

Bodhicrew and Female Migrant Domestic Workers

Many domestic worker recruitment agencies have been in the news for all the wrong reasons recently, including the exploitation of workers and their families. But there are exceptions, such as Bodhicrew Services Pvt Ltd, a training and placement agency for domestic workers in West Bengal. Through its “Just Help” programme, Bodhicrew offers complete domestic work solutions to the rapidly growing middle class of India.

Having started its operations in January 2012, Bodhicrew offers training and guarantees safe migration, good jobs and fair wages for female domestic workers. It also supports legislative, administrative and policy changes that contribute to the employability, dignity, and welfare of domestic workers and their families. Bodhicrew’s operational area is North Bengal and, having started from one district of Darjeeling in January 2012, they have gradually spread their work to the districts of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar in West Bengal. In the future, Bodhicrew proposes to expand to Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Odisha.



The process of recruitment starts with a mass mobilisation exercise of organising a Job Mela (or Job Fair) at the *gram panchayat* (village level institution of local self-government) level, where the initial shortlisting of candidates is done. Once selected, Bodhicrew obtains a No Objection Certificate from the parents of candidates and submits this to the local *gram panchayat* and police station. Following training, candidates are placed in New Delhi, and after the placement Bodhicrew assists the candidate in Delhi Police Verification and in obtaining proof of identity.

Thus, Bodhicrew works closely with local police, *gram panchayats*, NGOs, and church organisations during the entire recruitment and training process.

Currently, Bodhicrew has sourced, trained and successfully placed 30 domestic workers in New Delhi and has helped ensure the workers receive government-issued identity proofs for accessing social protection entitlements. In response to increasing demand, Bodhicrew has also included other trades such as cooks, security guards and construction workers in their portfolio. Bodhicrew aims to train and deploy 100,000 domestic workers in the next four years.

Source: Bodhicrew Services Pvt. Ltd. (www.bodhicrew.com)
Social Inclusion of Internal Migrants in India, UNESCO, 2013

When Rajita Meets Bodhicrew

Rajita Kindo, aged 24 years, belongs to the Oraon tribe, in Darjeeling, West Bengal. After completing her class 10 examination, she stopped her studies and began looking for work. The jobs she took up in Darjeeling included working in tea gardens - for which she earned ₹ 500 a week (USD 9); and working in a mall, where she earned ₹ 2,700 a month (USD 48). However, the pay remained inadequate and given at infrequent intervals.

Having initially heard of Bodhicrew Services from the local village ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist), Rajita went to the Darjeeling office of Bodhicrew to learn more about the opportunities for working as domestic help in Delhi homes. Convinced that she would make a better living, and placing faith in the organisation on the basis of references received from trusted local sources, she packed her bags and enrolled in the residential training programme of Bodhicrew. There she received two weeks' training for a number of processes, including learning basic Hindi and English, cooking, how to operate machines such as vacuum cleaners, microwaves and washing machines, and some basics in social etiquette.

Today, after coming to Delhi with only ₹ 200 (USD 4) in her pocket, she now earns ₹ 6,000 a month (USD 107), most of which she sends back home, keeping ₹ 2,000 (USD 36) for herself. Though Rajita's parents were initially reluctant to send her to Delhi to work, they are now less wary having learnt about her safe and secure living and working arrangements.

Source: Social Inclusion of Internal Migrants in India, UNESCO, 2013