

Volunteers for Native Language Education

India has rich linguistic diversity and the Census of India 2001 lists 122 languages having more than 10,000 native speakers and 234 mother tongues. The Indian Constitution recognizes 22 languages. Language barriers are an important obstacle faced by interstate migrant families, including migrant children. Language is often used to promote cultural parochialism and becomes the basis of anti-migrant sentiments of locals. It is important to address language-based difficulties faced by internal migrants in order to ensure assimilation of internal migrants at the destination, and to prevent their alienation and social, cultural and political marginalization.

For instance, migrant children traveling from Odisha and speaking Odia often face difficulties when they migrate to Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, because they do not speak Tamil and Telugu. To address this issue, Aide et Action has mobilised education volunteers from the source villages of the migrant children to teach them in their mother tongue. These education volunteers are appointed on a seasonal basis and are paid jointly by Aide et Action and the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) of the destination states.

Additionally, text books are provided by SSA Odisha for Odia migrant children studying in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. After the children return to their source villages, education volunteers receive transfer certificates for the children from the respective SSAs at the destination. Based on the number of students that have studied in worksite schools at the destination, Aide et Action writes a letter to SSA Odisha to reintegrate these children into the nearest schools to their home villages. The education volunteers assist the parents in reintegrating children into the village school.

A similar initiative had been launched by the Jhabua district administration in Madhya Pradesh, in collaboration with the Migrant Labour Support Programme of Gramin Vikas Trust to send Hindi-speaking teachers with children accompanying their migrant parents to neighbouring states. Although the initiative was successful, it was not up-scaled as it was a special project introduced by the Collector and not part of regular programming.

Source: Aide et Action (www.aea-southasia.org)
Social Inclusion of Internal Migrants in India, UNESCO, 2013