



# Jesuit Resource and Response Hub (JRH)



Image Courtesy: Siji Chacko, SJ

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented waves of devastation across the globe. Apart from being a threat to lives, the lockdown that followed brought misery and despair to millions of people, especially the poor. Migrant workers in the unorganised sector and daily wage earners lost their livelihood and homes. Hunger, starvation and homelessness became a bitter reality for millions. Jesuits across South Asia have been actively involved in reaching out to the affected people by way of food support, shelter, financial aid, distribution of masks, psycho-social support, etc. While Jesuit Provinces and communities have been reaching out independently and collectively, the global nature of the pandemic has emphasised the need to set up a crisis response mechanism at the JCSA level. The nature of the crisis is such that interventions at multiple levels - micro and macro - are required to tackle the impact. A macro level problem requires macro level interventions to be addressed effectively. Towards this purpose, on 13th April 2020, the President of South Asia announced the setting up of JRH with the Conference Development Office as leader in

collaboration with the Core and Advisory Committees that includes ISI-Delhi, JESA, JAAI and others.

The purpose of JRH is not to duplicate the initiatives of the Provinces but to act as a resource and response hub that would support the Provinces and communities in, “Reaching out to the Unreached”. JRH is currently engaged in consolidating all the relief measures happening across JCSA. It also strives to mobilise resources to support the relief measures, although this is not one of the major mandates.

JRH galvanizes support to the Provinces by creating certain network linkages, offering media and communication support, and also offering technical support in terms of proposal formulation, etc. It also functions as a repository of resources and undertakes the responsibility of data gathering, consolidation, and sharing. Another crucial function of JRH is to provide a common platform for Jesuits, partners and collaborators to facilitate collective action which is steadily evolving.

The Jesuits of South Asia have been proactively responding to the crisis and reaching out to the people in distress. The role of JRH in this context has been to consolidate all the relief work that had been undertaken across the Conference. This was also a response to the mandate from the Fr. General to gather information on Jesuit initiatives and relief works in the Covid-19 context. This crucial role of JRH has helped to present the cumulative efforts of the Jesuits across the Conference at the national and international platforms. This has given a South Asian/Regional identity to the work done in the global Jesuit context.

The responses of the Provinces, Common Houses/Works, JAAI and others have been impressive and substantial. When put together there is greater visibility and impact. The latest consolidated data from the Provinces will give a picture of the JCSA response to the crisis.

## JRH and the Campaign for Migrants - #V4MIGRANTS

The online Campaign for Migrants titled #V4MIGRANTS has been the highlight of the JRH initiatives since its inception. The campaign was initiated in response to the distressing situations the nation witnessed as the lockdown was imposed and lakhs of homeless and jobless migrants started travelling back to their home States defying the Government's orders - walking, cycling and stuffed in crowded trucks - hundreds and thousands of kilometres to reach the safety and dignity of their homes. The media has been full of news about migrant workers dying on their way home due to hunger, thirst, sheer exhaustion, meeting with accidents, etc.

The distressing exodus of migrant workers was the result of the insensitive policies of the Government that failed to consider them in its decision making to combat the pandemic. Therefore, while immediate relief measures were undertaken at the ground level, JRH undertook a series of initiatives targeted to reach out to the migrants through network and collaboration at multiple levels. The campaign decided to focus primarily on macro level intervention advocating for policy changes that would address the rights of the migrant workers.

A series of webinars on migrant issues were organised by JRH. These brought together social activists and academics to discuss the issues pertinent to the migrants in the context of the national lockdown. Eminent academics and social activists such as Harsh Mander, Nikhil Dey, Jean Dreze and academicians such as Shyam Sundar of XLRI came together to discuss themes on 'Migrants as the Battered Citizens', the

'Big Question' about their future in cities and their home States, and the impact of the draconian measures of various States to suspend labour laws and sacrifice labour welfare to boost the economy. The webinar series has proved to be a powerful medium to bring the distress of the migrants to a global audience, with a reach of more than 1000 people for each series. The YouTube videos related to the migrant campaign have been subscribed to by 4794 persons and groups.

Pressure tactics were also used by initiating mass appeal letters to the Karnataka Chief Minister to persuade him to permit special trains for migrants from Karnataka.

To support the Jesuits and others involved in reaching out to the migrants, JRH relayed a series of information on relief measures of the Central and State Government, Help-

lines, details of other organisations involved in relief work, details of special trains, etc. It has also initiated an online publication space called "The Muse" with the tagline 'Be Absorbed'.

Other than supporting in project development, fund raising efforts for migrants are also initiated through appeal letters, migrant campaign, etc. The online campaign for migrants has a direct reach of about 18000 persons across 31 countries. JRH has also been providing handholding support

to the Migrant Helpdesk initiative at Bagaicha Social Centre, Ranchi.

## JRH – Way Ahead

JRH initiated as a response to the Covid-19 crisis has been envisaged as the Disaster/Crisis Response Mechanism of JCSA at the Conference level towards any such future crisis. To this end, JRH will be involved in the formulation of JCSA level crisis response, including Covid-19, to any such national and global level disaster/crisis. JRH is in its evolutionary phase and a plan at the JCSA level would be emerging through consultations with Jesuits and collaborators. So far, the concern for the migrant labourers in distress has been the heart of JRH. In the days to come JRH envisages to reflect further on the learning so far, and strategise for a systematic and impactful way ahead with discernment, collaboration and networking as key components

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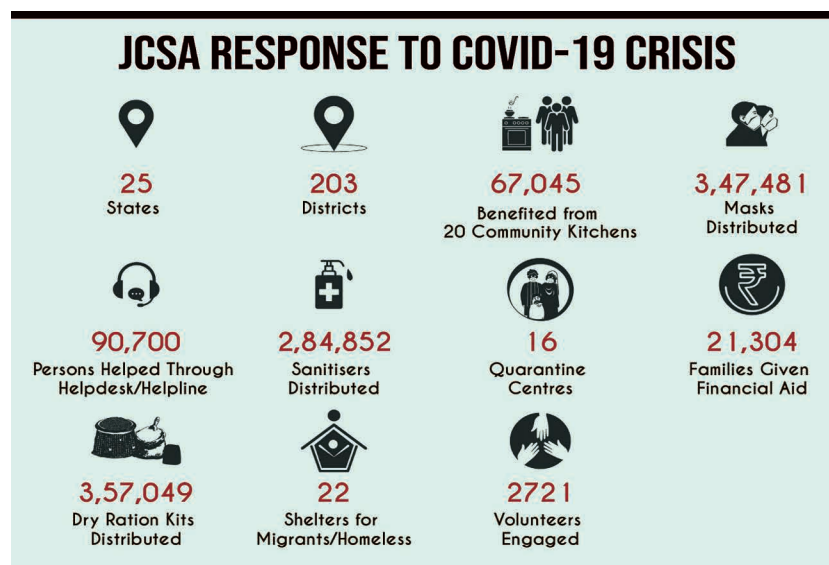


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