

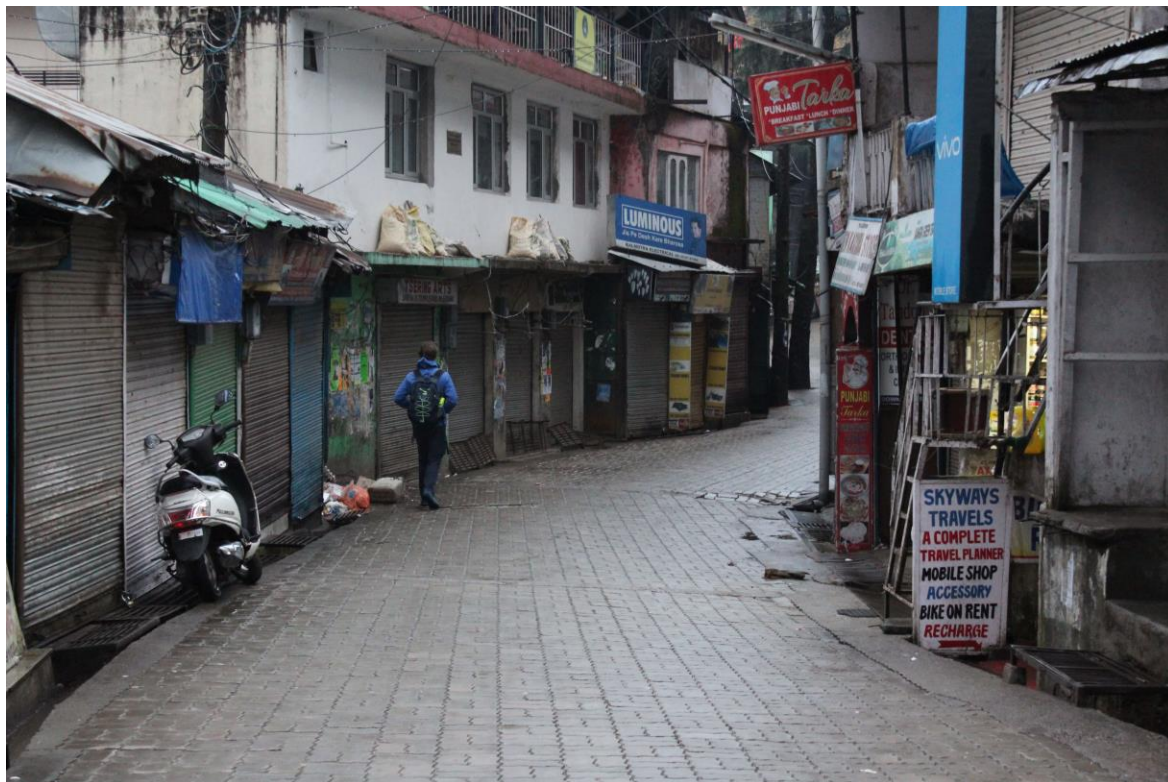
# ISEP POLICY BRIEF

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## IMPACT OF PANDEMIC LOCKDOWN ON LIVELIHOOD, FOOD SECURITY, AND HYGIENE PRACTICES IN JHARKHAND

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Post-lockdown survey conducted by ISEP and Morsel in the state of Jharkhand shows 6 out of 10 respondents lost their job or encountered reduced working hours—with casual laborers being the most affected. Four out of 10 respondents had to borrow money to survive, and further, prevalent hygiene practices were inadequate to reduce the risk of infection. This brief recommends that the Jharkhand government use District Mineral Foundation (DMF) funds effectively for livelihood generation, move from passive skill-mapping to active skill-development, circulate worker hygiene advisories, and conduct hygiene audits of reopened business establishments, and invest in public place hygiene infrastructure.



## INTRODUCTION

The state of Jharkhand had recorded 951 active cases and 8 coronavirus-related deaths as of June 12, 2020 (Government of Jharkhand, 2020). To control the spread of virus, non-pharmaceutical interventions have been instituted both by the central and the state government, the most significant of them being the nation-wide lockdown. The lockdown was put in place on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and is since then being gradually phased out. However, despite central government's advisory to reopen standalone shops during the third phase of the lockdown, Jharkhand opted to continue the curbs citing return of migrants. So far, around 5.5 lakh migrant workers have returned to the state (Thakur et al, 2020).

As India enters the fourth phase of the pandemic lockdown, with states given leeway to open marketplaces and fix curb zones, Jharkhand has permitted industrial units, liquor stores, book and hardware stores, private offices, e-commerce for essential and non-essential deliveries, go-downs, and retail telecom services in non-containment zones to open. However, for a resilient phasing out, the state must consider the impact of erstwhile phases of the lockdown on livelihood, food security, and hygiene practices. The impact on livelihood and food security will determine compliance with lockdown measures going forward. The impact on hygiene practices will determine risk of infection with increase in human activity and offer insight into where efforts must be concentrated to reduce this risk.

## POST-LOCKDOWN SURVEY

ISEP and Morsel conducted a phone survey of 895 respondents across the 24 districts of Jharkhand in May 2020. Participants were selected using systematic random sampling from a database of phone records maintained by Morsel from previous studies. Due to the nature of the database, rural households had a higher probability of being selected.

The questionnaire included questions related to loss of employment by members of the household, food security, cash flow constraints, hygiene and social distancing practices, and government assistance since lockdown. The median age of the respondents was 35, 90% were Hindu and 61% were males. Thirty-nine per cent of respondents belonged to a rural area, and 83% belonged to a non-general caste category (Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes/Other Backward Castes).

## IMPACT OF COVID-19 LOCKDOWN ON JHARKHAND

### **Livelihood**

The lockdown has gravely impacted employment and created cash constraints for households, with casual laborers (defined here as informal workers in a non-farm enterprise) being the most affected. Sixty per cent of respondents (or their household members) had lost a job or faced reduced working hours since the lockdown. Forty per cent of respondents knew someone outside their household who had lost a job or reduced working hours. Forty-three per cent of respondents (or their household members) had to borrow money to survive since the lockdown.

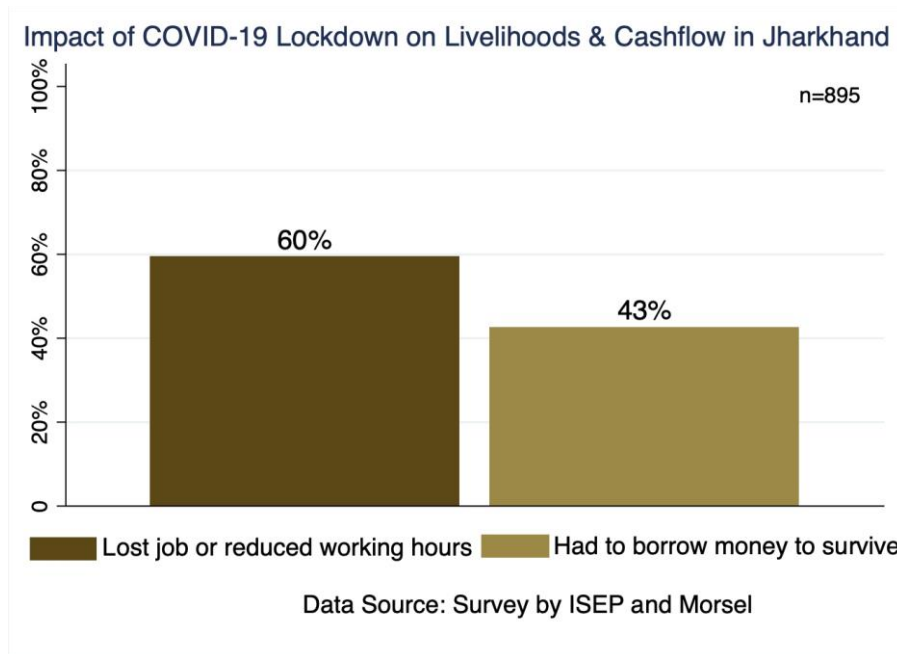


Figure 1. Impact of pandemic lockdown on livelihoods in Jharkhand

Of those who had lost a job or faced reduced working hours, 41% were casual laborers, and 24% were farmers. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey conducted in 2017-18 by the National Statistical Office, casual laborers represent a quarter of the Indian workforce, yet 98% of them have no written contract or paid leave. Jharkhand has 19.4 lakh casual workers, who will be the worst hit given the precarious terms of employment.

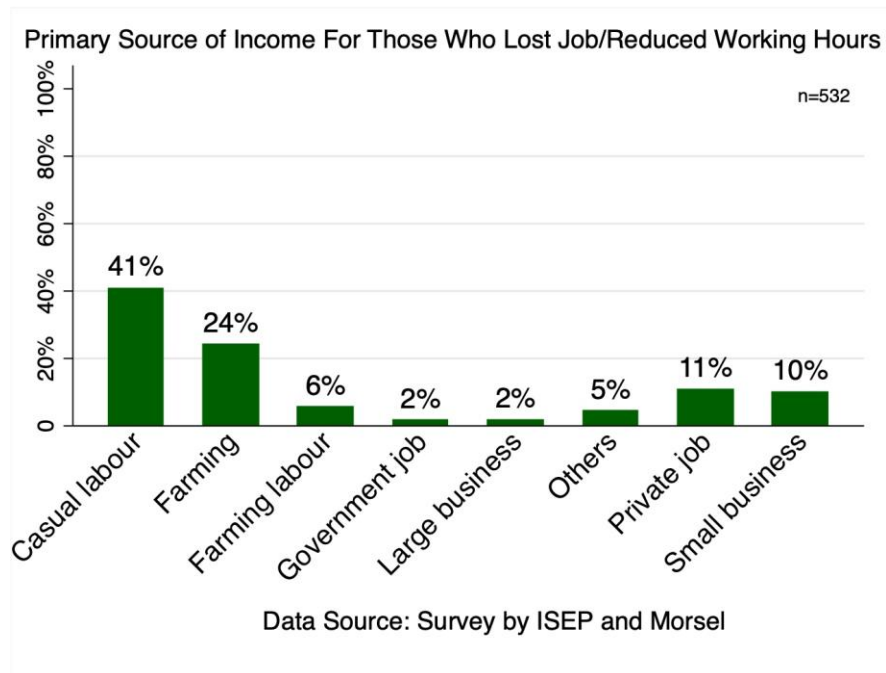


Figure 2. Impact of lockdown on livelihood by income source

Scheduled Tribes (STs) form 26.2% of Jharkhand’s population, and poverty rate amongst them is higher than the state average by more than 10 percentage points (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2014). Survey results show that that 56% of respondents belonging to the STs (or their household members) lost their job or had reduced working hours, and 31% of respondent belonging to the STs had to borrow money to survive.

Respondents belonging to Scheduled Tribes in our survey were also most likely to be engaged in the two livelihood sources that are most impacted by the lockdown according to survey results: Casual labor and Farming. Forty per cent of respondents belonging to STs were engaged in casual labor and 38% in farming. Survey data from Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2014) shows that 21.1% of households belonging to individuals from the STs in India are likely to be casual laborers compared to a national average of 13.4%, and 37% of households belonging to individuals from the STs are likely to be engaged in farming compared to a national average of 31.9% for all social groups.

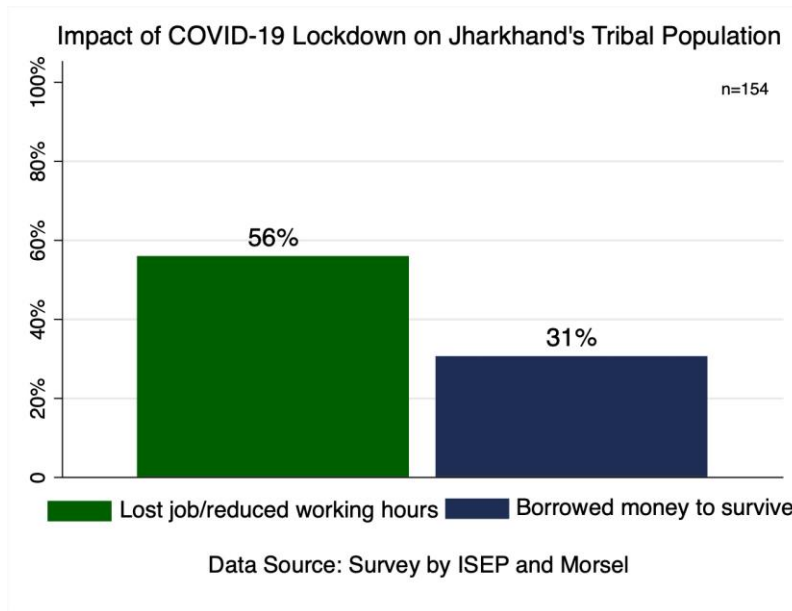


Figure 3. Impact of Lockdown on Respondents belonging to Scheduled Tribes in Jharkhand

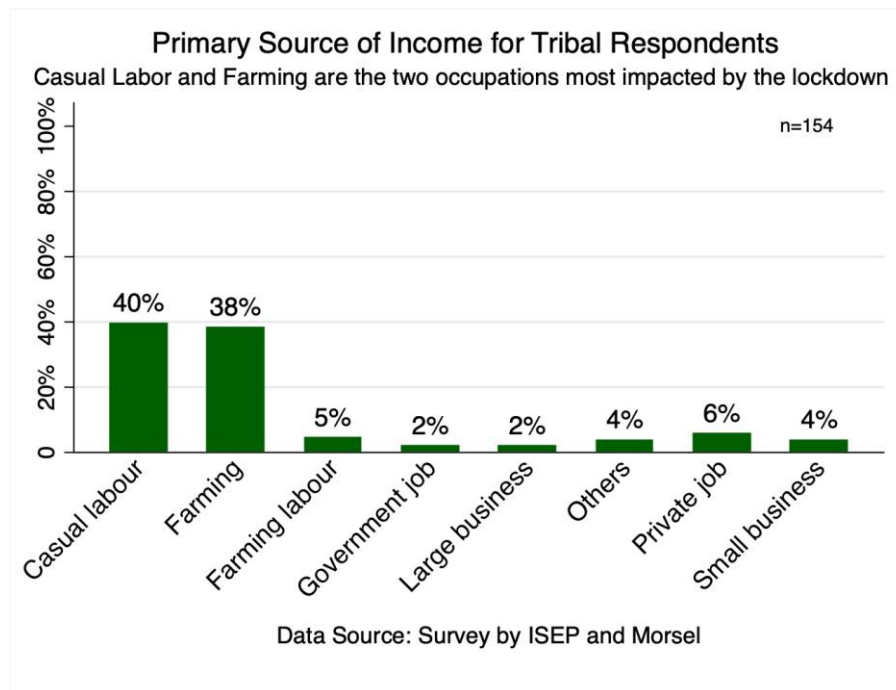


Figure 4. Primary Source of Income of Respondents belonging to ST.

## Food Security

Government assistance programs in the state have been effective in reducing the plight from lockdown and unemployment, with the majority of assistance in the form of food grains. Only 3.7% of respondents said someone in their household had gone hungry since the lockdown. Eighty-five per cent of respondents said they had received food grains and other assistance from a government shop, and 54% said they had received cash transfers in their bank account from the government.

As soon as the lockdown was effected in March, the state government had announced several measures: two months of ration in advance to ration card holders, cash transfer of INR 1000 (US\$ 13.13) to migrants, and setting up of additional *dal bhat kendras*- units that give out meals to the needy, at a price of INR 5 (6.6 cents).

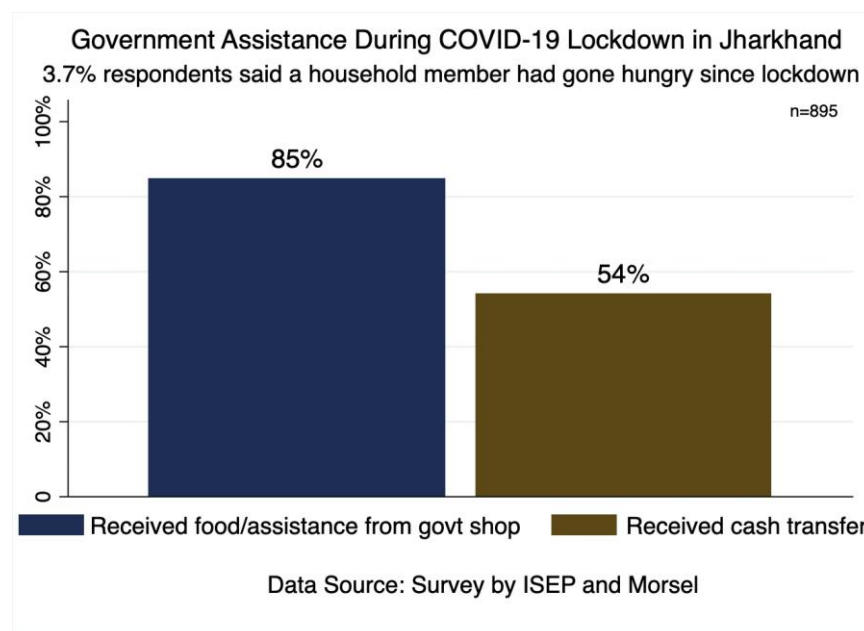


Figure 5. Respondents who received government assistance during lockdown

## Hygiene practices

Social distancing seems to have been effective in the state, with non-essential trips (to places of religious worship, for instance) almost entirely halted. Hygiene practices at the household level are far from ideal, with frequency and timing of handwashing not sufficient to reduce infection.

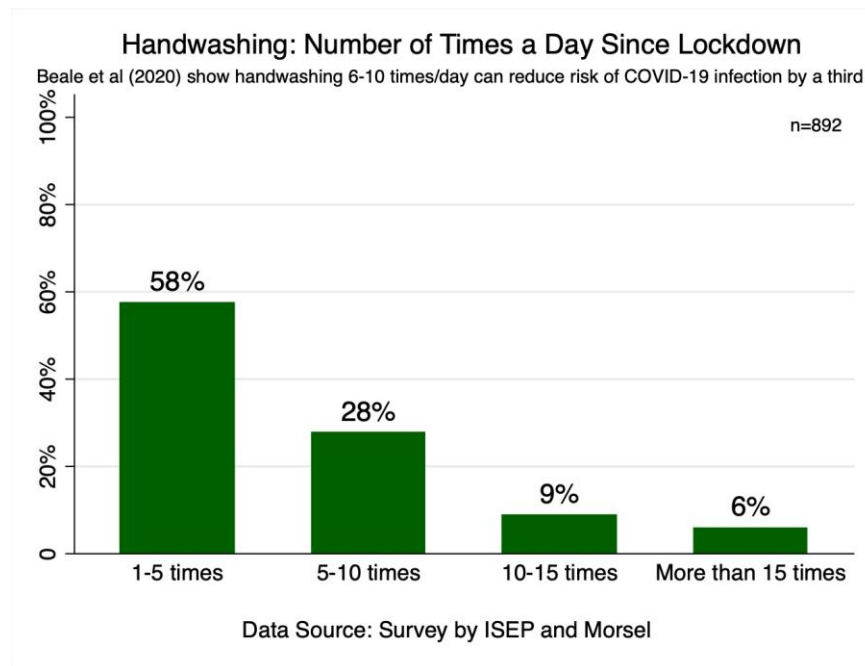


Figure 6. Hand-washing practices since lockdown

Thirty-four per cent of respondents did not visit any place in the last 7 days. Of the places visited, markets and banks/ATMs were most common. Less than 1% of respondents had visited a place of religious worship in the last 7 days. Fifty-eight per cent of respondents said they wash their hands with soap 1 to 5 times, and 28% of respondents wash them 5 to 10 times a day. A UK study by Beale et al (2020) showed that washing hands 6 to 10 times a day cuts risk of coronavirus infection by a third. Eighty-five per cent of respondents wash their hands before and after eating food, 54% after going to the toilet, and 42% before or after touching anything.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Use District Mineral Foundation (DMF) Funds For Livelihood Generation

DMF was instituted in 2015 as a non-profit trust funded by royalties collected from mining companies, to be used for the development of areas affected by mining-related operations. Jharkhand has the second largest DMF accrual in India, but no funds have been used for livelihood generation in the state so far (Banerjee, 2020). Contrast this with other DMF-rich states-, Orissa for instance, has used INR 196 crores (US\$ 25.74 million) for livelihood generation, and Chattisgarh has used INR 456 crores (US\$ 59.89 million). In a [previous brief](#), I had recommended that DMF funds be utilized for reducing employment dependence on coal in Jharkhand through state-support for alternative livelihood sources. These can be forest products which mining areas are rich in (mahua, bamboo, lemongrass oil, etc), cottage industries, agriculture, and animal husbandry. Banerjee (2020) recommends using DMF funds for supporting women self-help groups (SHGs) on micro enterprises such as poultry farming, dairy, sericulture, handicrafts, handlooms, etc. as well as training of health care workers.

## **2. From Passive Skill-Mapping to Active Skill-Development**

Jharkhand has launched the Mission Saksham app for skill mapping of migrant workers. They have been placed in 49 categories under 14 sectors, with most workers engaged in construction. District collectors in districts such as Bokaro have created online databases of migrant workers with their contact details, which have been shared with business establishments and industries in the area, in hopes of these establishments hiring the workers. However, skill mapping will not be enough for Jharkhand's 5.5 lakh migrant worker returnees, for two reasons: 1) Unemployment rate in the state is already high for its resident workers: Jharkhand's unemployment rate was 7.5% in 2017-18 against the national average of 6% (Chatterjee, 2019); 2) The pandemic has created a demand for new set of skills, such as online education platforms, virtual consultations, home delivery of goods and services, etc. Thus, there is a need to ramp up efforts for skill development in line with the current demand, and skill-mapping databases can serve as a promising starting point to gauge gaps in skillsets.

## **3. Invest in Public Place Hygiene Infrastructure**

One thing we know for sure is: handwashing with soap, when done properly, is one of the cheapest, and most effective ways to protect from coronavirus. But even this practice is out of reach at the community level due to lack of clean water/soap, and in public places due to lack of properly maintained public toilets. Another alternative for hand hygiene in public places is hand sanitizers, which can be installed in dispensers in frequently visited places as well as in public transit. Investing today in public place hygiene infrastructure will go a long way in promoting the level of hygiene required to reduce the spread of the virus.

## **4. Ensure Organizational Precautions: Hygiene Advisories and Hygiene Audits**

In addition to public places, business/industrial establishments, restaurants, and private offices will also be places with increased human contact with the lockdown being phased out. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in the central government has been issuing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on preventive measures for containment of spread of COVID-19 in business establishments such as shopping malls, restaurants, as well as in places of religious worship. These can serve as working documents for state governments to contextualize and supplement. For instance, the Jharkhand government might consider issuing similar SOPs for mining operations. In addition, the state and city governments can play an important role in ensuring compliance with these SOPs through unannounced hygiene audits.



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## About ISEP

The Initiative for Sustainable Energy Policy (ISEP) is an interdisciplinary research program that uses cutting-edge social and behavioral science to design, test, and implement better energy policies in emerging economies.

Hosted at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), ISEP identifies opportunities for policy reforms that allow emerging economies to achieve human development at minimal economic and environmental costs. The initiative pursues such opportunities both proactively, with continuous policy innovation and bold ideas, and by responding to policymakers' demands and needs in sustained engagement and dialogue.

## About Morsel

Morsel specializes in field research by providing quality data through primary and secondary data collection using modern technologies. Apart from data collection, Morsel has a technologically proficient team of data managers to ensure data quality and security.

Morsel is among the top 5 research organizations in India and aims to render solutions to the social and economic challenges using an analytical approach.

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