

## Identity Crisis and Numbers: Aajeevika Bureau

As a response to the identity crisis that a migrant faces – especially during inter-state migration - Aajeevika Bureau undertakes a process of registration of migrants and issues identity cards.

The worker applies for the identity card by filling out a simple registration form that captures demographic information including the duration of their migration cycle and his/her destination, trade and income. Migrants get this information verified by the *Sarpanch*, the elected head of their *panchayat* (village level institution of local selfgovernment). Following this, migrants are issued with an identity card that contains all relevant details, including their domicile, trade, education and contact details.

Started in 2005, the registration and identity service achieved a significant milestone in December 2007. After two years of advocacy efforts the card was recognised as a valid proof of identity by the Ministry of Labour and Employment of Rajasthan. With this authorisation, the card has found greater acceptability as a credible proof of identity among employers, police and local administration. Going beyond a mere proof of introduction, this card has now become the gateway to numerous services such as employer verification, opening of bank accounts and enrolment for social security services. The photo ID is also a critical document preventing migrants from experiencing police harassment that is common place in cities.



Aajeevika Bureau states that over a span of seven years, they have been able to register a total of over 70,000 migrants. Under the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT) supported migration programme, this service has now been replicated by 32 organisations across 41 districts of states such as Odisha, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan, covering source areas in high out-migration states as well as key urban destinations, reaching out to over 100,000 migrants.

While civil society organisations have demonstrated how migrants can be counted, registered and offered a verifiable proof of identity, it is clear that the scale of migration in reality demands a much larger, state-driven response to solve this identity crisis.

This simple yet powerful tool designed by Aajeevika has resulted in securing the identities of a mobile and vulnerable population who were otherwise struggling to assert their citizenship rights in urban spaces. Away from their homes and local community support systems, often speaking a language that no one understands, the identity card gives them a sense of security and entitlement.

Source: Aajeevika Bureau ([www.aajeevika.org](http://www.aajeevika.org))

Social Inclusion of Internal Migrants in India, UNESCO, 2013