IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON LIVELIHOOD SOURCE IN INDIA

SUMMARY
In this brief, we examine the relationship between demographic characteristics and the impact of COVID-19 on survey respondents’ source of livelihoods. For the purpose of this project, source of livelihood is defined as the means in which an individual is able to secure their basic needs.

Overall, regardless of demographic characteristics, a high percentage of respondents reported COVID-19 had impacted their source of livelihood.

ABOUT
COVID-19 has emerged as a serious challenge for all countries around the globe, especially for those individuals residing in low- and middle-income countries. In India, the COVID-19 pandemic emerged suddenly - affecting individuals and households of all strata and region. Lockdown, physical distancing, self-isolation and travel restrictions have led to reverse migration and consequently reduced the workforce across all economic sectors. Service sector workers have lost their jobs, whereas many others were asked to work from home with lower pay. Furthermore, the social distancing to prevent the spread of pandemic has been linked to increased stigma, discrimination and poverty among the lower section of society.

Initially in India, COVID 19 was limited to cities and urban areas but eventually it spread from urban to rural populations and from identified high-risk groups to the general population. COVID 19 has restricted the free interaction and movement of individuals, and hence its impact reaches far beyond the health sector with severe socioeconomic consequences.
This project explored the social impacts of COVID-19 on individuals and households and its objectives included:

1. To document the level of information, awareness and changes in social behaviour with regards to COVID-19;
2. To identify the perceptions, myths and the misconceptions associated with COVID-19;
3. To assess the nature of influence of COVID-19 on the social life and livelihood of individuals and families;
4. To identify the challenges and provide recommendations for social work interventions

METHODS

A total of 4,814 households in the State of Maharashtra participated in the survey. To assess the impact of COVID-19 on family’s source of livelihoods, survey respondents reported whether or not the means in which they were able to secure their basic needs was impacted as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Survey Data were collected between August – September 2020. The questionnaire was drafted in English and translated into Marathi.

Bivariate analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between reported source of livelihood and respondents’ sociodemographic characteristics, including age group, gender, education, religion, family status, occupation, caste and geographic residence.

RESULTS

Impact on Source of Livelihood by Age Group

Most respondents, regardless of their age group, reported COVID-19 impacted their source of livelihood. Persons aged 18 –35 (85%) and 36 – 55 (85%) were most likely to be impacted whereas persons age 55+ (81%) were less likely to report (Figure 1).
Impact on Source of Livelihood by Gender
Overall, a high percentage of survey respondents, regardless of their gender identity, reported COVID-19 impacted their source of livelihoods. Men suffered the most, with 85% of men experienced an impact of COVID-19 on their livelihood compared with 83% of women (Figure 2).

![Figure 2. Impact of COVID-19 on Source of Livelihood by Gender](image)

Impact on Source of Livelihood by Education
Regardless of educational background, a high percentage of survey respondents reported that COVID-19 had impacted their livelihood source. When compared to other classifications, those with school education (86%) and no formal education (86%) were most likely to be impacted (Figure 3).

![Figure 3. Impact of COVID-19 on the Source of Livelihood by Education](image)

Impact on Source of Livelihood by Family Status
Regardless of family status, COVID-19 was reported to impact the family. For example, those denoting joint family experienced the most impact (86%) (Figure 4).
Impact on Source of Livelihood by Occupation
Overall, a high percentage of respondents, regardless of occupation status, reported COVID-19 impacted their livelihood source. Laborers (88%) were most affected compared to all other respondents. Those respondents designated as public employees (69%) were the least likely to be affected by COVID-19 (Figure 5).

Impact on Source of Livelihood by Caste
Despite caste, a high percentage of respondents belonging to both the economic backward (86%) and social backward (85%) caste reported affirmatively that COVID-19 had impacted their source of livelihood (Figure 6).
Impact of Source of Livelihood by Geographic Residence
Residents of rural (83%) and urban (86%) locations indicated that COVID-19 had impacted their livelihood source.

Figure 7. Impact of COVID-19 on Source of Livelihood by Geographic Residence

DISCUSSION AND NEXT STEPS
Findings reveal that regardless of socio-demographic characteristics, COVID-19 has disrupted individuals’ and family’s source of livelihood creating difficulties for people to meet their basic needs. Those who were working in cities migrated back to villages and many of them lost their jobs, livelihood and income. Among those most affected were individuals working in the service sector as skilled and unskilled workers, otherwise identified as laborers. For these workers in particular, there was no way in which they could work from home or engage online. Furthermore, the situation of menial laborers like domestic workers, housekeeping staff, cleaning and sweepers were worst affected. In the Indian context, these jobs are considered uncleanly and highly stigmatized and social distancing requirements have further distanced these workers resulting in an increase in poverty. The data presented in this brief invite for exploration of an intervention to restore the livelihood and income sources of those most vulnerable including the socially and economically backward section of the society.
This research brief is a collaborative research brief series on a project conducted by the Centre for Studies in Rural Development (CSRD) at the Institute of Social Work & Research in Ahmednagar, India. The project's primary aim was to identify the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on individuals and families in India. Global Social Development Innovations (GSDI) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill supported CSRD in the analysis of data and development of this brief.

Content of this brief was prepared as follows:
CSRD: Suresh Pathare: conceptualization, methodology, supervision, and writing – review and editing; Jaimon Varghese: conceptualization, methodology and data curation; Pradeep Jare: Conceptualization, methodology, and data curation GSDI: Rainier Masa: Data curation, supervision, and writing – review and editing; Miranda Manzanares: Writing – original draft; visualization, and project administration; Graham Zulu: Formal analysis and writing – original draft; Mohit Tamta: visualization; Neil Bilotta: Writing – review and editing.

Suggested Citation: Global Social Development Innovations (GSDI) and Centre for Studies in Rural Development (CSRD). (2021). Impact of COVID-19 on livelihood source in India. Chapel Hill, N.C. and Ahmednagar, India: GSDI, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and CSRD, Institute of Social Work and Research.