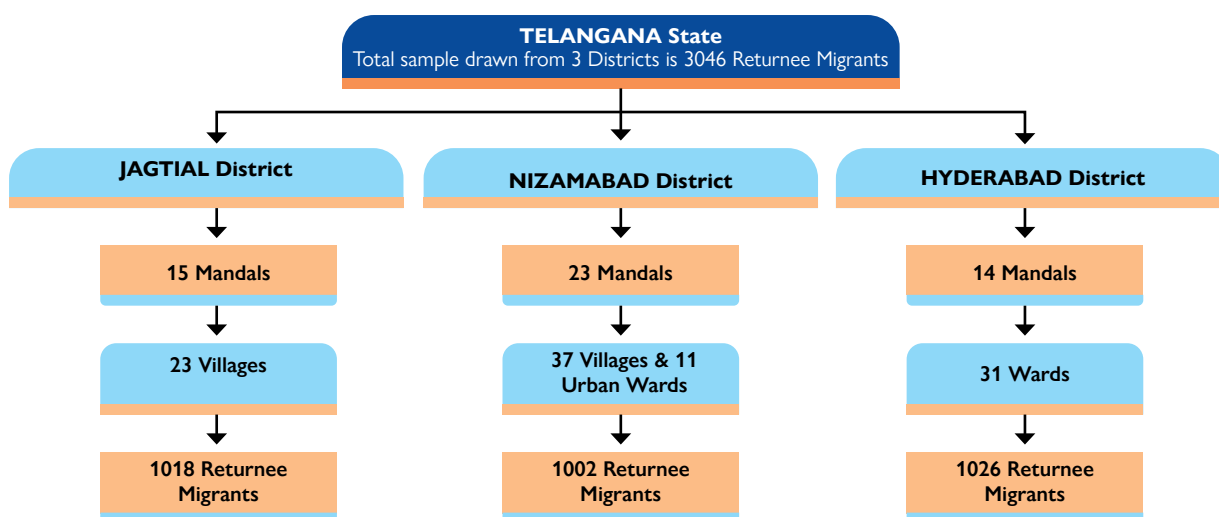
Verticals for gender-responsive planning



Over 3046 returnee migrant workers across three high migrant-sending districts (Nizamabad, Jagtial and Hyderabad) were reached as part of this initiative. The returnee migrants' survey project report has been submitted to IOM. The survey findings were released and presented by Prof. Revathi Ellanki (Director, CESS) at the Workshop on the Key Learnings from the Reintegration Pilot, held on 18 January 2024. The returnee migrant survey database comprises the following: In Jagtial

district, the survey team collected data from 1018 returnee migrants from 15 mandals, 23 villages and eight urban wards. In Nizamabad district, the team collected data from 1002 returnee migrants from 23 mandals, 37 villages and 11 urban wards. In Hyderabad, the team collected data from 1026 returnee migrants from 14 mandals, and 31 wards. The sample surveyed is 3046 returnees, including 84 female returnees from Hyderabad district.

Returnee Migrants Survey Database



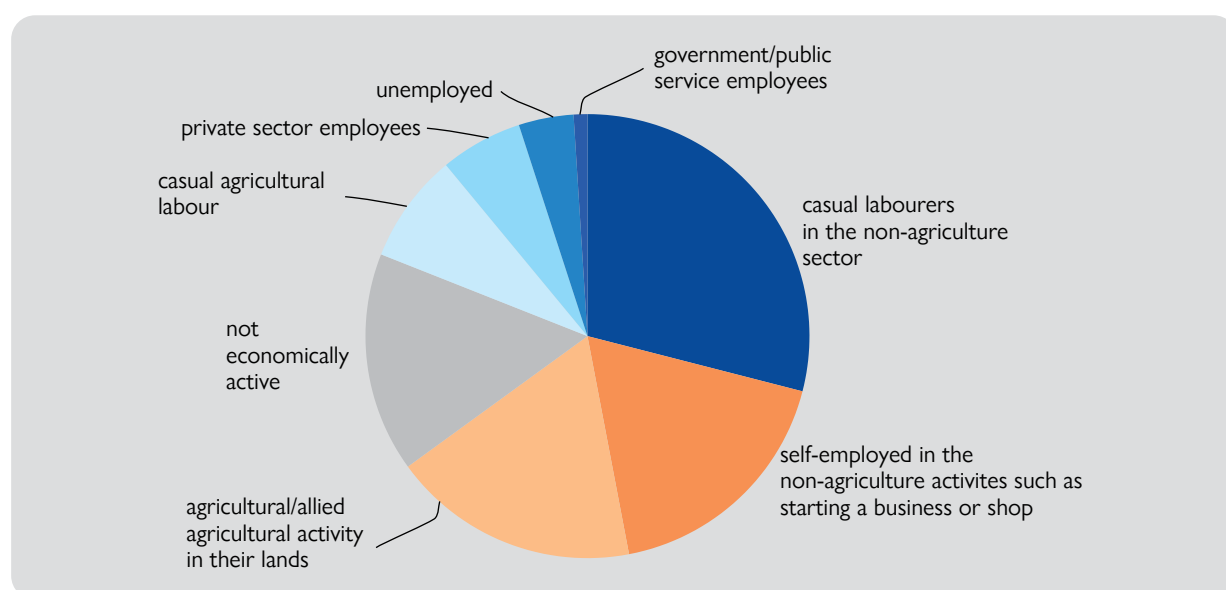
Migration from Telangana to the Gulf follows explicitly gendered patterns; it is male dominated, with certain districts exclusively sending male migrants. Hyderabad is the sole district that sends female migrant workers to the Gulf. Male migrants from Telangana are predominantly employed in

the construction sector in the Gulf, while female migrant workers are employed as housemaids. The age distribution of migrant returnees reveals that 74% fall into the under-40 age group and 26% into the over 40 age group.

The returnee migrants after their return made attempts to integrate themselves into the local labour market. 29% of returnees worked as casual labourers in the non-agriculture sector; 18% became self-employed in the non-agriculture activities such as starting a business or shop; 18% engaged themselves in agricultural/allied agricultural

activity in their lands; 8% got into casual agricultural labour, 6% got absorbed into private sector as employees and 1% got into government/public service as salaried employees. While 4% of the returnees were still unemployed at the time of the survey, 16% were not economically active.

Post-return occupation of returnee migrants



The survey initiative conducted in partnership with CESS, conducted the first extensive survey of returnee migrants and successfully supported building the first returnee migrant database in the state.

2. Establish Migrant Resource Centres (MRC) to enable one-stop service delivery for sustainable reintegration.

In collaboration with a CSO partner, National Workers Welfare Trust (NWWT), IOM established one MRC each in Hyderabad, Nizamabad and Jagtial. While the MRC in Hyderabad is situated within the Society for Employment Promotion and Training in the Twin Cities (SETWIN) Main office, the ones in Nizamabad and Jagtial are situated in the District Employment Exchanges of the districts. The District Employment Officers were nominated as

nodal officers² of the MRCs and routinely provided guidance and assistance to MRC staff in the districts.

As of 19th January 2024, the MRC staff directly reached 792 returnee migrant workers. Among them, 660 were men and 132 were women. Through direct outreach efforts of the MRC staff, 2879 community members were reached as part of their day-to-day operations (including community meetings): 2118 were women and 761 were male members. Through the MRC services, the migrant workers have been provided information on Union Government Schemes (National) and State Government (Subnational) Schemes enabling them to establish linkages with the services offered by government. Significantly, MRC staff helped migrant workers get registered to the following services: E-Shram Card (scheme for unorganized

² DEOs are the Ex-officio Managers of TOMCOM according to Cir. Memo No. H/M, Meeting/2017 dated 10.07.2017 issued by Directorate of Employment and Training, Government of Telangana.

workers to help them avail several benefits), Ayushman Bharath Card (health/insurance scheme), Labour Card for Construction Workers (welfare scheme for construction workers), Asara Pension (scheme that provides nominal pension to those from vulnerable communities), Kalyana Lakshmi (scheme to support wedding expenses of eligible young women from poor communities), Double Bedroom Housing Scheme (scheme that provides a double bedroom house to eligible candidates from vulnerable communities). In addition, several migrant workers were also assisted with securing Aadhar Card (citizen identification card in India), Income certificate and Caste Certificate.

MRC staff also successfully identified and mobilized returnee migrant workers for skill upgradation training across job roles in construction, driving, garment-making and beautician courses. They were then provided skills training (in partnership with multiple stakeholders) through IOM's pilot initiative. MRC services have also included sessions on financial management (SHG formation) and business development to benefit returnee migrant workers. The successful functioning of MRCs in Telangana as part of the pilot project have meant that TOMCOM has made a commitment to absorb the MRCs and carry forward the work. TOMCOM is the apex body and has identified the DEO (District Employment Officers) as the nodal officers at the district level. MRC offices are situated on the premises of employment exchanges and coordinate with DEOs and other related line departments. At present, the thinking of public functionaries (those having constitutional authority) is perspicuous. The services of MRCs need to continue, and the centres would complement the government's programmes. Public servants in TOMCOM, as well as district-level officials such as DEOs, suggest data gathering and management at the village level (the bedrock point for prospective migrants as well as returnee migrants) with active support from MRCs. For them, this arrangement would address many migration and return migration issues. They also add that better data management would be handy in designing, implementing, and monitoring the programme operations. Throughout the process, they consider MRCs to be effective social catalysts.



TOMCOM is the apex body and has identified the DEO (District Employment Officers) as the nodal officers at the district level.

3. Establish a Toll-free helpline to promote psychosocial reintegration

In collaboration with NWWT and the iCall team of the Tata Institute of Social Science (TISS), IOM established a toll-free helpline at the MRC Hyderabad. As of 19th January 2024, the helpline received 281 calls, and the callers have been provided with the necessary guidance and referrals. Among 281 calls, 47 were from women, and men numbered at 234. Five calls exclusively sought psychosocial help, while 40 touched upon livelihood challenges and how these impinge on psychosocial wellbeing. Ninety-five calls were seeking information about overseas job recruitment through TOMCOM, and 124 calls were related to skill upgradation courses and training offered as part of the IOM-GOALS reintegration pilot initiative (through NAC, TIDES and SETWIN).

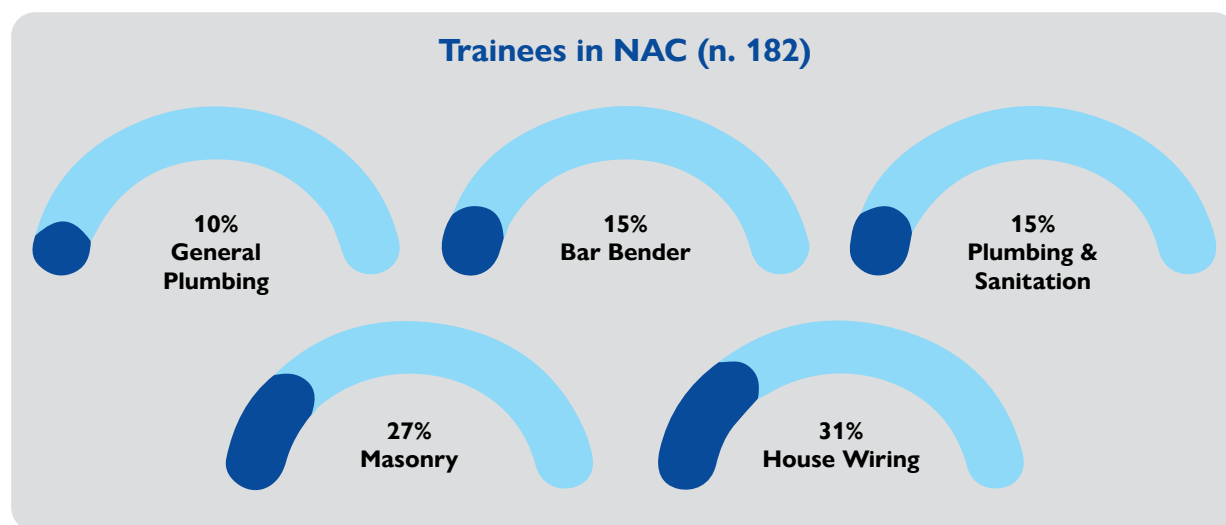
4. Provide livelihood support training with multiple stakeholder partnerships to promote economic reintegration.

- a) **Partnership with National Academy of Construction (NAC)** to provide training across construction job roles (General Plumbing, Bar Bender, Plumbing & Sanitation, Masonry and House wiring): 182 returnee migrant workers have completed training across three districts and have been certified.
- b) **Partnership with Society for Employment Promotion and Training in the Twin Cities (SETWIN)** to provide training in garment-making and beautician courses. As part of this training, 29 women were trained across the above trades. They are all keen on setting up their own tailoring units.

- c) **Partnership with Telangana Institute of Driving Education and Skills (TIDES)** to provide Heavy Motor Vehicle (HMV) Training: As part of this training partnership, 20 migrant

workers have been trained/certified. Through this partnership, successfully trained candidates have been supported with placement opportunities (in private-sector firms like Ashok Leyland).

National Academy of Construction and Trainees



5. Preparation of IEC materials

In collaboration with TOMCOM, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has prepared IEC materials to help with information sharing on government schemes and to popularize the MRC initiative and related services. The IEC materials have collated Union Government Schemes and Telangana Government Schemes for the larger benefit of returnee migrants. Similarly, the materials have focused on popularizing the MRC initiative and the umbrella of services being offered. These materials also spread awareness among migrants about psychosocial reintegration support available through the helpline initiative. The materials were made available in English, Telugu, and Urdu (the official languages of Telangana).



TIDES poster with information on the driver training programmes

Structural Level Pilot activities initiated to fortify Government mechanisms to support migrant workers



Telangana Government: Legal and Nodal Support

TOMCOM (Telangana Overseas Manpower Company Limited)

Established in 2014, TOMCOM (Telangana Overseas Manpower Company) facilitates youth from Telangana worldwide. It trains workers by organising skill development programmes that meet overseas standards; conducting Overseas Employers' Meetings; Recruiting Agents; Training of Trainers workshops; providing travel, passport, visa, and stamping assistance; and familiarizing workers with the work conditions, work environment, and culture of the destination point.

The Public Support System: Approach of TOMCOM

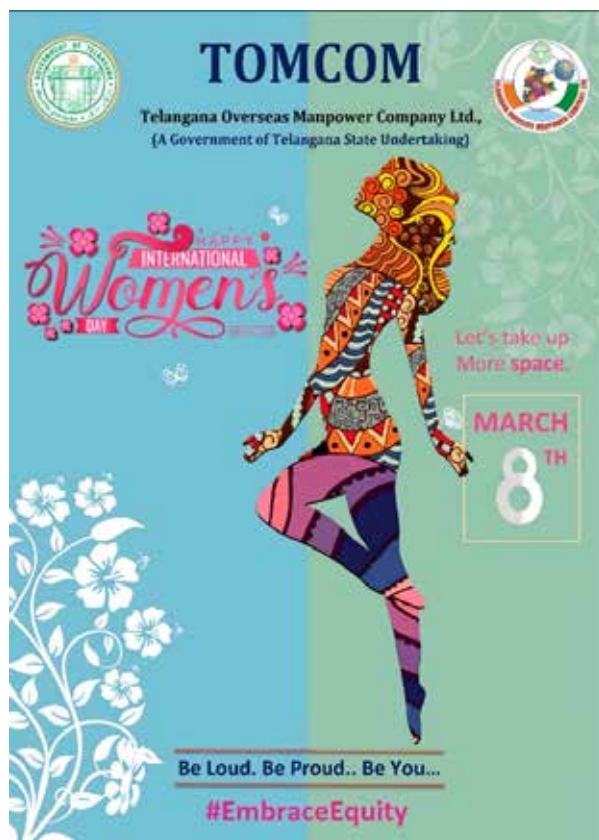
Established by the Government of Telangana and armed with regulatory and nodal powers, TOMCOM plays a catalytic role in overseeing the

Established by the Government of Telangana and armed with regulatory and nodal powers, **TOMCOM** plays a catalytic role in overseeing the smooth flow of outward migrants and supporting the **reintegration of returnee migrants**.

smooth flow of outward migrants and supporting the reintegration of returnee migrants. It is one of the ten agencies in India licensed to recruit and send workers abroad for employment. Its role in dealing with the returnee migrants in the post-

COVID situation has become more pronounced. The General Manager K. Naga Bharathi admits, 'We are also looking at return migration and migrants in the post COVID-19 period'.

Tomcom is Coordinating with Five Critical Stakeholders



- 01 The Government of India (Ministry of External Affairs)
- 02 IOM (International organization for Migration)
- 03 Department of Labour and Employment Exchanges
- 04 Specialist Government Agencies such as SETWIN, NAC and TIDES
- 05 Civil Society organisations such as the National Workers' Welfare Trust (NWWT)

Three-dimensional role of TOMCOM

TOMCOM holds a valid license to recruit candidates across all categories to all countries in the world. For the reintegration pilot under the GOALS programme, TOMCOM focussed on supporting returnee migrants, mostly from the Gulf countries (e.g.: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates). Given the age-specific conventions in Gulf Countries following the COVID-19 pandemic, those above 40 years of age find it difficult to secure overseas employment. TOMCOM is closely associated with all these people (prospective as well as returnee migrants) and provides initial counselling, training, and settlement in appropriate livelihood sectors within the state of Telangana. Its role is seen at three levels:



Dr. Emmadi Vishnu Vardhan Reddy
CEO, TOMCOM, Govt of Telangana

TOMCOM and the Operational Parameters

As part of the operational mechanisms, TOMCOM has adopted three parameters while engaging with the returnee migrants: (i) refreshing the skills of the semi-skilled, (ii) capacitating un-skilled individuals, and (iii) training skilled workers in new techniques wherever possible. In this process, TOMCOM has signed an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding), with professional training institutes such as TIDES (Telangana Institute of Driving Education and Skills) to improve the technicalities of the returnee migrants who have been into heavy motor driving.

It has established operational relations with Civil Society Organisations (for example, NWWT) working on migration issues. This understanding has enabled the sharing of information and a thorough understanding of the issues of returnee migrants



from an alternate perspective. On the other hand, TOMCOM's rural outreach is accelerated through its NGO network.

Awareness, Advocacy, and Counselling

Awareness

Validated information on opportunities, training courses, available schemes of government, fiscal/ credit institutions, entrepreneurial skills, and business training.

Advocacy

Providing advice appropriate for the different age and gender groups.

Counselling

Professional Counselling on different trades/ professions and the possible resettlement pathways.



It has established operational relations with Civil Society Organisations (for example, NWWT) working on migration issues. This understanding has enabled the sharing of information and a thorough understanding of the issues of returnee migrants from an alternate perspective.

Lessons Learnt

TOMCOM's proactive networking with CSOs has significantly accelerated operations. This positive outcome is a testament to the effectiveness of Government and civil society organisations (CSOs) relations, instilling confidence in the audience about the programme's progress and potential for further success.

There is a possibility and prospect of a growing number of returnee migrants entering the State of Telangana over time.

It is crucial to establish a clear mitigation and coping mechanism to address the needs of returnee migrants in the years to come. This emphasis on the need for a comprehensive support system should invoke a sense of responsibility in the audience, urging them to consider the welfare of these migrants as a priority.

The third essential dimension of the operational mechanism is TOMCOM's direct working relation with employment exchanges at district levels. In the first board meeting of the Board of Directors of TOMCOM held on 20.06.2017, all the District Employment Officers (DEOs) in the State of Telangana were designated as Ex-Officio Managers of TOMCOM. This entrusted DEOs to take up all the activities of TOMCOM at the district level, along with the establishment of District Migrant Resource Centres (DMRCs), Passport Application Collection

Centres and take up necessary outsourcing activities.³ This existing ecosystem within which DEOs were Ex-Officio Managers of TOMCOM was advantageous to ensuring smooth district-level pilot interventions in the three districts. Significantly, the DEOs of Nizamabad and Jagtial were nominated as the Nodal Officers in-charge of the Migrant Resource Centres. They were instructed to provide space in the Employment Exchanges for setting up MRCs, to supervise and support the activities of the MRC staff.⁴

Best Practices

The Government of Telangana is proactive in its support of the programme. TOMCOM is a public body created by the government to oversee migration from the region. It has decided to designate DEOs (District Employment Officers) as the nodal officers for TOMCOM at the suburban and rural (mofussil locations) levels.

MRC offices are allowed to operate from district employment exchanges, enabling the constant flow of programme communications and information between Government and Civil Society.

³ Cir. Memo No. H/M, Meeting/2017 (Date: 10.07.2017) ..., op.cit.

⁴ Reference is made to Memo. No. J/TOMCOM/2023 (Date: 31.07.2023), with Subject: CE&T, Hyderabad – Setting up of Migrant Resource Centers at Nizamabad & Jagtial – Reg.

Consequently, the MRCs in Jagtial and Nizamabad were set up at the District Employment Exchanges, adjacent to the DEO offices, enabling seamless partnership with IOM, NWWT and TOMCOM in operationalizing the MRCs and the related services. The MRC established in Hyderabad, at SETWIN Head Office (Charminar, Hyderabad) was also supported and guided by the DEO, Hyderabad. The location of the MRC in Hyderabad was necessitated because most out-migrants from Hyderabad originate from Old City, especially Charminar mandal of Hyderabad, thereby making it more accessible to returnees, especially women returnee migrants in Hyderabad. To support and strengthen the MRC and related services, IOM has also made available two vans to function as the Mobile Migrant Resource Centres (MMRCs), and as 'moving help desks for migrant communities in the districts (especially rural districts), under the GOALS reintegration pilot.

TOMCOM and IEC Material

The Government of Telangana follows directives and policy guidelines prepared by the MEA (Ministry of External Affairs), Government of India. These are meant for pan-Indian application and execution. TOMCOM, in turn, adopts the top-down approach. It produces translated versions of guidelines and booklets in vernacular (Telugu and Urdu in the present instance) and shares them with related stakeholders. While they are expected to serve as efficient IEC material for all, these information tools are also expected to promote unified and shared understanding across all departments and other operational players in civil society.

Experiences and Lessons

The outcomes emanating from TOMCOM's overall and overarching role in supporting the reintegration and resettlement of returnee migrants are declared to be proceeding on the expected lines. Currently, it uses the data generated from family surveys undertaken by functionaries of IOM/NWWT in the three districts of Telangana (Hyderabad, Nizamabad and Jagtial). Currently, 1,000 returnee migrants per district are under the monitoring purview. Disaggregated training and placement data is locally available with the training institutes, such as NAC, SETWIN & TIDES, and is monitored by public and non-governmental bodies.

Interactions and conversations with public functionaries, CSO and community representatives, and family members of the returnee migrants shed light on the dubious role and negative influence of private agents facilitating the migration of workers outside India (mainly in the Gulf region). As a result, many have to return due to work VISA, placement and payment issues. One valuable lesson for TOMCOM in resettlement is the possibility of a growing number of returnee migrants in Telangana shortly, with particular reference to Gulf countries where legal settlement is complicated. Many returnee migrants feel they must return to India after a permissible time limit (after 45 years of age). TOMCOM believes that there should be a foolproof mitigation and coping mechanism at the grassroots level to take care of returnee migrants in



TOMCOM & IEC Material (Pre-Departure Orientation)

the years to come. As discussed earlier, this relates to the data management of all migrants.

Operational Challenges

The location of training institutes (skill development training bodies) in urban areas is currently considered a limitation. There is a need to establish and run skill development training institutes at the mofussil level to cater to the needs of semi-skilled and un-skilled returnee migrants. One crucial psychological determinant identified and perceived by TOMCOM is the willingness of returnee migrants to settle within the near vicinity of their native places. Non-burdensome settlement is a critical variable impacting the post-return programme interventions.

Challenges

To establish and run skill development training institutes at the rural levels/locations, to cater to the needs of semi-skilled and un-skilled returnee migrants. One important psychological determinant identified and perceived is the willingness of returnee migrants to settle within the near vicinity of their native places. To strengthen the inter-departmental coordination since the issue of returnee migrants is to be validated by various participating stakeholders that primarily include departments such as labour, and employment exchanges.

Another operational challenge has been the identified need for enhanced coordination and cooperation among government line departments. Though it is not underrated at present, TOMCOM feels the need to strengthen inter-departmental coordination since the issue of returnee migrants must be validated by various participating stakeholders, primarily departments such as labour and employment exchanges. Telangana's Government fully supports its approach to the

problem of migration from the region. TOMCOM, DEOs and the Department of Labour, in addition to public training bodies such as SETWIN, NAC and TIDES (Public Private Partnership Mode), are active in the field. Interactions with the stakeholders (official and non-official) hint at the stand-alone interventions of these bodies. Since there is no official circular or directive from the Government, each department deals with the returnee migrants as and when the issue is brought to their notice. If there is written instruction from the apex level (of the Government), programming for the returnee migrants would gain momentum and necessary acceleration.

TOMCOM and Prospective Thinking

TOMCOM prides itself on out-of-box thinking. It appropriately and contextually refers to the flagship policy proclamation of the Government of India (the 'Make In India' initiative announced by the government in the post-COVID period) and takes a specific reference to the Start-up initiative of the Government of Telangana (T-Hub). TOMCOM officials aver that linking the current initiatives with these new policy promulgations and interventions of the governments (Union Government as well as Sub-national Government) will result in more readily available employment opportunities for the returnee migrants. The operational wisdom resulting from interventional dynamism reiterates the need to establish regional skilling centres to act as meaningful and connecting linkages between return migration and employment generation upon return.

Future Assumptions

To link the current initiatives with new policy promulgations and interventions of the Union Government (Make in India and T-Hub) are sure to result in more number of readily-available employment opportunities for the returnee migrants.

As part of the IOM Reintegration Pilot initiative, TOMCOM was the key nodal body supporting the implementation of all the pilot activities. As part of this pilot, ten IEC materials (across three languages) were developed, as follows:

- Creation of IEC materials to inform and build awareness on Government (Union and State) schemes and initiatives.
- Creation of IEC materials to inform and build awareness on services offered by the newly

established Migrant Resource Centres (MRC) and Mobile Migrant Resource Centres (MMRC).

- Creation of IEC material to disseminate information about the toll-free helpline, towards psychosocial reintegration of returning migrant workers. The helpline was set up through a multi-stakeholder partnership (especially NWWT, the CSO partner and iCall, the MHPSS capacity building stakeholder).

The image displays two IEC materials. The left material, titled 'Return - Reintegration Support', features a blue header with the IOM logo and a yellow banner. It includes a 'Question' section about returning migrants seeking help, an 'Answer' section mentioning the MRC helpline, and a list of services provided by the toll-free helpline (1800 599 1393), such as psychosocial counseling, awareness of welfare schemes, and skill upgradation training. It also provides contact details for MRCs in Hyderabad, Nizamabad, and Jagtial. The right material, titled 'Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) & Mobile Migrant Resource Centre (MMRC)', has a blue header with the IOM logo. It includes a 'What is MRC?' section, a 'Purpose and Scope' section, and a 'One Stop Service Delivery through MRC' section. It lists services like counseling, information on migration and reintegration, and psychosocial support. Both materials feature logos for IOM, iCALL, and GOALS at the bottom.

IEC Material on Toll-Free Helpline, MRC and MMRC services

The first extensive returnee migrants' survey: Reflections on the activities in three districts of Telangana

The study on Returnee Migrants in Telangana was carried out in the context of the phenomenon of return migration, especially from the GCC countries. TOMCOM and IOM are trying to understand and monitor the process precipitated by COVID-19 and after. The study spans the districts of Hyderabad,

Nizamabad and Jagtial, which are known pockets for out-migration to the Gulf countries. It attempts to understand the characteristics of returnee migrants' socio-economic status, skill set, employment status, and challenges faced in the local labour market.

The study aims to estimate the return migrants (by definition, those returning from the GCC in the past five years or from 2018), assess their skills, learn their current activities, analyse the challenges

faced by them in the local labour markets, assess the local market status, and suggest methods of skilling and livelihood support for the reintegration of the returnee migrants within the target districts.



Women Returnee Migrants During an Interactive Session (Hyderabad, Telangana)

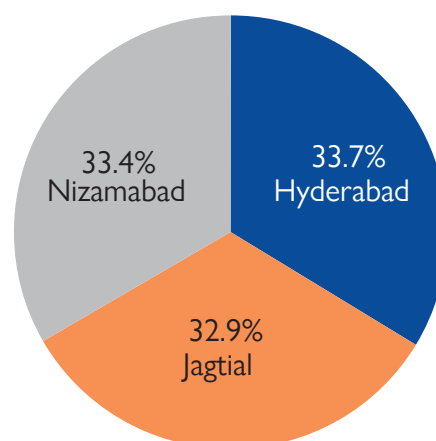
The Sample

The sample was collected using the stratified sampling method with insights drawn from the Samagra Kutumba Survey data on migrant households in the three districts. A total of 25 villages/wards were selected per district, and 40 respondents were selected, comprising a minimum sample of 1000 per district. Further, the 'snowballing' effort was utilised at the village level, where the interviewees' knowledge of other returnees was used to reach out to the other respondents. At the village level, prominent persons like village/ward representatives were consulted to gather information on the approximate number of gulf returnees and identify initial survey respondents. They, in turn, were helpful in further sample identification.

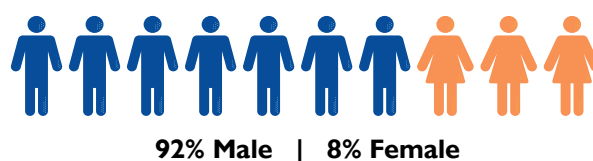
Focus Group Discussions at the community level were organised to capture qualitative data relating to labour conditions, the impact of returnee migrants on employment relations and issues related to reintegration. Information on these aspects was collected through discussion with the district employment officers, labour department and TOMCOM officials.

The study interviewed 3,046 migrant returnees across the three districts. In Hyderabad alone, 84 (8%) out of 1026 respondents surveyed were women. Close to 50 per cent of the total sample had returned from UAE, followed by other Gulf countries. For returnees' duration of last stay, the most significant percentage of respondents (nearly 49%) comprised those who stayed for less than five years. It is followed by those staying between 5 and 15 Years (37%), with 11 per cent and 3 per cent of respondents staying between 16 and 25 years and beyond 25 years respectively.

Sample Respondents



Gender in Hyderabad



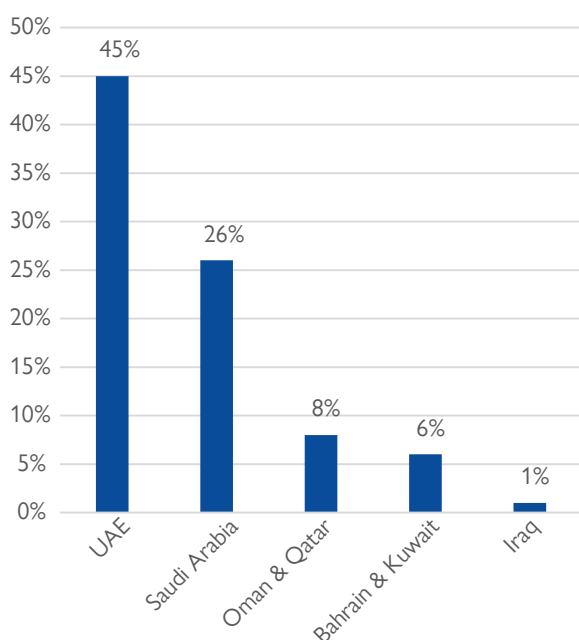
Most of them are educated up to secondary level and belong to the below 40-year age bracket, closely followed by those completing intermediate (+2) study, belonging to the below 40-year age bracket (20%). Interestingly, a little above 1 per cent of respondents have technical qualifications (polytechnic), hinting that most of the migrant returnees are those who have undertaken unskilled ad-hoc jobs rather than semi- skilled or skilled jobs.

Reasons for Return

Reasons for return are varied. 37 per cent of respondents have cited termination/expiry of a contract as an important reason for return migration, followed by a little above 18 per cent returning because they were unhappy with their salaries. Other reasons include incompatibility with the employer (a little above 12%) and problems back home (a little above 10%). Interestingly, COVID-19 was cited by nearly 9 per cent of respondents as a reason. Other factors like health problems, retirement, availability of work at the local market, etc., contributed to the return of the rest of the migrants.

IOM Reintegration Pilot Project: Telangana- Respondents'

From country by which migrants returned (Source: CESS Study)



The study revealed that the majority were earning between INR 20,000 to INR 50,000 per month (approx. USD 240 to USD 600 per month), followed by a few with less than INR 20,000 (approx. USD 240). Quite a few earned between INR 50,000 and

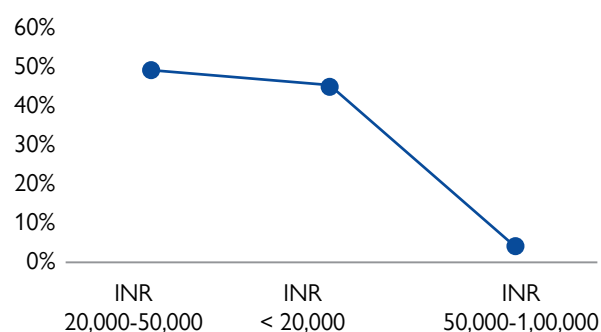
INR 1,00,000 per month (approx. USD 600 to USD 1200 per month).

The usage of remittances is also different across the sample: close to 55 per cent for repayment of debt; a little above 25 per cent towards consumption needs of the family; close to 22 per cent for construction of a house; around 12 per cent for children's education; little above 6 per cent was for health needs of the family members; around 4 per cent for performing a wedding in the family, and 2 per cent for purchase of assets like vehicle or land. Nearly 8 per cent of the sample mentioned they had no money for their needs.

Post-return: Efforts at resettlement

Soon after return, the returnee migrants attempted to reintegrate into the local labour market. The pattern of the occupations into which they tried to integrate is as follows: 29 per cent got into casual labour in the non-agriculture sector; 18 per cent became self-employed in non-agriculture activities like starting a business or shop; 17 per cent engaged themselves in agricultural activity in their lands; 8 per cent got into casual agricultural labour, 6 per cent got absorbed into private sector as employees and; 1 per cent got into government/public service as salaried employees. 4 per cent of the returnees remained unemployed at the time of the survey, and 16 per cent were not working. 76 per cent of the returnee migrants did not obtain any skills when migrating (for example, 68% from Hyderabad and 74% from Nizamabad; 86% of respondents had no skills at the time of migration).

Earnings Per Month During Their Migration



Even after migration, efforts to acquire skills were low among the sample. 10 per cent of respondents from Hyderabad, 18 per cent from Nizamabad and 4 per cent from Jagtial are stated to have made efforts to acquire skills at the destination. Further, 65% of them did not find employment in line with their skills. As a result, close to 51 per cent did not find the pragmatic application and use of the acquired skills; 44 per cent found these skills somewhat helpful in their current place of employment, and only a little above 5 per cent found training very useful in their current jobs.

Among those who found jobs commensurate with their training (n. 113), a little above 60 per cent reported earning income/wages that suited the skills they acquired. In comparison, 40 per cent felt their compensation needed to be more consistent with their skills. Many a returnee migrant thought that skill training was necessary to compete in the domestic job market. While a little above 60 per cent agreed that skill training is necessary, close to 40 per cent felt that additional skills were not a criterion for securing a job in the local labour market.

Gulf Migrants, both aspirants and returnees, have distinct characteristics and needs to be addressed for effective reintegration into local markets. Unlike the general unemployed population, many are unskilled, uneducated, and aged with family responsibilities. A significant section of them is landless and hails from vulnerable social groups like Scheduled Castes and Backward Castes.

Establishment of Migrant Resource Centres (MRC)

Holistic Approach in partnership with NWWT (National Workers' Welfare Trust)

IOM's core focus under the GOALS Reintegration Pilot (Whole of Government and Whole of Society approach towards reintegration) has been realised at the grassroots level by the establishment of Migrant Resource Centres (MRC). Working in partnership with NWWT, the IOM established MRCs at Hyderabad Nizamabad, and Jagtial in Telangana in June 2023. NWWT is a civil society organisation

committed to the cause of target stakeholders (mostly construction workers and domestic workers) and conflict-resolution mechanisms dealing with legal, social, psychological, and economic concerns faced by the migrant population. According to Dr Lissy Joseph, the Chairperson of NWWT, it is 'the pioneering organisation that has brought the issues and concerns of the migrant population to the table'

Lessons Learnt

- *Formation of 'Neighbourhood Groups' (informal discussion forums).*
- *Process of petition and representation by returnee migrants.*
- *Enhanced social participation (women migrants emphasised).*

NWWT and its Operational Philosophy

The operations of MRCs and their mother organisation, NWWT, denote clarity of perception and the devoted nature of activity implementation. Dealing with a problem-ridden population, the operational philosophy of the organisation proceeds along three important social considerations:

1. capping isolation (efforts to bring the returnee migrants into mainstream activities);
2. visibility promotion (working for social visibility of the migrants upon return); encouraging participation (through petition and representation making the problems known and represented at appropriate governance levels); and
3. rejuvenation of community activism (through the formation of non-sectarian human groups with vulnerable migrants).

Keeping these guiding themes at the backdrop, MRCs have undertaken four critical activities at the grassroots level.

- a) Mobilising groups of returnee migrants at the community level, and building awareness about newly established MRCs through household interactions
 - b) Creation of a discussion and sharing platform for the returnee migrants with a focus on sharing real-time information
 - c) Establishment of a multi-stakeholder platform (toll-free helpline) for guidance and counselling (to discuss psychosocial, personal, social, cultural and livelihood matters)
 - d) Provision for awareness sessions on MRC and related services, business development and financial management training to help poor returnee migrants (mainly from marginalised and non-literate categories)
- Establishing social relationships between returnee migrants and MRCs (by the field staff)
 - Information-sharing (proper migration norms; opportunities for livelihoods training and employment)
 - Counselling and personal/social guidance (through toll-free helpline)
 - Referral services (connecting with authorised skill-training institutes, primarily by the government)
 - Monitoring the reintegration (with due support from public and legal bodies such as TOMCOM)

Field Operations and the Immediate Outcomes

The process outcomes can be categorised into two: first, neighbourhood human fraternity among the returnee migrants, and second, breaking silence and making representation. These two are organically linked to psycho-social processes informing on the fundamental human rights of social dignity and the minimum state support to problems of the migrant population under democratic governance systems.

These are achieved through two primary activities:

- i. Support the identified (surveyed) returnee migrants in linking them with eligible government welfare schemes. For example, social guarantee schemes such as pensions, ration cards, health insurance schemes, government subsidies, Aadhaar Card/social security card updation etc.
- ii. MRC staff refer the returnee migrants to training institutes for skill upgradation and certification (public and authorised private training institutes for skill development such as SETWIN, NAC, TIDES, Reddy's Foundation, Yashoda Foundation, Safa, ICICI Bank's CSR, Bharatiya Yuva Sakti Trust/BYST, etc.).

This process is conducted through three critical phases:

- recognition of the existing skills or no skills



MRCs: The Programme Units and Their Activities

MRCs have established two programme units to help and support the returnee migrant population in Telangana. They undertake activities in coordination with appropriate information-sharing. Presently, the pre-defined programme activities proceed on the following lines:

- Data gathering (survey in the identified areas known for frequent migration)
- Establishing human interface with the returnee migrants (through repeat visits to locations)

- upgrading the skills or training the unskilled in new trades of their personal choice
- valid legal certification by authorised agencies (both government and private sector agencies)

One more exciting intervention resulting in an encouraging outcome has been the formation of 'neighbourhood groups'. These groups are informal and unregistered, designated to promote camaraderie among the returnee migrants. This innovative strategy is helping create a community-level buzz about the need for open discussion. Since these groups are operating within the orbit of local habitat locations, this intervention has become user-friendly, especially in the case of women drawn from poor, marginalised and minority religious sections. The underpinning of the entire

process is the effort to make them break the silence and negotiate for what is required for glitch-free integration with mainstream life and livelihood activities. Most women members of these groups are now sufficiently vocal to represent, petition and seek redressal. Though the programme is in its initial stages, the intense community-connect efforts have resulted in three significant developments:

1. Increasing levels of participation in social gatherings.
2. Increasing levels of awareness and confidence.
3. Improving knowledge on solutions (knowledge on government institutions providing free training courses, public welfare schemes meant for the poor and marginalised etc.).

Best Practice

The strategic networking between IOM's India Office and civil society organisations has proven to be a significant boost. This is evident in the formation of 'neighbourhood groups' by local CSOs, such as the NWWT, in areas where returnee migrants are prevalent, particularly in urban and slum areas. These groups serve as safe spaces where returnee migrants, especially women, can gather and openly discuss their concerns. MRC staffers leverage this platform for smooth interactions. It has been observed that returnee migrants, particularly women, have learned to openly discuss, represent, and submit petitions to the relevant public authorities, seeking redress, training, alternate livelihoods, and proper rehabilitation. In essence, these Neighbourhood Groups act as catalysts, breaking the silence and promoting smooth rehabilitation through legal measures and means.

MRCs (Migrant Resource Centres) as 'Data Nodes':

Mode of Work and Code of Operations

Pilot activities initiated the efforts to foster community participation, awareness generation and cooperation, towards economic, social, and psychosocial reintegration. In a short span of time, IOM, through MRCs, established personal rapport

with 792 returnee migrant households. Fieldwork and direct outreach by MRC staff (of the newly established MRCs) among households in the three districts of pilot intervention (Nizamabad, Jagtial, Hyderabad) have enabled smooth progression of the intended programme activities. Community meetings held by MRC staff at Nizamabad, Jagtial and Hyderabad have further added and complemented the process.

Data Gathering: Procedures and Operations

Work Done Report *Rajula*

Week: 1 Dist: Hyderabad Mandal/Area: Chaminas Name of the staff: Faliya Month: July (2023)

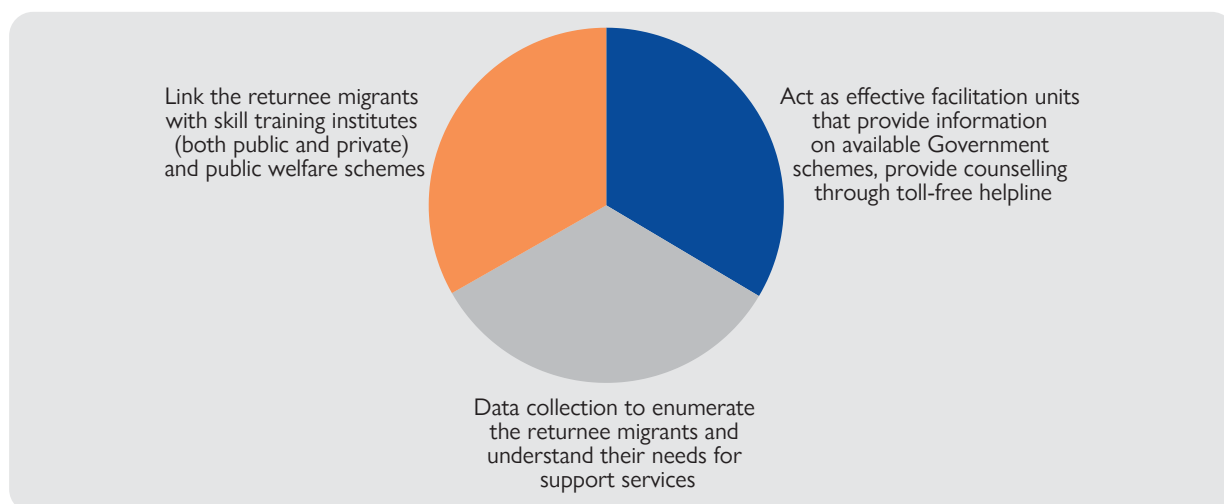
Sl	Village/ward-Address	Name of the person	Father /husband name	Age	Educational	Status- Married, Single, Widow, divorce etc	Country of departure	Nature of work done	Year of return	Reason for return	Present Work	Skill/ Certificate	Support Required - TOM/COM, Govt. Schemes, Skills etc	Support provided	Contact details
1	<u>Mohd. Ali Campus</u>	<u>Mohd. Noorjahan</u>	<u>Late. Mohd. Abbas</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>SSC</u>	<u>Widow Single</u>	<u>Saudi</u>	<u>D.W.</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>Contract Completed</u>	<u>D.W.</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>E-shram Health Card</u>	<u>Tension</u>	<u>Not Given</u>

Data Collection Tool of the MRCs (Hyderabad, Telangana, India)

Enumeration and data collection (survey) of returnee migrants, to identify their need for support services, is the chief operational function of the Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) under the current intervention. These nodal centres form the connecting links in the project operations. Its procedures are three dimensional:

- first, data collection and consolidation;
- second, act as the nodal liaison centres between returnee migrants and government and as the effective facilitation units that provide information on available schemes, counselling through the helpline and;
- third, link the returnee migrants with skill training institutes (both public and private) and public welfare schemes.

Migrant Resource Centres (MRC) activities



It is the primary data collection that gets the ball rolling. In addition, the centres are also involved in two other operations: i. identification of private agents involved in dispatching ignorant individuals abroad (mainly the Gulf countries) on work assignments, and train them on various aspects; and, ii. helping the domestic female workers (maids). Overall, the MRCs deal with aspects of problematic migration and return migration (recent period).

Data Collection and the Players:

Return migration is a recent subject considered by MRCs, as part of IOM's pilot project on the reintegration of returnee migrants in Telangana. At the outset, migration and return migration make a labyrinth deeply arranged, making facilitation processes practically challenging. In the present context, most of the out-migration was earlier facilitated through unregistered private agents of dubious repute. This fact presupposes the

prospective difficulty in dealing with returnee migration. It is not an exaggeration to declare that 'thousands are missing' as the details of the migrants, as well as returnee migrants, are not immediately available.

Lessons Learnt

Guidelines from government to line departments accelerate the process of reintegration.

Role of unregistered agents in the process of migration is still strong (with implications on forced return-migration). Migration and return migration are dynamic. Problematic return migration needs a more focussed approach and intervention for resettlement as most of them are non-skilled (manual workers).

Against this background, the MRCs have undertaken initial data enumeration exercise in listing the returnee migrants (starting June 2023) in three districts of Telangana: Hyderabad (Urban), and Nizamabad and Jagtial (Mofussil). With a target of 1500 (500 per MRC in the three districts), the resource centres have begun their work on a modest note. The Government of Telangana has been very considerate in allowing the MRCs to function from public spaces. For example, the Hyderabad MRC is on the premises of SETWIN, while the mofussil centres (Nizamabad and Jagtial) are accommodated in the District Employment Exchanges.

The operational modes of the MRCs in collecting data from returnee migrants and their families exhibit minor differences. The strategic approach in urban areas (Hyderabad) and rural locations (Nizamabad and Jagtial) is a case in point. Though the morphology of approaches shows minor variations, operations do not present

any dichotomy. MRCs have proceeded on three lines: i. liaising with TOMCOM, Government of Telangana; ii. Establish contact with local leaders (Basti Leaders in Hyderabad Urban and Village Council Heads known as Sarpanches in rural areas); iii. Identify and approach families through public functionaries at the lowest level, such as Anganwadi Workers, Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA workers), and women Self-Help Group leaders in slums and villages. Sometimes, other methods with contextual considerations are pressed into service. For example, the Nizamabad MRC staff have accompanied NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) staff to villages to negotiate with local farmers. During the process, the MRC functionaries have tried to strike working relations with a few local farmers, and the newly carved acquaintance has enabled them to penetrate deep into the village communities.

Preparation, collection, and challenges

Data collection was preceded by a two-day intensive training on the format used for data collection. Executing the format, the staff could scientifically conduct the process of enumeration. Through household surveys, MRC staff could enlist 792 returnee migrants and capture their details for further mobilisation (for training, and support with linking to schemes). The data survey and collection of details forcefully bring certain field realities and difficulties into the picture. Data collection is dynamic in nature. Most people have used 'Ghost Channels' (private agents, mostly unregistered) rather than the 'Green Channels' (government and legal). Upon return, most returnee migrants are suspicious of any attempt at data collection by unknown parties (other than the government). They are afraid that the personal details might be misused for extraneous purposes. Their fears are valid because their earlier migration was squalid. According to the MRC survey team members, the extended fear psychosis of the returnee migrants results in psycho-social disturbances in life.

Challenges

- *Most migrants remain outside the purview of data collection.*
- *Data sharing is considered a sensitive matter.*
- *Data collection raises expectation of direct beneficiary support.*
- *Post-survey (data collection) operations remain unclear other than linking with public welfare schemes and training agencies.*
- *Uncertainty in the future of the project intervention (aims, objectives, vision etc.).*

The stigma of being a 'problematic returnee migrant' always hangs in the face of women returnee migrants. The concept of chastity is forced into the social narrative after return. It is more pronounced in delicate religious minority groups in Hyderabad slums and urban locations. The grip of patriarchy is still visible, according to the field-level functionaries. There is an added disadvantage. Most returnee migrants are non-skilled (domestic maids or manual workers). Their work often remains uncertified. Details of their migration often remain unregistered. Both these factors are coupled together in precipitating the situation. Hence, the field situation makes it difficult to enumerate data and details of all. It has also made the sincere efforts of the apex public body, TOMCOM, difficult that always prefers the Green Channel migration of certified and educated migrants. One strong suggestion is about the possibility of TOMCOM assuming a subaltern approach so that moderately educated or lowly educated youth too could enjoy the benefit of regular channels of migration without delay. Given the challenging economic realities on the domestic front, most young migrants look for accelerated processes and speedy disposal of their efforts.

During the interactions with prospective young migrants in rural Telangana (for example, Rechapally village, Sarangapur Mandal, Jagtial District), there was an open declaration that they are willing to go for gainful work outside Bharat (India) through private agents even if it involved high fees for agents. The hastiness of will and anxiety to earn fail to attract them towards government channels of migration (currently confined to certain trades and certified professionals through a stringent process of selection).

Linking returnee migrants with training

On average, around 90 forms were filled in a month by MRC staff to understand the needs of the returnee migrants and provide them with the necessary support. Wherever possible and applicable, the returnee migrants were attached to government welfare schemes (Health Insurance/ Arogyasri Cards, Ration Cards, Social Pensions, Aadhaar Cards/Social Security Cards, eShram labour cards, etc.). In addition, eligible and willing returnee migrants were attached to public and private skill training centres (SETWIN, NAC and TIDES in the public sector; Reddy Labs Foundation, Yashoda Foundation, Safa, ICICI Bank, Bharatiya Yuva Sakti Trust in the private sector). Though the efforts remain nascent and small, they provide hope for the returnee migrants. However, inter-departmental coordination needs to be improved, with clear directives to the district-level officers from the Government of Telangana. Though the facilitating bodies such as TOMCOM, Employment Exchanges, Labour Department, and skill training agencies such as NAC, SETWIN and TIDES are active in their respective spheres, it is found that clear guidelines and norms still need to be put in place for better efficiency. In their absence, familiarity and awareness of, returnee migrants' issues remain alien to essential stakeholders. MRCs have proven to be dynamic operational units, providing meaningful and purposeful linkages in the process. Their importance and existence are reimposed against their day-to-day interactions with village communities where the returnee migrants find social space for gainful social engagement.

Best Practice

The trilateral network in place in India (IOM, Government of Telangana represented by TOMCOM, district officials and training institutes, and CSO represented by National Workers' Welfare Trust) is a significant impact factor.

Wherever possible, returnee migrants are attached to government welfare schemes (Health Insurance/Arogyasri Cards, Ration Cards, Social Pensions, Aadhaar Cards/Social Security Cards, eShram labour cards, etc.).

Eligible and willing returnee migrants are attached to public and private skill training centres (SETWIN, NAC and TIDES in the public sector; Reddy Labs Foundation, Yashoda Foundation, Safa, ICICI Bank, Bharatiya Yuva Sakti Trust in the private sector).

Data Collection and Future Implications

Data collection and enumeration exercises have brought a few social necessities to the fore. At the outset, the formation of grievance cells is felt as an emerging need by MRC team members. MRC staffers suggest that establishing grievance cells at the district level (in the premise of employment exchanges where MRCs are located at present) and their official monitoring by the Government will go a long way toward the uncomplicated and smooth settlement of returnee migrant issues. Most family-level concerns and disputes can be settled by social adjudicating authorities such as government-

nominated persons/officials and supported by MRCs.

Some of the questions raised by the returnee migrants need the necessary involvement of government legal agencies. Otherwise, most returnee migrants must end up at the local police stations for redressal, even though these issues do not relate to policing matters. Establishing such cells at the district level will resolve and settle the concerns of the returnee migrant population.

Future Implications

- *Formation of grievance cells at the rural and district level.*
- *MRCs need to maintain dynamic data of migrants.*
- *The creation of data registers with migrant details at the habitation level felt necessary.*
- *Village-level (elect Village Council) public servants to be notified as data managers.*
- *Data sharing between village-level functionaries and MRCs is expected to fill all gaps.*
- *Data at the village/habitation level can be used to plan rehabilitation.*

Another essential variable with a valid futuristic implication is registering every incoming returnee migrant at the Gram Panchayat (Village Council) level so that dynamic data maintenance is possible for monitoring and linking. Most MRC team members strongly argue for this for two reasons: i. local familiarity eases the mental tension of returnee migrants in divulging details upon return, and ii. registering every returnee migrant (migration registers) eases the pressure on policy-making bodies to design appropriate social interventions. Banking on the experience emanating from the maiden effort at data collection involving the returnee migrants, most of the survey team members from the mofussil regions consider that community-level arrangement for data gathering and management holds the key to future operations.

Challenges: Issue of Social Security

The role of intermediaries (travel/recruitment agents) is still significant and unchecked. Behavioural Change Communication (BCC) regarding semi-literate or non-literate migrants, especially returnees, is fraught with practical difficulties. In places such as Hyderabad, most of the returnee migrants are Muslim women. The sharing of information with operational staff still needs to be improved. The returnee migrants are either cocooned within the religio-cultural strictures or under the enduring influence of patriarchy at the household level. In the absence of proper information, forward linkages and optimal counselling advice are posing operational challenges. It has been found that the savings of returnee migrants, mainly non-technical and semi-literate people, are conspicuous by their absence. The little amounts they have earned while in Gulf are either misspent or lost upon arrival in their home country.

Challenges

- *Dubious role of travel/recruitment agents.*
- *Public apathy (low awareness among public servants).*
- *Process flow of Behavioural Change Communication (BCC) is slow.*
- *Cultural sensitivity in case of minority religious groups.*

Way Forward

It has become a non-negotiable intervention to promote thrift involving all the known and registered returnee migrants. The emerging need has recently necessitated the introduction of fiscal literacy programmes for returnee migrants along with other interventional drives linking them with social security schemes and skill training programmes. Awareness of using formal channels of migration is expected to curb the problems faced by returnee migrants. Backward and forward linkages need to be sufficiently fastened. This calls for more publicity drives in important transit locations and exit points like airports and bus/railway stations.

Future Implications

- *Coordinated action to expose negative role of travel agents.*
- *Enhanced public-publicity drives on migration.*
- *Continuation of MRCs for better coordination and reintegration.*

Capacity-building and Targeted Reintegration: Support to Returnee Migrants and Role of Government Stakeholders



Mr. K. Bikshapathi

Director General, NAC (National Academy of Construction)

Reintegration presupposes an important intervention during the post-return period of returnee migrants. It is about capacity-building commensurate with and directly proportional to smooth resettlement. As part of this, IOM organised a one-day training for Government officials (Telangana, India). The Joint Director of Employment and Training, Government of Telangana, felt that Employment and Training Department plays a crucial role in enrolling candidates and providing suitable employment opportunities to them through sharing information and job fairs. The official mentioned the role of TOMCOM in overseas recruitment in nursing and non-nursing fields. The Director of NAC emphasised the crucial role of the employment department in supporting unemployed youth in finding jobs. He referred to the skill training programs offered in construction (80% practical and 20% theoretical) which would help unskilled individuals become skilled and find employment in India and overseas.

Setting the context and understanding, the National Officer, IOM India and the Regional Migration Protection Officer, Regional Office for Asia & Pacific, Bangkok, spoke to District Employment Officers on reintegration and promoted a common

understanding of the integrated approach to sustainable reintegration of migrant workers in Telangana, with a particular focus on the impact of structural-level interventions. The workshop highlighted the importance of coordination between different stakeholders within the framework of a reintegration policy for a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. Another component that received greater emphasis during the workshop was the importance of socialising the audience with the GOALS-South Asia Reintegration model, towards supporting the smooth reintegration of returnees. During this conference and workshop, IOM shed specific light on the following:



Dr Elsa Oommen

Project Lead Consultant, IOM

- Snapshot of migrant statistics and share of India.
- Social, financial, and psychological challenges of the returnee migrants and how best they can be addressed.
- Skills, financial resources, and social capital, social or professional networks, specific vulnerabilities related to migration.
- IOM's integrated approach to reintegration (individual, community, and structural level, and focusing on economic, social and psychosocial aspects)
- Facilitating good practices on reintegration from other Asian Countries
- Sharing of good practices by officials in Telangana, drawing from their experience of supporting the Telangana pilot.



Training Programme on Reintegration for District Employment Officers, Telangana

Creation of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials: Informing and building awareness of MRC services and public welfare schemes

IEC as Knowledge Stakeholder

Adaptation, translation, production, and circulation of IEC materials detailing and dealing with returnee migrant issues, including aspects of safe migration, constitute a vital activity of the IOM pilot project in Telangana. IEC materials can be described as 'Knowledge Stakeholders' (Information Facilitators). The production and use of IEC materials can be gauged at different levels. The materials are available in three languages (English, Telugu, and Urdu).

1. The materials prepared by IOM and TOMCOM as part of the reintegration pilot. Ten IEC materials (covering three languages) have been prepared and disseminated as part of the pilot initiative. Snapshots of some of the IEC materials are presented below.
2. The materials prepared and produced by the Government of India and used by MRC staff for intervention among returnee migrants in Telangana. These materials broadly reflect on and relate to the migration process, safe migratory practices, and opportunities for qualified (certified) professionals abroad (emphasis on Europe). TOMCOM circulates them in the translated versions.

3. The IEC materials produced and used by collaborating regional partners (NWWT, NAC, SETWIN, and TIDES). These materials, produced by different collaborating partners, are vocal about what they offer. The pilot project on returnee migrants engages these materials for twin purposes: first, for internal circulation and second, for identification of courses offered by these institutes that would gel with the interests of the returnee migrants across Telangana.
4. The IEC materials produced by individual (public as well as private) foundations and non-governmental agencies that promote poor-friendly training cum employment schemes under the mandate of Corporate Social responsibility. The pilot project collects and procures these leaflets and pamphlets, which are used to link to returnee migrant families.





IEC Materials: The Thematic Divide

The IEC materials currently used by the project are trifurcated in terms of their thematic approach (Information, Education and Communication).



One set of IEC materials speaks about the dates, venue, name of training trades, facilities available during the training and the opportunities galore in the post-training period. Most of them can be clubbed under the advertisement or publicity pamphlets. For example, the pamphlets and leaflets produced and circulated among the public (and used by MRC staff in the field) by SETWIN, NAC and TIDES.

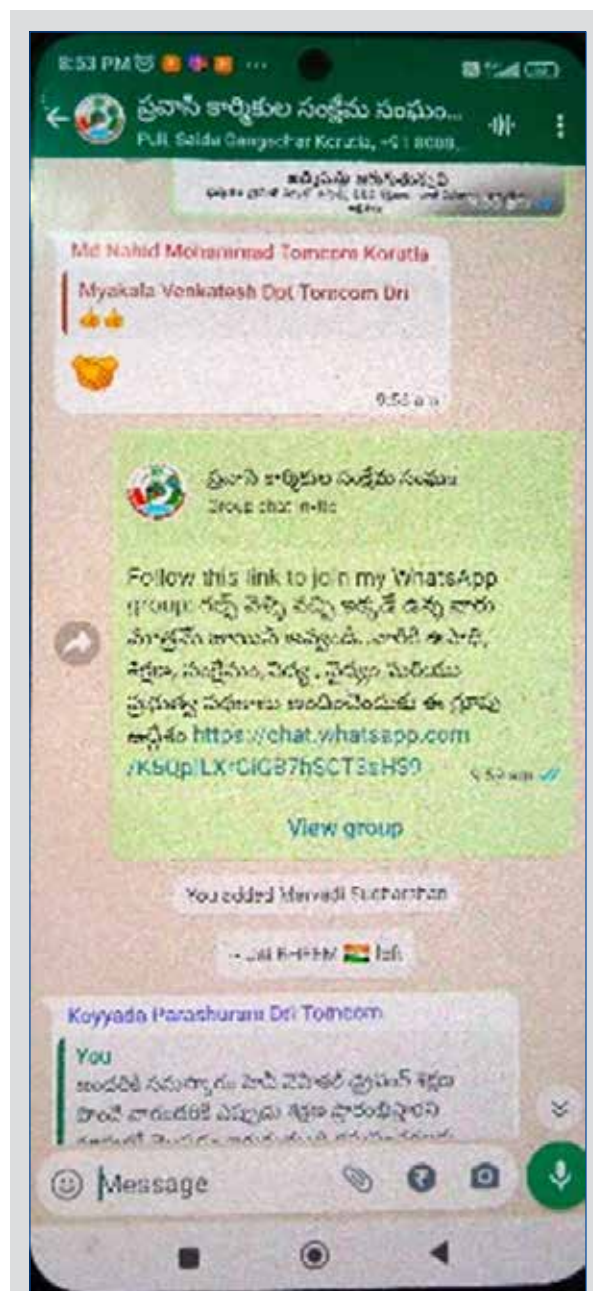
There are largely IEC materials produced by the same collaborating partners of IOM's reintegration pilot, providing technical information on the trades they offer. Two key examples can be cited in the context: the pamphlets (infographics) produced by NAC and TIDES. The TIDES, a first of its kind in India is a recent and innovative programme launched in private-public partnership mode by the Government of Telangana at Sircilla. It exclusively deals with driving skills. The IEC material produced by the institute in Telugu (vernacular language) is self-explanatory and eloquent about technical aspects and the availability of state-of-the-art equipment at the institute. MRC staff, in due collaboration with the institute, have appropriately utilised the IEC material and successfully mobilised many eligible aspirants among the returnee migrants towards the driving training institute.

The IEC material from different sources are also collated into a digitised space (WhatsApp group), which has been created to help spread awareness among returnee migrants. For example, the MRC Jagtial team created a WhatsApp group to share appropriate information on the related aspects with all the returnee migrants.

IEC Materials: The Stakeholders

TOMCOM adopts and adapts the booklets released by the Government of India, in partnership with expert stakeholders. They mainly relate to safe migration practices and pre-departure orientation. In addition, it announces the array of opportunities for trained professionals abroad. NWWT (National Workers' Welfare Trust) advocates for safe migration practices and produces information leaflets in Telugu (vernacular). IEC materials are produced or procured by MRC centres in urban and rural locations. As an innovative approach, the rural MRC staff have added technology into service. They have formed a WhatsApp group with returnee migrants (all those willing) with a few essential objectives: use the platform for sharing information; discussion and suggestive advice and clarify returnee migrants' doubts about reintegration and resettlement in the local job market.

The NAC branches (across Telangana) produce colourful brochures and study material with appropriate and sufficient information on their trade and training courses. These materials contain details of trades, a detailed description (technical) of the trades and information on forward linkages with the employment market. On the other hand, they produce and circulate one-pager announcements (publicity pamphlets) meant for public consumption. IEC material produced and circulated by SETWIN is already widespread. It declares that the agency offers around 57 training courses for different population categories. The MRC staff are using the material to promote awareness among the returnee migrants about the ongoing courses at SETWIN. The IEC material printed by other institutes (mostly private) is also available at the MRCs. These materials are about training in business development and linkages with public credit institutions.



WhatsApp Group created in Jagtial district of Telangana, India (digitised communication tool)

Awareness and Information on wheels:

Mobile Migrant Resource Centres (MMRC) and the outreach

The MMRC (Mobile Migrant Resource Centre) is an innovative concept introduced by IOM, in partnership with TOMCOM and NWWT, to further its operational aims among the target stakeholders. They (the mobile resource vans) carry help, assistance, and information to the doorsteps of returnee migrant neighbourhoods and migrant-sending villages in the designated operational areas.



Van which will be used as Mobile Migrant Resource Centre



Special Chief Secretary (Department of LETF, Telangana) and Chief Executive Officer, TOMCOM flag off the two vans (MMRC)

These communicative devices (awareness and information on wheels) are expected to clarify doubts at the local habitation level and promote safe practices of migration. They are also used to publicise sustainable reintegration opportunities through the sharing of the latest and standard information on training (capacity-building) programmes, the toll-free psychosocial helpline and skilled migration pathways to the Gulf and other countries.

Establishment of Toll-Free Helpline:

The Stress-buster: Dynamic Assistance and Online Counselling

The stand-alone helpline facility (Toll-Free Number 1800 599 1393) established at the MRC (Migrant Resource Centre) in Hyderabad in July 2023 functions with three operational aims: first, to provide counselling and awareness to returnee and aspiring migrants. Secondly, to help callers cope with their psychological stress. Thirdly, to provide information and guidance on all aspects of migration (the generic function being delivered by the parent body of the Helpline Centre, National Workers' Welfare Trust). The centre works six days a week (9.00 Hrs. – 18.00 Hrs. IST.). The Helpline centre staff members have been trained by the iCALL team of the reputed institute, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai. iCALL also produced Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for MRC Helpline as part of the association.

The training morphology consists of generic training (involving management aspects of the Helpline centre) and specific training (provision of help and appropriate analytical advice regarding individual case files of online callers). Coordination and contact between the Helpline Centre and the iCALL-TISS team is dynamic in nature. The process happens online: training to helpline staff, counselling, and discussion of callers' enquiries received by the helpline centre.

MRC HELPLINE CALLS DATA SHEET - 1

Sl.No	Date	Caller Helpline ID / Contact No	Gender (M/F)	Age	Marital Status (1/2/3)	Language (T-1/H2/E-3)	Client's Presentation of Problem	Call Summary	Core issues identified	Secondary

MRC HELPLINE CALLS DATA SHEET - 2

Tertiary	Strategies used	Whether referral was provided (Y/N)	Name of referred NGO/Govt Facilities	Final Outcome	Counselors reflections	Source of referral (FS/SM/IEC)	Call Type (SS1/RS2/ ST-3)	Location (District)	Duration (Mins)	Counselor Name	Remarks

Data Collection Sheets used by MRCs: Helpline Call Data Sheets 1 & 2

The locational details of the helpline centre and the names/details of the helpline staff are kept confidential and not revealed to the callers, to ensure that callers feel safe while speaking with the counsellors. The existence of the toll-free helpline and the number is publicised and propagated through MRC staff in the respective operational locations.

iCALL: Training on Counselling and Monitoring Support

iCALL is a psychological helpline established by the School of Human Ecology of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in 2012. It helps bridge the gaps in the domain of mental health counselling. It provides affordable, anonymous, and professional counselling services over phone, email, and chat to all those who are experiencing distress. IOM collaborated with iCALL to set up the helpline centre in MRC. It also facilitated establishment of helpline services, and promotion of technology adoption, documentation process, and awareness-building strategies. It supported recruitment and capacity-building of helpline staff and the supervisor along with providing supervision and handholding support as part of the ongoing process.

iCALL believes that mental health should not be seen in isolation from the communities. Instead, the focus should be on psychosocial counselling. Orientation to the helpline staff and the counsellor was introduced and conducted against the backdrop of this generic understanding. Capacity building of the staff had particular emphasis on the concerns of migrants, basic skills in tele-counselling, understanding, and working with mental health disorders, substance abuse, gender-based violence, and suicidal ideation and self-harm. Prime focus on empathy, probing questions, tone/speech/pace, and identification and emphasis on emotional distress have been integral part of capacity building programme.

The calls that the helpline received were often concerned with migration-related queries (44%), job requirements (23%) and skill development (18%). iCALL was also involved in supervision of the helpline. It regularly mentors the helpline staff and the supervisor in reviewing the calls, the process of interaction with a person on call, aspects to consider on call, approach during follow-up calls, challenges faced during interactive sessions, and experiences the staff members face. iCALL has also provided SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) on ethical dilemmas and, supported the preparation of

reading material for dissemination and awareness. According to the team-iCALL, continuation of Helpline services would provide durable mental health support to the migrants in need. One difficulty faced by iCALL was the language barrier. Mental health issues are usually and effectively expressed in local language (Telugu in the current context). At present, this remains an operational challenge for counsellors in iCALL team looking after capacity building and counselling.

Number and Nature of Calls: Implications

At the outset, the centre receives, on average, 5-6 calls per day. All these calls are duly recorded and coordinated. A pre-designed format records caller data and preserves it for future use and reference. The gendered details are fascinating. According to the Helpline staff, most of the callers from Hyderabad are female (to the tune of 85%), and the rest are male. The trend is reversed regarding calls received from semi-urban and mofussil areas. Calls from these locations are from males only (to the tune of 100%). All the callers are returnee migrants from Gulf countries. The generic data gathered by the Helpline Centre implies three things: i. large migration of females from the Hyderabad metropolis to the Gulf (preponderating incidence of domestic work); ii. more of male-migration from the hinterland (mostly construction work and manual labour), and iii. mechanical (casual and unskilled) migration without legal validation and desperate relocation informed by stress and distress.

Online Callers: The Psychological Dimensions

Call coordination and data gathering from individual callers is often succeeded by counselling conversations. Most of the enquiries from callers are related to the dubious role of private agents: the handsome amount of money paid to the private agents, the absence of monitoring and follow-up support from these agents in the port of entry (destination country), and lack of insurance policies in the place of work. A delicate divide observed in the conversations is the level of immunity of the callers to problems. Most of the callers remain immune to the problems that they face. They often ask for and seek economic reintegration (especially in the 45+ years category).

Best Practices

Measuring the quality of calls (monitoring the practices) through three variables: duration of the call, repeat calls from the callers, satisfaction level assessed through voice/tone modulation during the conversation. The soft and friendly tone is again manifest by extension of the conversation by the caller and sharing of additional personal information. Oral publicity effectively spreads the Toll-Free Number and its importance.

Moreover, in the hurried aspiration for immediate resettlement, their acute problems are often compressed at a subconscious level. In other words, the problems they underwent in the Gulf and the post-return period remain subconsciously hibernated. For them, these problems are of secondary importance. Upon friendly and consistent probing alone, they share their woes. The advice by helpline staff now proceeds on two lines. In respect of distressed callers, the staff members provide psychological counselling and refer them to specialist medical practitioners dealing with hypertension, depression, aggressiveness, anxiety, and worry. In case of minor psychological issues, the staff recommend simple practices such as drinking more water, nature/long walks, and basic yoga practices such as breathing exercises and number-counting (a measure to arrest the negative impact of a tensed-up mind). As mentioned, helpline staff members are trained by iCALL Team of TISS on all these aspects of advice, guidance, and counselling.

Helpline Centre: The Nature of Assistance

The helpline staff members provide information to the callers who seek help in economic, social, and psychosocial reintegration. For example, information on existing government schemes (subsidy and training), skill development training institutes, and business training centres (public, private and NGO). MRC and field staff members coordinate with specific families, callers or individuals for further

and extended coordination. The importance of the helpline centre is slowly established at the grassroots level. Through word-of-mouth publicity, the Toll-Free number is reportedly reaching the returnee migrants outside the designated operational locations (Hyderabad, Nizamabad, and Jagtial). For instance, the Centre has received 21 calls from outside the operational area during the last six months (June-December 2023). Though the number is insignificant (period vs. occurrence), it does denote the spreading importance and influence of the helpline facility. It also reiterates that assistance and individual counselling facilities have assumed programmatic importance from the perspective of returnee migrant issues.



Sr. Rosy Arulappa
Helpline Coordinator

Challenges

- *Both helpline counsellors are male, although the helpline coordinator/supervisor is a woman.*
- *Specialist training to deal with distressed population in Telangana is absent (psycho-social issues).*
- *Returnee migrants do not seek professional help from helpline. They may seek solace from habitat locations and seek advice from peers or family.*
- *Callers mostly seek help for immediate economic reintegration.*

Call Centre: Problems and Challenges

Problems and challenges are bound to be present in a pilot. There are three members of staff currently operating the helpline centre: two male counsellors and one woman coordinator who also provides counselling support to the callers. It was mentioned by the helpline centre that initially they had one female counsellor, one male counsellor and one female coordinator. But the female counsellor moved out of the city due to spousal transfer. Despite sincere efforts to onboard a suitably trained female counsellor, this was not achieved in the short span and hence a male counsellor was onboarded—thus both counsellors currently at the helpline being men. Female callers (expected to increase in the days to come) may find it delicate to share details with a member of opposite sex at the other end of the line. Currently, the female coordinator of the helpline is providing necessary support to female callers at the helpline. Though TISS trains the existing members at the Helpline, questions arise regarding the specialist's expertise in dealing with psychological issues specific to the context of migrants in Telangana. The training components at present seem to be generic. The staff reports that many returnee migrants stay satisfied with peers' or local members' advice at the respective habitat location.

Traditional wisdom is always considered and respected, but modern-day problems need reformed approaches. The mindset of vulnerable returnee migrants may present an eternal quest for immediate resettlement in life. The online approach through Helpline and the advice extended may, at best, assuage the feelings on a temporary scale, but it does not serve as a lasting solution to the problem. Helpline service may be reduced to lip service and a piecemeal approach unless coordinated, linked, and synchronised with other programmatic interventions. MRCs may undertake appropriate measures to deal with the issue. One futuristic implication in the current context is the activation and beneficial use of MMRC (Mobile Migrant Resource Centre), a moving helpdesk meant for continued programme intervention. Questions are posed at various levels: whether the ongoing pilot ends as another time-bound

intervention or whether it will metamorphose into a substantial programme application. The problems of returnee migrants are ongoing and unending in nature. Additionally, their numbers are massive, and the Helpline Centre's outreach is limited. Absence of complete data on returnee migrants is also a key constraint. Measures such as toll-free helpline are expected to be the rivulets to add, complement and strengthen the main flow of interventions for the beneficiary communities (migrants and returnee migrants in this case). How best these measures are sustained is a question that hangs in the balance. The questions posed in this context call for a loud thinking and appropriate programme activity.

Online Calls: Monitoring Details

The Helpline Toll-Free Number operates by remaining incognito. In a short period, the helpline centre has established a healthy norm of monitoring practices. The calls are documented (quantitative approach). On the other, the quality aspects are measured through a few innovative approaches: duration of the call, repeat calls from the same caller, and modulation of tone/voice of the caller (manifest by extension of friendly conversation

and sharing of further details online). Some of the callers already feel the importance of the facility as measured by these qualitative monitoring variables. This innovative approach holds promise for the present and for strengthening migrant-specific interventions in the future.

Lessons Learnt & Future Implications

For returnee migrants, helpline assistance in home country is altogether a new experience. Hence response is low.

Activation of MMRC (Mobile Migrant Resource Centre) equipped with appropriate IEC material, facility for public address system etc may accelerate the process. Visit by the MMRC to villages and places of congregational community gatherings will complement the ongoing efforts.



Interactive Session with Men Returnee Migrants at TIDES, Sircilla, Telangana, India

Individual Level Pilot activities initiated for skills training:

Towards socio-economic reintegration



Through the reintegration pilot, IOM established training partnerships (for example with SETWIN, NAC and TIDES) to provide skill trainings to returnee migrant workers. The purposive aim has been to provide livelihoods training support to the returnee migrants in various trades such as garment-making, fashion-designing, beautician courses, construction, and driving. A supportive bursary/lunch and refreshments were also provided to specific cohorts of trainees.

Returnee Migrants and Training

Skilling and Settling: Updation, Upgradation, and Development of Skills

The GOALS reintegration pilot project of returnee migrants in Telangana, implemented by IOM, follows an eight-fold logical sequence. The entire process is monitored by MRCs (Migrant Resource Centres), the operational units established for mobilising the returnee migrants for training and for providing

Through the reintegration pilot, IOM established training partnerships (for example with SETWIN, NAC and TIDES) to provide skill trainings to returnee migrant workers. The purposive aim has been to provide livelihoods training support to the returnee migrants in various trades such as garment-making, fashion-designing, beautician courses, construction, and driving.

awareness regarding the project and its services. The sequential approach to the issue has the following essential components:

- a) Household outreach and survey of the returnee migrants (subject to individual willingness and preparedness)
- b) Assessment of the existing skills, if any
- c) Advice and counselling through the Helpline
- d) Mapping the individual interests (work-focused)
- e) Linking with skill-training institutes (public and private)
- f) Placement support in association with district employment exchanges and bank linkages, if possible and found eligible
- g) Entitlement-based support by linking returnee migrants with social security schemes (Securing Aadhaar Cards, linking with social welfare schemes of government such as Ration Cards, Pension Schemes), and
- h) Labour rights protection obtained through linkages with labour department schemes (eShram Cards) wherever applicable and eligible



Interactive Session with Women Returnee Migrants at SETWIN, Hyderabad, Telangana, India

Linkages with Skill Training Institutes

Linking with skill training institutes occupies a place of pivotal importance in the operations of the MRCs for two crucial reasons. First, most of the returnee migrants are looking for immediate sustenance (welfare schemes and employment placement). Welfare schemes and benefits are guaranteed upon fact check of the social credentials of applicants (returnee migrants in the present instance). It is monitored by local community leaders and MRC staff. Secondly, linking the returnee migrants with skilling institutes is conditioned by limitations and time factors. Data gathering and consolidation undertaken by the MRC staff is a grueling task for valid operational reasons. Once the identification process is complete, assessment of existing skills begins. This phase is considered crucial in the entire chain. It is found that most of the returnee migrants are casual (manual) labourers involved in the construction industry abroad (Gulf countries). These people have returned home (some as an aftermath of Covid-19 pandemic) and have undertaken various casual activities in their habitat locations.

Skills Training: Problematic Perceptions of Returnee Migrants

The first operational problem encountered is the lack of awareness among the returnee migrants about what they would do professionally. While the female returnee migrants (Hyderabad- Urban) exhibit comparatively greater awareness of their choices (limited to in-house vocations such as tailoring, embroidery, bridal make-up etc.), the male returnee migrants (Nizamabad and Jagtial-Mofussil) are seen confused between aspiration and adaptation. Most of them aspired for immediate resettlement but seemed caught up in indecision. After overcoming these initial hurdles, the MRC staff could enumerate, identify, and send several batches of returnee migrants to three skilling centres: SETWIN (Society for Employment Promotion & Training in Twin Cities; <https://www.setwin.online>); NAC (National Academy of Construction; <https://nac.edu.in>); and TIDES (Telangana Institute of Driving Education and Skills; <https://www.tidessircilla.com>).

The Society for Employment Promotion & Training in Twin Cities (SETWIN) is an organisation owned by the Government of Telangana to create employment and self-employment opportunities for unemployed persons of the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad, by providing training in various courses at nominal fees. It was established in the year 1978. The local MRC staff have established working and professional relations with the institute, with due knowledge of the Telangana Government's TOMCOM. During the month of December 2023, the first batch of female trainees (twenty nine in number) began attending the training in tailoring at SETWIN (Purana Haveli), Hyderabad. One exciting aspect observed in the case of female returnee migrants is their resistance to the idea of going back to the Gulf again.

According to the MRC staff (appropriately corroborated by the Chairman of SETWIN K. Venugopala Rao), the female trainees would like to eke out their livelihood in India since they fear the dubious role of agents involved in the migration process. SETWIN, on the other hand, offers a diversified range of courses (around 57 as of date), including online/digital courses. However, a nominal fee is charged for every course. In the present case, the female trainees are sponsored by IOM. The only constraint is the confinement of SETWIN to the Hyderabad metropolis (twenty operational branches as on the date). There are only a few branches outside the jurisdiction of the twin cities. In addition, SETWIN has fifty more franchise units that operate on its suggested guidelines.

Being a public body controlled by the Government of Telangana, SETWIN offers immediate operational flexibility. Its Managing Director has expressed organisational willingness to take the services of the SETWIN to the doorsteps of the returnee migrants (localized set-up) as and when IOM offers enough number of trainees. The organisation, however, bats for handholding support to the female trainees after the training (such as tailoring and beautician kits).

Challenges

- *Most of the migrants are non-skilled (casual workers).*
- *No testing mechanism to identify existing skills, if any.*
- *Immediate resettlement is the option.*
- *Pre-orientation preparation found weak.*
- *Casual approach to skilling programme.*
- *Female-oriented training programmes less in mofussil areas.*

The National Academy of Construction (NAC; <https://nac.edu.in>) is another public skilling agency with branches spread across the state of Telangana. During the time of PLF team's visit to the NAC centres, 88 returnee migrants were under training in construction trade (20 from Hyderabad, 50 from Jagtial and 18 from Nizamabad). As part of IOM-NAC association, 182 returnee migrants have got trained in various construction-related roles (plumber, mason, electrician, bar bender and steel fixer) across the NAC centres in Telangana. NAC was established as a Society in 1998, as the joint initiative of the construction industry (Builders Association of India) and the Government of Andhra

Pradesh. It was incorporated as a Public Charitable institution with the chief objective of developing and building human resource capacities to enhance the construction industry's quality and productivity. Its operations are seen in skill development, skill upgradation and capacity building of all types of human resources, exclusively for the construction industry. Most trainees have joined the institute to upgrade their skills and receive certification. They have returned home in the last few years and acquired skills while working on various projects. Their skills still needed improvement with professional certification. It has necessitated them to opt for the current training course.



Interactive Session with Men Returnee Migrants at NAC, Nizamabad, Telangana, India

All the trainees have been rated good by the Assistant Directors of the Institute, Ch. Prabhakar (Nizamabad) and Goli Ramesh (Jagtial) for regularity, receptivity, and recollection ability. Many have expressed willingness to return to the Gulf as certified and qualified technicians this time. The newly-found confidence makes them convinced that the role of public-private social intervention is meant for the good of all returnee migrants. Because the NAC certification is valid and recognised in 149 countries across the globe, the current programme intervention for the returnee migrants stands socially justified and financially appropriate.

NAC has working relations with other line departments, such as employment exchanges, labour departments, and MoUs with private companies. The strategic tie-ups facilitate the employment of trainees in respective trades. However, this is subject to the preparedness and willingness of the individual trainees. The only sensible question is about the beneficial outreach and coverage of the programme. The mammoth population (returnee migrants) and minuscule application (the actual number of returnee migrants identified and placed under proper training institutes) call for renewed focus and thinking at the apex level.

Another professional trade that the returnee migrants have chosen is heavy motor vehicle driving. At the time of PLF team visit, 11 members

were under training at the Telangana Institute of Driving Education and Skills (TIDES; (<https://www.tidessircilla.com>)). TIDES was set up as a joint venture under the PPP model (Public Private Partnership), between the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, New Delhi, and the Government of Telangana during the XII Plan Period (2012-2017). Its chief objective is to bring out professionally trained drivers and improve road safety/driving habits to reduce road accidents. The trainees belong to the most recent batch and are drawn from local habitations. However, the only constraint is their earlier trades of operation. Many of them are carpenters, masons, etc. Though they are bent on completing the course without any hitch, the Head Trainer, T Vijay Kumar, believes that the selection process by MRC should have involved proper pre-orientation training. According to him, serious professionalism is not present in the trainees. Instead, they look for an added certification from TIDES. This casual approach, especially in driving, may not gel well with road safety issues in the long run. However, the institute has considered them on humanitarian grounds. Though the attention and participation levels of the trainees are up to the trainers' satisfaction (commendable performance), detachment may creep in at any time. For this reason, MRCs should undertake rigorous pre-orientation exposure before admission to future technical training partnerships.

Lessons Learnt

When proper awareness drives are in place, trainees are prepared to assume the role of publicity agents for resettlement of returnee migrants

Proper counselling and monitoring result in appropriate social change. Some returnee migrants are now prepared to use 'Green Channel' for future migration and avoid money-fleeing private agents

Democratic government's willingness to take the training programmes to the doorsteps of the returnee migrants, if sufficient number of trainees is available.

In addition to the private institutes, the three training institutes have started dealing with the problem of returnee migrants. Presently, they are training those returnee migrants who have come back semi-skilled. Nevertheless, many of the non-skilled (manual) human workforce stays out of the programme's purview. Inclusion of the excluded from among the returnee migrant families poses a challenge. The only encouraging prospect in the entire process is the proactive role of IOM and MRC staff in establishing acquaintance with government line departments. It is expected to fructify the ongoing efforts in linking most returnee migrants with certified training programmes of the government/semi-government institutes.

The Unintended Outcomes

There are some unintended outcomes from the programme intervention. Highly approbatory is the outcome of the government's preparedness (SETWIN and NAC) to open door-step training facilities in favour of returnee migrants if enough number of prospective trainees are available. Though the promise and assurance are generic, proactive lobbying and follow-up by respective operational units would undoubtedly accelerate the government's resolve. The germinating awareness among trainee-returnee migrants exhibits a two-fold favourable implication for the ongoing work. First, many participating stakeholders (returnee-migrant trainees) have declared their willingness to act as publicity agents for their communities on the current intervention. On the other hand, some trainees have expressed a resolve to use 'Green Channel' (formal and regular channels of migration) only for future migrations. They added that they would advise others in the vicinity to do so. In the short-spanned pilot intervention, these unintended byproducts have positive implications for the future.

Peeps into Migrants' Mind:

Differing, Different and Divergent Dimensions

Similar to the process of migration and return migration, the dimensions of the migrants' minds and life perspectives are dynamic. Interactions with the returnee migrants (of course, prospective

young migrants too involved) exhibit differences, similarities, and confused clarity. In addition to gendered differences, there are individuals differentiated by age, education, exposure, and experience. A peep into their expressive thinking and assertive opinions leaves some hints at their mind's landscape.

The Women Returnee Migrants

The women migrants (mainly from Hyderabad Urban) belong to the religious minority category. Most (barring an insignificant number) worked as maids/cooks in the Persian Gulf countries and returned home. They too have experiences to share, and with an obvious confirmation of the notoriety of private agents. In different cases of migration melancholy, the role of private agents is the common episodic element. The feeling of deception is the common disgust expressed by many. The group interactions show that their mind is repeatedly bothered by the experience with agents. The social nexus that these agents enjoy is a hard nut to crack. Many returnee female migrants, upon forced return in the post-COVID period, are not prepared to go back again. Instead, they have opted for resettlement in their home country. The trades for resettlement that they have selected are the ones that deal with female clients (bridal make-up, tailoring, embroidery etc.). Most of them try to be self-employed and eke out their bread. At best, they go out on wedding assignments. The young among the returnee female migrants have declared their willingness to seek higher educational certificates and then try for employment. Overall, they seek hassle-free, self-centric, and self-managed work assignments upon their return.

Lessons Learnt Female Migrants

- *Under stress (role of private agents).*
- *Prefer trades offering potential for self-employment.*
- *Young migrants prefer higher education.*

The Male Returnee Migrants

The male migrants differ in their perceptions and perspectives on life. Most of them have returned home for some important reasons:

- casual migration and casual work assignments (assorted nature of menial and manual works) in the overseas destination
- absence of any technical certification, rendering their extended stay burdensome and unviable
- low wages for uncertified casual work and the attendant economic stress
- callous attitudes of the employers
- misleading role of private agents

These returnee migrants are unaware of a government agency promoting safe and regular migration (TOMCOM). For many, the existence of a public agency meant for smooth and hassle-free migration is the breaking news. Upon return, the male returnee migrants come under economic stress (with low or no savings). According to them, the absence of a credit facility upon return adds to their misery. The significant variable that impacts their immediate and self-driven resettlement is the problem of inflated and puffed-up ego. It is admitted by many without any reservations. Some migrants have chosen the phrase 'unprofessional approach to professional work' to describe the home situations. It is but natural that they draw parallels with overseas work conditions. In the foreign country (Persian Gulf), they have worked as 'Attired Professionals' (Uniformed Workers), though they have been involved in manual, casual and trivial assignments. The feeling of 'assumed professionalism' is a significant influence on the minds of the returnee migrants, most of whom happen to be uncertified and semi/unskilled workers. For this reason, many admit that they choose places of work outside their hometowns. Alternatively, they desist manual work in their home country. The feeling of humiliation and shyness impede the progression of reintegration.

Lessons Learnt Male Migrants

- *Under mental and economic stress upon return.*
- *Mostly victims of private agents.*
- *Unaware of Green Channel (TOMCOM).*
- *Problem of ego upon return.*
- *Moderately educated young migrants look for immediate resettlement.*
- *Influence of migrants on aspiring youth.*
- *Very few (decently educated returnee migrants) avail services of MRCs and training institutes.*
- *Prepared to stay back when reasonable work available.*

Problems of Returnee Migrants

Many have migrated through the 'Ghost Channel' (private agents) without sharing or registering their travel details with government authority or village bodies. Without their presence at home locations for longer, their names are often deleted from social security cards such as Aadhar Cards and Ration Cards. The updation and re-issue of these cards have become extremely difficult for them when they return home. It causes mental agony as they feel like 'nobodies' in the country of their birth. On the other, they admit their fault regarding unannounced departure without valid information.

Most of them are helpless and look for revival. It is this mental dilemma (fringing on trauma) that is writ large on their faces. The negative experiences have made them wise now. If they plan to return and work in a foreign country again, they are convinced that they should do so through the Green Channel agency (TOMCOM in the present context) and as certified professionals. Many declare that 'this time we go legally and come back successfully'.

The underpinning of their positive and hopeful assertion is the plan for repeated migrations, which in fact hints at the need for coping mechanisms by related stakeholders (public and private). These are the people (though a microscopic minority at present) who have returned with the concept of 'dignity of labour' firmly entrenched in their minds. These people can be earmarked for 'return of the returnee migrants.' This emerging prospect calls for better coordination among the line departments of the government. An increase in the number of such returnee migrants availing the services of the facilitating and promoting agencies (Employment Exchanges, Labour Departments, MRCs, Skill Training Institutes, IOM, TOMCOM etc.) will be a qualitative as well as quantitative indicator informing the progress of the intervention.

Returnee Migrants and Influence of Migration

The 'downward filtration' act as a negative influence on the minds of prospective migrants. Community-level interactions in Telangana unearth certain social realities. The influence of migrants (both ongoing and returnee) is taking its toll. In the absence of immediate employment opportunities, most of the moderately educated youth opt for overseas assignments. It appears as if they are caught between ignorance and ambition. Despite gruelling stories and personal episodes of the returnee migrants being shared in the village (every household, for example, in the Rechapally Village, reports one or two migrations through private agents), the young minds ignore them. The prospect of foreign assignment lures them and makes them ambitious. In a hurry, most of them are prepared to take the ascent from the private springboards (unregistered agencies). They have no reservations about making open declarations in this regard. The ambition to work and earn at any cost is lost in hurriedness and callousness.

Returnee Migrants and Skill Upgradation

Some of the returnee migrants returned home with some experience in their respective trades of work in foreign locations. They are reasonably educated even before they departed their home country. However, their foreign experience needs to be certified. They have been earlier involved in construction work assignments (masonry, electrical, plumbing trades etc.). Some of them had worked earlier in other sectors. These aware groups of returnee migrants have immediately utilised the services of IOM (sponsorship) and MRCs. They have joined government skill training institutes to receive updated training in construction (NAC @ Nizamabad and Jagtial) and driving (TIDES @ Sircilla). They are fully aware of the importance attached to certification. Since the certified courses offered by NAC and TIDES are globally recognised, they will fetch decent work and handsome payments. To avail the benefit of authorised certification, these returnee migrants have wasted no time following the guidance given by MRCs.

Changing Perceptions

There is another mind dimension of the returnee migrants. The majority are prepared to stay back and work in India, if appropriate skilled work (and good salary) assignments are available commensurate with their certification. One positive assertion by these returnee migrants under training is their willingness to propagate proper awareness among all prospective aspirants and moderately educated youth of their native villages. The declared intentions and preparedness are indicative of the change in making. This declaration reflects renewed thinking among a few returnee migrants.

Recommendations



In the short-spanned pilot project, there are bound to be emerging concerns that need to be addressed in near future. Though they are not alarming at present, it has been suggested by many that these concerns call for minor and contextual reorientation of the existing programme elements. Some of the important concerns and way forward measures are briefly captured below:

Government Inter-Departmental Coordination

An official directive from Government of Telangana will help the local administration to expedite the process. The Department of Labour, Employment, Training and Factories (LETf) Telangana is the key department with whom IOM liaised with, as part of the GOALS pilot project. Telangana Overseas Manpower Company Ltd (TOMCOM) is a state recruitment agency, under the Department of LETf, Telangana. The latter could thereby issue a department-wide memo on ensuring close coordination with the district administrative units

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towards supporting returnee migrants and their reintegration. Greater awareness and coordination among the officials of the decentralised state machinery (District Collector and District Employment Officers, Mandal, and Panchayat level officials) will ensure better streamlining of interventions with various government and non-government stakeholders in helping migrant communities at pre-migration, pre-return and post-return phases of international migration.

Availability of Migration-Related Information & Suitable Support to Migrants and their Families

Comprehensive labour and employment information related data from different government agencies to assist in re-training and re-deployment will go a long way in facilitating safe, orderly, and regular migration. Overseas work-related migration to GCC countries may be registered/recorded at the village level and monitored at the district level. Reintegration measures could also cover dependents of the returnee migrants to assist in improving income enhancement opportunities for the household where the returnee migrant is very old or not aiming at an alternative job/ enterprise.

Availability of Validated Migration Data Registers at the Village Level

Registration of returnee migrants (migration registers) at the village level would be a game changer in the programme process and field operations. Since migration is dynamic, maintenance of such registers at the village level (origin point of migration) is the necessary and crucial variable. A policy proclamation or official circular advising Gram Panchayats (Village Councils) to collect data of returnee migrants will automatically result in creation of authentic data registers at the habitation level. Such routine data collection will also result in replenishment of data, to enable effective evidence-based planning.

Effective regulation of private agents

There is a need for effective regulation of recruitment agents operating across the state. Awareness building also needs to be provided to agents taking up overseas recruitment. Under

Emigration Act, 1983 no person can function as an agent without a valid overseas recruitment licence. The overseas recruitment licence is obtained after submission of valid documents online via emigrate.gov.in and these documents will be processed either by the Protector General of Emigrants (PGE) or concerned POE office. Clear guidelines must also be provided by the government to concerned line departments to address the issue of unregulated private agents. District and village administration may also coordinate with the district police departments and work closely with the migrant communities to ensure that private agents' actions are monitored and regulated, for the welfare of migrants.

Enhanced Awareness About Psychosocial Helpline

For returnee migrants, helpline assistance in home country is a relatively new experience. The district and village administration may work closely with migrant communities to regularly hold community meetings and discussions in neighbourhood groups (including self-help groups of women) to propagate awareness on mental health and psychosocial support that is available through the helpline. Such awareness through community-level interventions will also help dispel the stigma around speaking about mental health challenges, thereby encouraging large sections of the society to seek support from the helpline.

Ongoing Training for the Psychosocial Helpline Staff

Specialised training for helpline staff on an ongoing basis (at regular intervals), will help counsellors deal with distressed population facing psychosocial issues, especially those who have migration-related trauma. Telangana is home to over 17% of Indian migrants in the Gulf countries, where most of them migrate as less-skilled workforce to work across construction, logistics and driving, household work and other labour-intensive jobs. Since Gulf countries do not permit pathways of settlement to overseas temporary migrants, most migrants return to their countries of origin. Upon their return, they struggle to reintegrate into their societies of origin. Psychosocial helpline for supporting

migrant communities enables them to use coping mechanisms or seek referral medical support (based on the gravity of trauma) to help them build confidence and ensure sustainable reintegration. Routine capacity building of the helpline staff will help them to better support and help the needs of the migrant communities.

Wide Availability of Fliers, Infographics, Leaflets, and Handbooks at the Local Level.

Extensive information leaflets about safe and regular migration, the role of TOMCOM and the DEOs, and information about interventions that support the reintegration of returnee migrants are needed to be available for the moderately literate returnee migrants at mofussil locations. Preparation and circulation of information about the TOMCOM App and trade-specific leaflets with information about employment opportunities (in and outside India) may also augment the ongoing efforts towards

sustainable reintegration. Appropriate publicity materials and associations with regional/local training centres to provide short-term skilling programs are a sure remedy to ensuring reintegration in the post-return period and in ensuring safe migration for those aspiring to migrate for the first time.

Bursary to Migrants Attending Skill Training Programmes

When training partnerships are implemented towards skill upgradation of migrant workers, it would be ideal to include a component of bursary payment for the trainees, to cover towards wage losses they may incur as part of the training. Some bursary amount or compensatory allowance for the entire training period (other than travel or food support) in the initial stages may facilitate the participation of migrants and ensure their retention in the entire training programme.

