



# Unworthy?

(Who will pay the April Salaries of Migrant Workers now?)

Report prepared by

Safe In India and Agrasar

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## Executive Summary

In April 2020, Safe in India Foundation (“SII”) conducted a rapid survey of migrant workers for their March 2020 wage payments and found that 37% had not been paid at all, 28% had been paid partially, and only 35% had been paid in full. In addition, there was apathy; only 60% were proactively informed by the Contractor or the factory owner about the lockdown.

SII and Agrasar have now partnered to conduct a rapid survey of another 100 migrant workers for April 2020 wages and found a serious worsening of the situation:

- 1. 3 in 4 workers have yet to be paid for April 2020**, despite government announcements to not deduct wages.
- 2. More than half (52%) of the workers didn’t do anything** when they didn’t receive the salary or did not know what to do, indicating lack of felt agency.
- 3. Majority of the workers (77%) have remained at their pre-COVID19 residences**, as they hope to get their original jobs back, which we believe is unlikely for several months.
- 86% of workers, who have stayed back, want to go back to the same job in same company after the lockdown, as they probably see no alternatives in sight.
- 5. Almost all (95 of the 100) are not members of any union.** Even the five, that are members of a union, advise to have received “No help” from their unions.

Clearly, the government directive to pay full salaries was ineffective. This should have been anticipated. Now that it has been completely withdrawn, there needs to be a quick alternative and, we believe, the government schemes designed and implemented with speed and effectiveness, in partnership with on the ground CSOs.



**NIRANJAN KUMAR,  
PIECE CHECKER**

**25-year-old Niranjjan Kumar, from Gaya, Bihar, came to Gurgaon, Haryana to earn a livelihood after his schooling.** In the past three years, he has been working for a company (“PG”) as a garment-piece-checker for Rs 10,000 a month. He lives in a rented shared room, works 12 hour shifts six days a week.

Since lock-down, Niranjjan has been paid only partially for March and nothing for April. He has therefore not been able to pay rent or meet food expenses.

**He has received no response to his calls to the contractor and employer.** He called the police as a last resort but was advised to visit the labor court along with his 10 colleagues and file a complaint against the company. This, however, did not succeed and his employer, who has reopened the factory, refuses to offer him the job.

With no respite in sight, **he left for his village but would still like to come back to Gurgaon** for work, even if he gets a job in the same company.

(as narrated to Nita Chauhan of Agrasar on 17th May 2020)



## Survey objectives

1. To determine the proportion of workers who have received their April 2020 salary, compared to March salary payments, as required by the Government announcements asking employers to pay full salaries to workers.
2. To capture the emotions of the workers and the status of their agency, they could have possibly used, when they didn't receive the salary.
3. To capture the related information about workers' views on joining similar or other jobs, assistance provided by unions, etc.

## Background and Reasons for this research

The recent corona virus outbreak has brought immense uncertainties to people across the globe, within which the extent of difficulties that the migrant workers are facing in India has been well covered in the media. Apart from the challenges of being unemployed during this pandemic or finding a way to travel back to their villages, a majority of the migrant workers haven't received their March and April salaries, even after the recent government announcement asking employers to pay their employees in full. Imagine what the situation will be like now that the government has withdrawn this statement. **If the employers are not going to pay the workers, who will support their cash needs?**

Safe in India and Agrasar, have been actively working towards helping the migrant workers by repurposing and serving them with ration, masks and other essential items.



Through the various interactions that we've had with the migrant workers, we are attempting to understand their struggles during these unprecedented times. Last month we conducted a survey to understand the March 2020 wage payments and found that **majority (65%) were not paid at all or only partially.**



## **In this survey, we are focusing on the implementation of the recent government announcement regarding employers paying their employees in full.**

Though the orders were withdrawn by the government (as on 18th May 2020), the findings are still relevant as they demonstrate the need for prompt action and avoid further delays in execution of even the announced support schemes for migrants.

This survey of 100, mostly migrant workers, randomly chosen from the Safe in India and Agrasar data base of more than 5000 workers, was conducted between 13th May 2020 and 15th May 2020 as all April 2020 salaries should have been paid by 15th May 2020. The profile of the workers is:

1. 47% of the workers work under a contractor.
2. 53% work directly for mostly Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
3. Jobs vary from unskilled (eg. cleaner, helper, etc) to more skilled roles (eg. machine operator in factories).

## **Insights from the survey**

**Insight 1: Despite the government announcement asking employers to pay their employees in full for March and April, vast majority of the workers haven't received their salary for the month of April**



Last month, in a similar survey conducted by SII, we had found that one-third of workers were not paid for March 2020 and another one-third were paid only partially and remaining one-third not paid at all. We now find that, **25% of the workers have still not been paid for the month of March 2020.**

**Golu, Driver:**

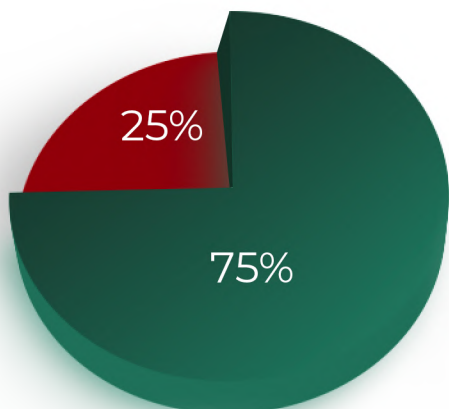
“मार्च में सैलरी नहीं दी तो अप्रैल में कैसे देंगे?”



This situation has worsened in April with 76% of workers not paid at all. Of the remaining minority of 24%, who did receive their salary, 38% didn't get paid in full .

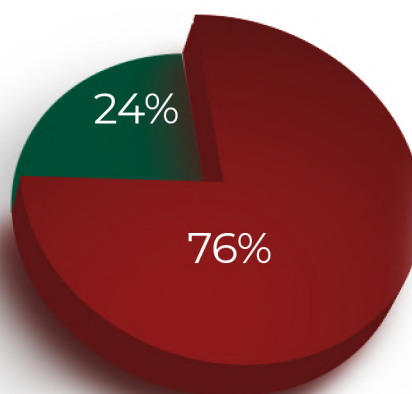
Overall, **22% of the workers haven't received their salary for both the months of March and April 2020.**

**Have you received your March Salary?**



Yes   
No 

**Have you received your April Salary?**



Yes   
No 

There is only a marginal difference between payment of wages to skilled (12 out of 57 paid) and semi/unskilled workers (10 out of 34 paid) and therefore it appears that no special effort is being made by employers/contractors to retain skilled workers more than the semi /unskilled. It is therefore possible that the wage payment behaviour is more about which employer pays its workers rather than a decision to retain some over the others. This, however, may need more granular research.



**Soni Devi, Tailor:**

“परिवार के साथ रहते हैं यहां पर, किराये से लेकर बहुत सारे खर्चे होते हैं वे तो कम हुए नहीं उस पर वेतन भी नहीं मिला, ऐसे में बहुत ज्यादा समस्या का सामना करना पड़ रहा है।”





## Insight 2: More than half of the workers didn't do anything when they didn't receive the salary or did not know what to do.

37% of workers did not do anything indicating a state of helplessness and lack of any agency to act.

Another 15% stated that they did not know what to do and only 18% called their contractors/companies.

A number of them stated that although they feel frustrated and it would appear that they **did not consider it as their right to ask for or challenge this non-payment of salaries**, despite the government directive.

### Manoj, Piece Checker:

“मेने तो मालिक से बात की मगर सारे लोग मिलकर नहीं बोलते है। एक अकेले के बोलने से कुछ नहीं होता है बल्कि नौकरी से निकाले जाने का डर रहता है।”



### Anil, Driver:

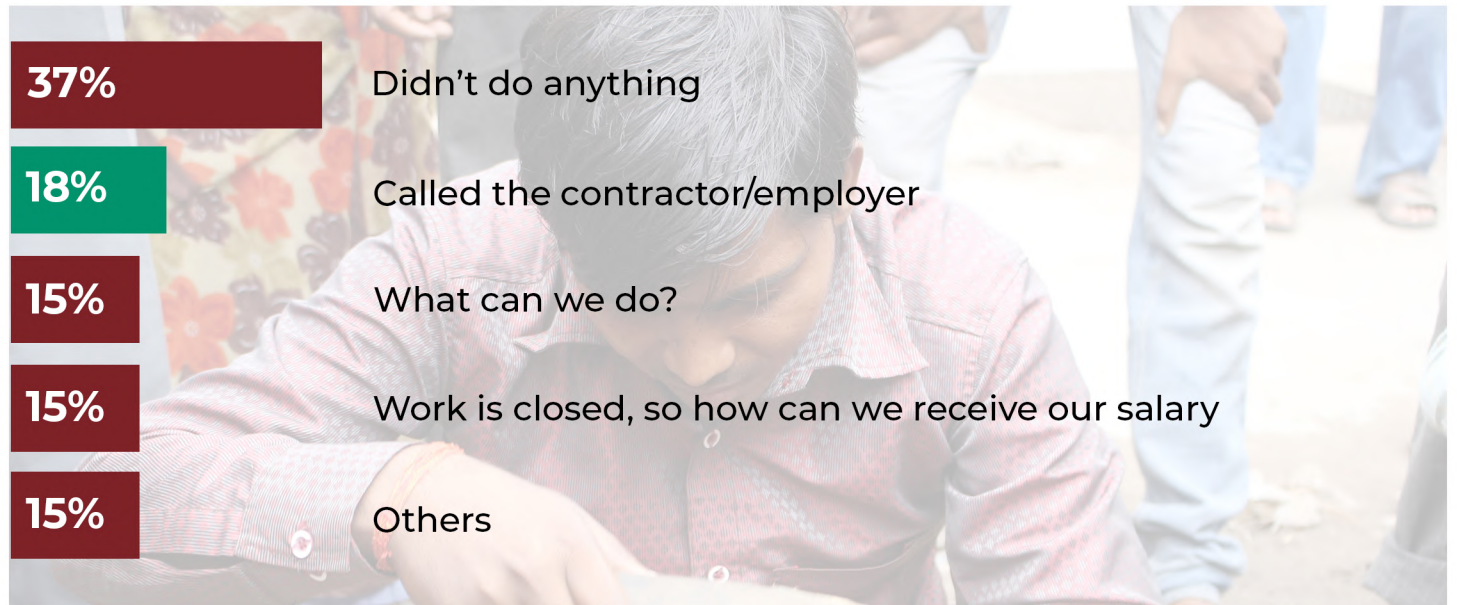
“हम क्या कर सकते हैं ? मजबूर आदमी कैसा महसूस करेगा वैसा ही महसूस कर रहे हैं |”

### Randir, Electrician:

“कंपनी मे बात की सैलरी के लिए तो मार्च की आधी सैलरी देने को कह रहे है! पता नहीं सैलरी मिलेगी भी या नहीं!”



## What did you do when you didn't receive your salary?



**Insight 3: More than half of the unpaid workers appear to have reconciled to non-payment due to lock-down.**

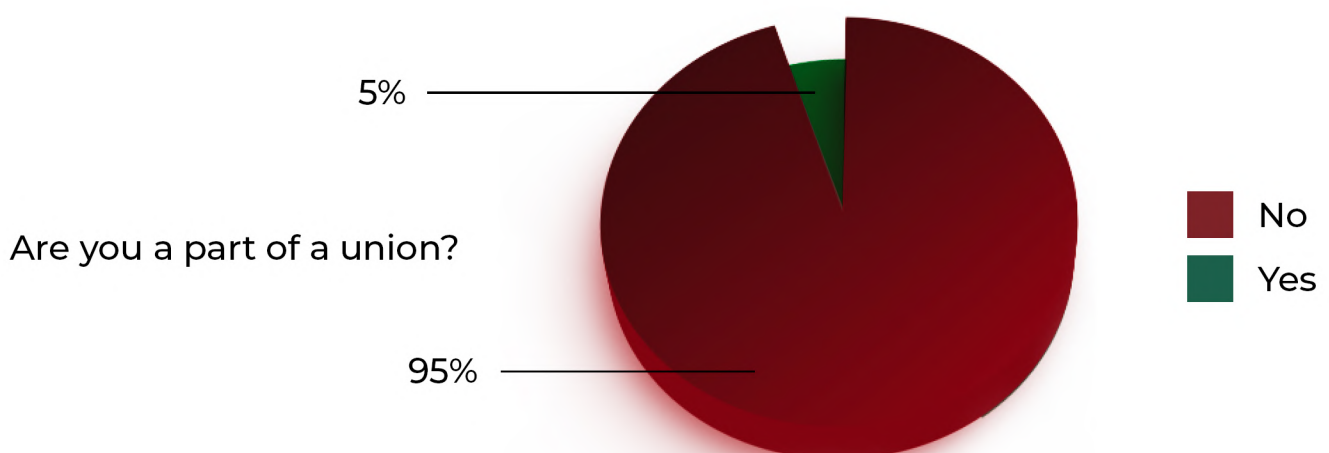
Of the workers who didn't receive their salary, 60% believe that the reason for not getting the salary is that work was closed due to the lockdown/will get paid later/business losses and seemed to accept these as valid reasons.

### Jayveer Singh, Tailor:

“मैं तो कंपनी में पीस रेट पर काम करता था। जब मैंने कोई काम किया ही नहीं तो कंपनी पैसे कहाँ से देगी?”

## Insight 4: None of the workers got any help from any union

Almost all (95%) of these workers are not a part of any union, which further deprives them from securing their rights. The remaining small 5% of the workers, we surveyed, are a member of a union but, **none of them received any help from them during this time and don't think it's of any use being a part of a union.**





## Insight 5: Majority of the workers are hopeful to get a call from their previous employers and resume work so that they can start earning again, but the reality could be much worse

More than three quarters of workers (77%) have stayed at their pre-covid19 place of work hoping to resume work soon with the same employer. However, **only half (57%) of them have received a call from their employers to resume work.** At the time of finishing this report, we had not been able to ascertain whether these 57% are employed already.

### Niranjan Kumar, Piece Checker:

“बहुत ही बुरे फसे हैं, सच में! ना घर जा पा रहे हैं और ना ही काम पर, रुपये ना होने की वजह से बहुत ज्यादा समस्याए हो रही हैं।”



### Seema Devi, Tailor:

“हम तो यहां रह ही काम की वजह से रहे हैं, ऐसे में वेतन न मिलने से बहुत सारी समस्याओं का सामना करना पड़ रहा है।”

## Insight 6: Almost all (86%) workers think they will go to the same jobs

86% of the workers said they'd go back to doing their old job when asked if they will go back to the same job. The remaining 14% are either planning to go back to their village when they are allowed or were so unhappy with the fact that the employers didn't give them the salary on time and hence don't want to rejoin the same job.

Assuming that the manufacturing and other industry will work at c.50% of capacity for several months (anecdotal), and 77% (as found in this survey) of the work force still resident at their pre-Covid19 locations, there could be an unemployment of c.



20-30% of the post-Covid local population. Extrapolating this for a typical industrial labour village of Naharpur, where c.90% of the 1.5 lakh population is migrant workers, **we may have c.30,000-45,000 unemployed workers that the government needs to plan for.**

### **Sajhari Devi, Tailor:**

“कंपनी लोगो को काम से निकाल रही है इसलिए अभी पता नहीं कहां करेंगे काम! अब भी वही काम करेंगे जो पहले करते थे। कंपनी में बात करेंगे की काम से ना निकाले।”

## **Recommendation based on these findings**

This rapid survey and its recommendations do not purport to deal with larger systemic issues like employer-employee relationship or migration related mega-trends, which are being discussed at several fora. We are suggesting here some immediate tactical actions based on these findings:

### **Businesses should be encouraged to:**

1. Proactively communicating directly and through their contractors with their workers explaining their position on salary. Silence is a sign of apathy and complete lack of care for your people.
2. Coordinating with Administration and local civil society organizations in proactively supporting the urgent needs of their worker community.
3. Use these times as an opportunity to showcase themselves as a role model of caring businesses.





## State Government should:

1. Pragmatic instructions to businesses eg. pay 50% of wages arrears for March and April to all workers, including contract workers, especially now as GOI has announced a number of MSME relief measures.
2. Pragmatic instructions to landlords eg. charge 25-50% of rent for a few months and impose penalties on landlords seeking high rents.
3. Support civil society organisations with better data on the needy and support their efforts with required support. Eg. ESIC, PF data can be used to see stoppage of wages, identify those employers/employees and remind them of their responsibilities and rights.
4. Start thinking of and talking about the unemployment related challenges and solutions., and begin small experiments, potentially with civic society. Eg, an urban ERGA project to clean up the city, grow trees, etc.



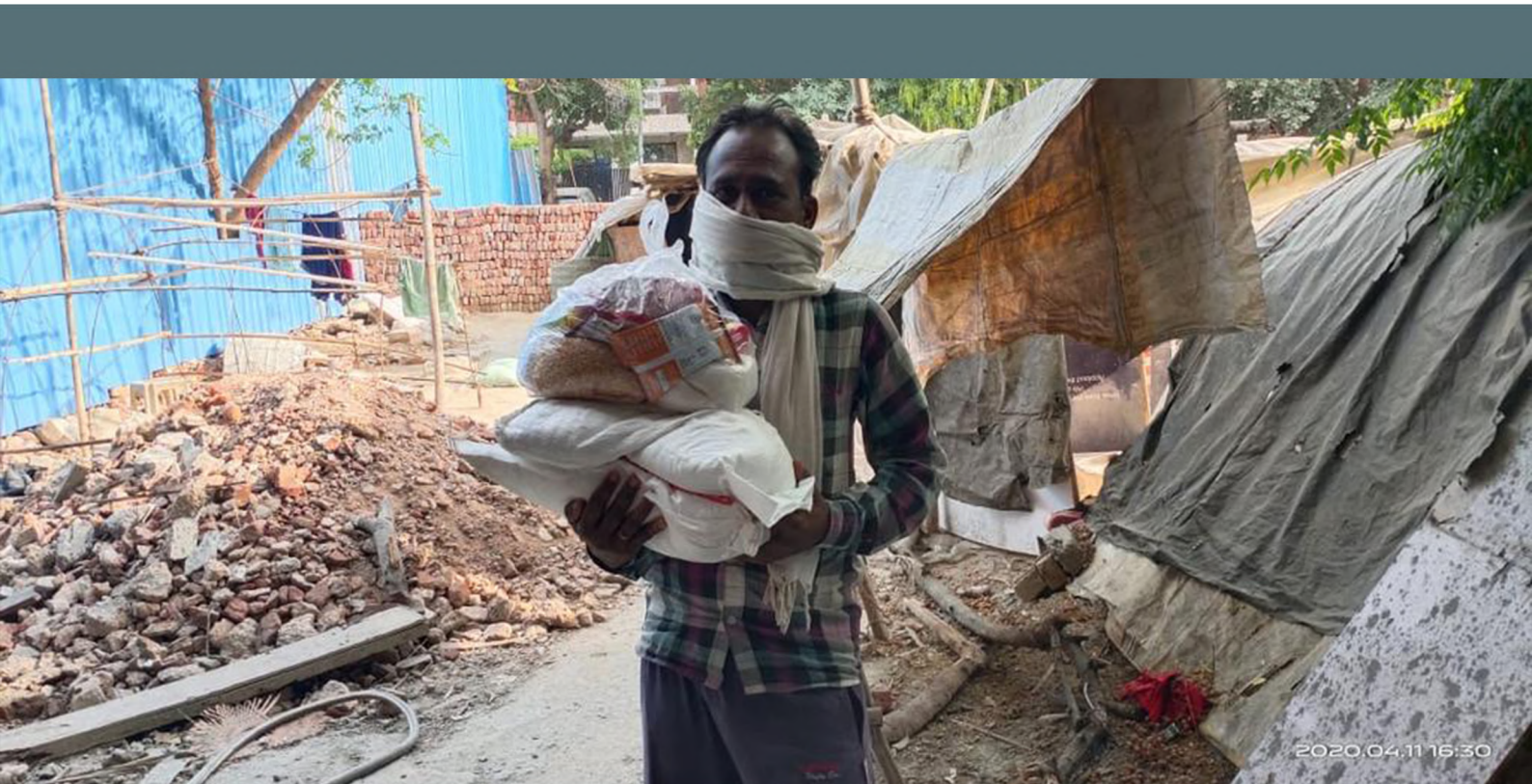
## Conclusion

The impact of lockdown due to Covid19 has been catastrophic for the entire economy but has particularly swept the livelihood of the unseen “migrant workers”, who have to bear heavy costs. Although, the government had issued an order to pay full salaries to workers for both March and April 2020, the implementation of the order in reality has been poor.



Of the 100 people surveyed, vast majority of them haven't received their salary for April and attribute its reason to the work being closed due to lockdown or because they haven't gone to work and many of them assumed non-payment as they had not received wages for March either. Among them, half of the unpaid workers who haven't received their salaries felt helpless and lacked the agency to inquire about the non-payment of their salaries and resigned to their situation.

Despite this, the workers are hopeful to resume the work and join the previous jobs to endure through these precarious times. But, will they find this employment in the current economic situation which is set to remain poor for at least several months? Who will pay the April salary or any cash support to the workers? And how will the government deal with large remaining unemployment while the industry works at less than pre-COVID19 production levels?





	Name	Current Location	Occupation	Skill level	Received March Salary?	Received April Salary?
1	Arjun	Gurgaon, Haryana	कोका कोला कंपनी में हेल्पर है !	Unskilled	Yes	No
2	Ashok Lal	Gurgaon, Haryana	Sport line (सिलाई का काम करते हैं)	Skilled	Yes	No
3	Soni Devi	Gurgaon, Haryana	Tailor	Skilled	Yes	No
4	Seema	Gurgaon, Haryana	बुटिक	Skilled	Yes	Yes
5	Babu singh	Gurgaon, Haryana	painting works on new car	Semi-Skilled	Yes	Yes
6	Vinod kumar	Gurgaon, Haryana	helper	Unskilled	Yes	Yes
7	Manish kumar	Gurgaon, Haryana	tape pasting	Unskilled	Yes	Yes
8	Subodh	Gurgaon, Haryana	electrical technician	Skilled	Yes	No
9	Dheeraj	Gurgaon, Haryana	Food service in call centers	Semi-Skilled	No	No
10	Sanjeet	Gurgaon, Haryana	cashier	Skilled	Yes	Yes
11	Pankaj	Gurgaon, Haryana	diesel mechanic	Skilled	Yes	No
12	Amit	Gurgaon, Haryana	diesel mechanic	Skilled	Yes	No
13	Bijender	Gurgaon, Haryana	Electrician	Skilled	Yes	No
14	Uma kant singh	Gurgaon, Haryana	Checker	Skilled	Yes	No
15	Niranjan Kumar	Gurgaon, Haryana	Piece Checker	Skilled	Yes	No
16	Parveen Kumar	Gurgaon, Haryana	Record keeper	Semi-Skilled	Yes	No
17	Vikas	Gurgaon, Haryana	सिलाई	Skilled	Yes	No
18	Manish Kumar	Gurgaon, Haryana	CNC machine operator	Skilled	No	No
19	Lakhan kumar	Gurgaon, Haryana	Security guard	Semi-Skilled	Yes	No
20	Naresh	Gurgaon, Haryana	house keeping	Skilled	Yes	Yes
21	Vijay mali	Gurgaon, Haryana	Supervisor	Skilled	Yes	No
22	Anita	Gurgaon, Haryana	Hand work (trumpet)	-	No	No
23	Ali Hussein	Gurgaon, Haryana	Helper	Unskilled	Yes	Yes
24	Anil mathur	Gurgaon, Haryana	Driver	Skilled	Yes	No
25	Anjana	Gurgaon, Haryana	Gadi ke part bnte the line pr kam	-	Yes	No
26	Lala mohammad	Gurgaon, Haryana	Checking	Skilled	Yes	Yes



	Name	Current Location	Occupation	Skill level	Received March Salary?	Received April Salary?
27	Shivam	Gurgaon, Haryana	Security guard	Semi-Skilled	No	No
28	Golu	Gurgaon, Haryana	Driver	Skilled	No	No
29	Brijh Mohan	Gurgaon, Haryana	Loading	Unskilled	Yes	No
30	Seema Devi	Gurgaon, Haryana	Tailor	Skilled	Yes	No
31	Kanchan	Gurgaon, Haryana	सिलाई	Skilled	Yes	No
32	Jayveer singh	Gurgaon, Haryana	Tailor	Skilled	Yes	No
33	संझारी देवी	Gurgaon, Haryana	सिलाई	Skilled	Yes	Yes
34	Ranjeet Singh	Gurgaon, Haryana	Lare man	Don't Know	Yes	No
35	Shakil	Gurgaon, Haryana	Tailer	Skilled	Yes	No
36	संजीत	Gurgaon, Haryana	सिलाई	Skilled	Yes	No
37	Jatendra	Gurgaon, Haryana	lohe ki machine par kam karte hai	Unskilled	Yes	Yes
38	Randhir	Gurgaon, Haryana	electrician	Skilled	No	No
39	Rohit	Gurgaon, Haryana	Delivery boy	Semi-Skilled	Yes	Yes
40	Shubhash	Gurgaon, Haryana	Helper	Unskilled	No	No
41	Manoj Kumar	Gurgaon, Haryana	Piece Checker	Skilled	Yes	No
42	Sanjay Kumar	Gurgaon, Haryana	Embroidery Work	Skilled	Yes	No
43	Karan pal	Gurgaon, Haryana	Security guard	Semi-Skilled	Yes	No
44	Rajesh	Gurgaon, Haryana	सिलाई का काम करते है! सैंपल पीस बनाते है (हेल्पर)	Unskilled	Yes	No
45	Upendra	Gurgaon, Haryana	लेदर गारमेंट्स बनाते है!	Skilled	Yes	Yes
46	Rajesh	Gurgaon, Haryana	Expot line	Unskilled	Yes	Yes
47	धर्मपाल	Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh	बाइक के पार्ट्स बनाने का	Skilled	Yes	No
48	Vinay	Gurgaon, Haryana	हेल्पर (कोका कोला कंपनी मे)	Unskilled	No	No
49	लालसा देवी	Gurgaon, Haryana	सिलाई	Skilled	Yes	No
50	Sunil Kumar	Alwar, Rajasthan	CNC machine operator	Skilled	Yes	No
51	Vijay Shankar	Manesar, Haryana	Painter	Semi-Skilled	Yes	No
52	Bhojraj	Manesar, Haryana	Dress machine operator	Skilled	Yes	Yes



	Name	Current Location	Occupation	Skill level	Received March Salary?	Received April Salary?
53	Om Singh	Manesar, Haryana	Operator	Skilled	Yes	Yes
54	Dhrupraj Chouhan	Manesar, Haryana	Operator	Skilled	Yes	No
55	Pramod	Manesar, Haryana	Operator	Skilled	Yes	No
56	Ranjeet Singh	Manesar, Haryana	Store	-	Yes	Yes
57	Sanjay Kumar	Manesar, Haryana	Lift Driver	Semi-Skilled	Yes	Yes
58	Satish	Manesar, Haryana	CNC Operator	Skilled	Yes	No
59	Bablu	Manesar, Haryana	Helper in maintenance	Unskilled	Yes	Yes
60	Krishna pradhan	Manesar, Haryana	Silayi ka kaam	Skilled	Yes	Yes
61	Rina Devi	Manesar, Haryana	Power press	Skilled	Yes	No
62	Monu kumar	Manesar, Haryana	Packing	Semi-Skilled	Yes	Yes
63	Santosh	Manesar, Haryana	Operator	Skilled	Yes	No
64	Shekhar	Manesar, Haryana	Operator	Skilled	Yes	No
65	Sourabh Kumar Singh	Manesar, Haryana	Mechanical Work	Skilled	No	Yes
66	Fool Singh	Manesar, Haryana	Machine Operator	Skilled	Yes	No
67	Jaiprakash Mehto	Manesar, Haryana	Machine Operator	Skilled	No	No
68	Bhagwat	Manesar, Haryana	Machine chal-ate the	Skilled	No	Yes
69	MD Mumtaz	Manesar, Haryana	Labour	Unskilled	Yes	No
70	Pappu	Manesar, Haryana	Helper	Unskilled	No	No
71	Sunil sharma	Manesar, Haryana	Helper	Unskilled	Yes	No
72	Gafur Ansari	Manesar, Haryana	Helper	Unskilled	Yes	No
73	Roopa Devi	Manesar, Haryana	Helper	Unskilled	No	No
74	Puja Dutta	Manesar, Haryana	Production dena	-	Yes	No
75	Puja Dutta	Manesar, Haryana	Carpenter	Skilled	No	No
76	Arvind Kumar	Uttar Pradesh	CDC Operator	Skilled	Yes	No
77	Vipin verma	Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh	Loading & Un-loading	Unskilled	No	No
78	Surender	Rewadi, Haryana	Meter is kaam	-	Yes	No



	Name	Current Location	Occupation	Skill level	Received March Salary?	Received April Salary?
79	Anil Kumar	Mirzapur, Bihar	Tailor	Skilled	Yes	No
80	Roshan kumar	Manesar, Haryana	Molding Machine	Skilled	Yes	No
81	Yogesh	Mathura, Uttar Pradesh	Servicing Engineering	Skilled	Yes	Yes
82	Sajeet Kumar	Majmauni, Bihar	Power press machine chalte the	Skilled	No	No
83	Jitender	Manesar, Haryana	Beldar	-	Yes	No
84	Govind	Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh	Machine Operator	Skilled	No	No
85	Ram Kumar	Manesar, Haryana	Safayi karte hain	Unskilled	No	Yes
86	Rahul Namdev	Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh	Counting & Packing	Semi-Skilled	Yes	No
87	Ajay Kumar	Jalaun District, Uttar Pradesh	Quality Inspection	Skilled	No	No
88	Shob Nath Gautam	Ilahbad, Uttar Pradesh	Operator	Skilled	Yes	No
89	Ramsharan	Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh	Machine Operator	Skilled	No	No
90	Pooja Ram	Gonda, Uttar Pradesh	Labour	Unskilled	Yes	No
91	Dev Kumar	Gaya District, Bihar	Press man	Skilled	No	No
92	Vikash Gupta	Firozabad, Uttar Pradesh	Operator	Skilled	No	No
93	Jitender	Firozabad, Uttar Pradesh	Chips nikalta hu	-	Yes	No
94	Ajay	Etah district, Uttar Pradesh	CLC Machine Operator	Skilled	No	No
95	Rodas	Bulandsheher, Uttar Pradesh	Operator	Skilled	Yes	No
96	Vijay Kumar	Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh	Helper	Unskilled	Yes	No
97	Sunil Kumar	Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh	Operator	Skilled	Yes	No
98	Dinesh Kumar	Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh	Gaadi ka card banata hu	-	No	No
99	Pankaj	Ajamgard, Uttar Pradesh	Machine chalte the	Skilled	Yes	No
100	Adarsh Kumar Sharma	Gurgaon, Haryana	Machine chalte the	Skilled	No	No





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