

Collaborative Design Project

Progress report

Week 1

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Project Overview

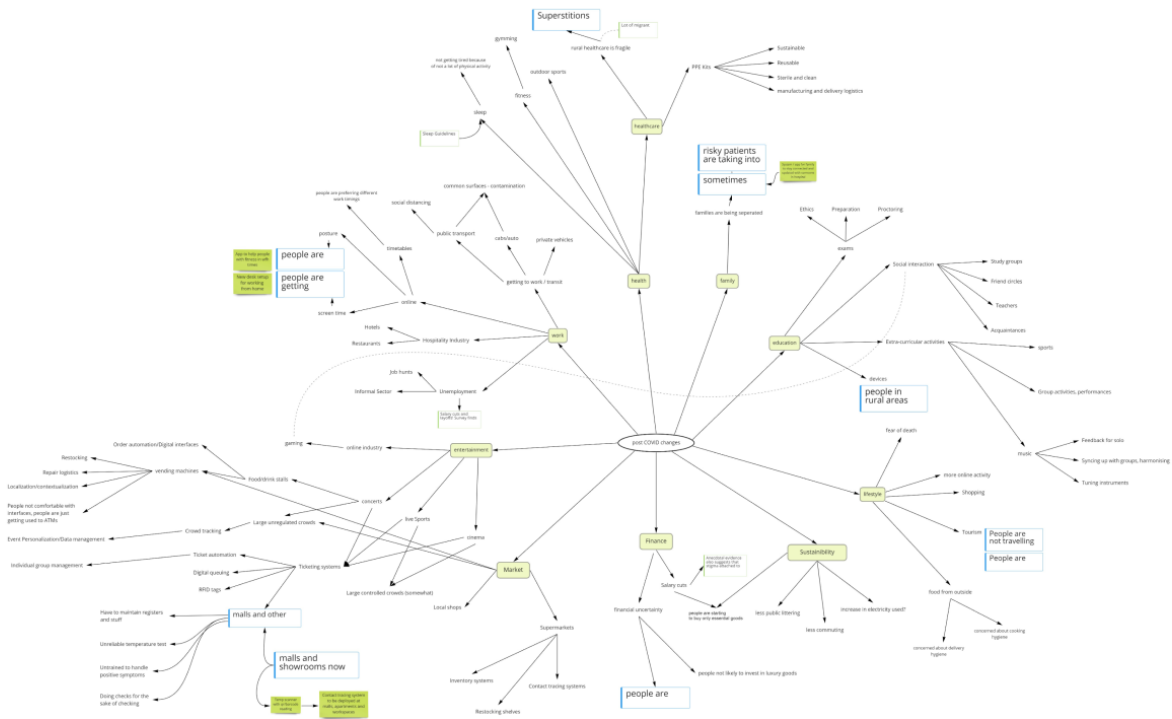
Since the pandemic, our country has been in a state of lockdown where businesses, entertainment, and every other non-essential service has been shut down. A major sector of the population (92.6%*) are unorganized workers who don't enjoy any social security benefits from their job. This would mean they would need to survive on their savings, in the scenario that they do have some. If they don't, it would mean nothing else but to prioritize putting food on the table for their families than help fight an invisible virus that they may never encounter.

In this project, we want to help workers of the unorganised sector get access to social benefits and financial security along with preparing them to overcome unforeseen challenges such as the pandemic.

Worldview Mapping

We initially started off by exploring different areas and how Covid has affected them. We made sure to identify opportunities rather than just difficulties that have surfaced during this time. Some of the broad areas we covered in our exploration:

- Entertainment
- Work
- Health
- Family
- Education
- Vacation/tourism
- Finance



img 1. Mind map of our exploration

We also looked at competitions that have materialised since Covid, and how other designers have replied to it to broaden our ideas about how Covid has changed the world.

We then narrowed down three areas we were interested in and started exploring it further. We looked at products that already existed as solutions or alternatives to the problems we identified.

Area 1: Entertainment

The entertainment industry has taken a massive hit and one of our team members being a part of Mood Indigo has experienced first hand the challenges such an organisation is facing. Recreating the social atmosphere and festive ambiance in a

virtual environment is a problem many companies have attempted to tackle, however, have still not reached a point of acceptance by the people.

Since virtual events are nothing new, since we have been consuming sports and athletic events for decades, and for many people, the virtual experience is the preferred medium. We were aiming to understand the essence of what makes these particular virtual experiences work and develop the technology of conducting such events much more accessible to creators and provide an immersive experience to the audience.

Area 2: Crowd Management

With communal spaces slowly opening up, precautionary measures such as social distancing, temperature checks, and regular hand sanitisation are crucial to contain the virus'. Security personnel almost everywhere are required to keep account of visitors and their body temperature that is measured on-site.

We found numerous issues with such an impulsively executed system where security guards were unaware of why such thorough accounting was necessary and what needs to be done when the temperature is not within the ideal range. Streamlining and educating both stakeholders in such a process was an opportunity where we felt we could intervene.

Area 3: The Unorganised Workers

With the majority of the Indian population working in the unorganised sector, they do not have any social benefits through their job. This means that they would have to rely on their savings, if they have any, to get through the lockdown phase.

Many independent workers; street vendors, small enterprise owners and service providers (plumber electricians) as well as contracted workers who were laid off

have been struggling to keep up. Government aid does not always reach everyone and continuing work in their existing profession is sometimes not an option with people more cautious about contamination and spread. We hoped to come up with an idea that would help make such workers better prepared for such events and help them get new jobs easily.

Understanding the Issues (Secondary research)

We selected Area 3; the Unorganised workers and moved forward to research and understand the current situation with workers and how they've been affected by the pandemic. We found multiple papers that quantified the severity of the problem, helped define and categorise workers based on profession and explained government policies that should be in place to help combat the situation.

1. SEWA: Impact of Coronavirus on the Informal Economy

Sewa.org

Income of workers

Street vendors, other small business owners and home workers have been significantly affected with fear of losing their source of income. Informal paid workers such as domestic help not affected as much, some employers are providing paid leave under the circumstances.

Trade in India

Supply chain has been disrupted along with uncertainty in import and export of materials from the country. Wholesale vendors have shut down and independent retailers are hiking prices making it difficult for families relying solely on their savings to make do.

Health and Sanitisation

Medical services are being quarantined off and focused solely on managing the Covid-19 situation. Social distancing is almost impossible in some communities. Concerns about domestic violence are rising rapidly with frustrated individuals having to stay at home for extended periods of time.

Recommendations on what the Government can do

SEVA goes over what different states have been doing to aid workers during the pandemic and gives examples of schemes other countries like Canada and South Korea have implemented to combat the same.

2. A study on Unorganized Sector and India's Informal Economy

Rinoj P K

Categorisation of workers in the unorganised sector

This paper helped us to identify parameters that have been used in the past to classify unorganised workers in India and help us understand some unique traits in the Indian workforce.

Home workers as a distinct category

Home workers in India are a significant part of the unorganised sector and contribute to the GDP of this country immensely. Under the broad category of self employed workers, there are 8.2 million home workers alone out of a total 69 million (NSS 1999-2000).

3. Report on Conditions of work and Promotion of Livelihoods in the Unorganised Sector

National Commission for Enterprise in the Unorganised Sector

In depth study of each category of workers

This paper gathers and analyses the socio-economic background of all categories of workers; wage workers, agricultural workers, and women workers in the non-agricultural sector. Data of education, gender, religion and caste are all graphed out and analysed.

4. Unemployment protection in the COVID-19 crisis: Country responses and policy considerations

International Labour Organisation

Unemployment in the Covid-19 crises

This document gives governments a set of guidelines to help respond to the crises. Emphasis the need for citizens to be provided with income security and further detailed methods of implementation that could be adopted to ensure the same.

Unemployment protection Schemes

Highlights two schemes to combat the crises. Providing employment retention benefits where corporations are given benefits such as tax reductions for providing job security and continued social benefits during the crises. The second method which would be more plausible for a country with a major Informal sector is unemployment benefits, where the government provides aid to workers who are not able to provide for themselves through financial schemes, subsidised rations, etc.

Highlights existing unemployment schemes

Provides guidance on planning such schemes and gives examples of how it's been done in the past across the globe; Botswana's wage subsidies, Partial employment retention benefits in European countries and Malaysia's employment insurance plan.

Digging Deeper (Primary Research)

Simultaneously we started investigating and talking to workers to understand how they've dealt with the situation personally. Since we were still at a preliminary stage in our project, we interviewed workers from diverse backgrounds and professions.

Interview 1: Coconut Seller

	Notes
1	Coconut Seller. Working for a year. Works from 9am-10pm.
2	Makes about 500 rupees per day. During lockdown he made less than 100-200 rupees.
3	Had to roam around the neighbourhood for business during lockdown.
4	Had to bear abuse from police and people. Only breadwinner in the family
5	Sets prices depending on cost from wholesale. Has to purchase straws and polythene bags separately.
6	Competition with other stall across the road. Prices will remain constant, they get coconuts from same seller, no worry about that.
7	Faith in Lord, doesn't compare prices. Has never spoken to other coconut seller.
8	Never tried to get a wage job, not confident about that, felt it was illogical.
9	Does not understand how a certificate would be useful about his experience. Feels no one would care about documentation.
10	Owns a Aadhaar card and Ration card. Uses ration card to get subsidised pricing on essentials

Insights

- Clear lack of communication between street vendors
- Lack of access to documentation prevents them from looking for better prospects.
- Has to work long hours to make ends meet.

Interview 2: Security Guard

	Notes
1	Security Guard at Mall. Working here for 5 years. Works in shifts.
2	Makes 9800 bucks a month, where 1k is deducted in the PF. Income was stable during lockdown and wasn't laid off.
3	Only earning person in the family, income was stable during lockdown but his scheduled increase in salary got cancelled.
4	Used to work in a biscuit factory in Haryana, then moved to a garment factory, then moved to Lucknow for job prospects and better education for his children.
5	He used to get wage increments in the factory too, where he used to work earlier.
6	There were increment in wages here too, but nowadays it has stopped.
7	Thankfully there wasn't suspension and he is confident about his job security.
8	There is a written agreement for his job and everything is formalised.
9	There are no chances of promotion, he'll stay a security guard here.
10	Lives quite close to his workplace, saves money on the commute.
11	Doesn't have a smartphone, but his wife has one, and she knows how to use it. Doesn't know how to use it.
12	Kids are using that smartphone for online classes right now.
13	He gets no leaves and very less holidays. There are not a lot of prospects of leaves in the security industry.

Insights

- Formalised industries have better wage structure and social security benefits for their employees.
- Such industries still don't provide career progression opportunities.

Interview 3: Restaurant Cook

	Notes
1	Chef from Restauraunt. Working since 1 month.
2	20 years experience as a cook, used to work at Idrees Biryani (very famous) for 5 years. went to qatar for training and worked at 3 star restauraunts.
3	Learnt skills from a master who used to serve the royal family.
4	7000-8000 when he got into the profession and now hes earning 13000.
5	Got this job because of his friend who knew about his skills and invited him.
6	He was working there on an informal verbal contract.
7	The employer takes care of the workers. Gives holidays and sick leave days. Accomodation provided. Helps with small medical expenses
8	Proud of his experience and teachers.
9	Owned Aadhar card and passport (worked in Qatar)
10	Does use a smartphone but unaware of technology. confident to use features as long as its in hindi.
11	Excited about the idea of something to keep track of his skills and connect him with other people.

Insights

- This interview reinforced that informal sector workers don't get appropriately rewarded for their skill sets.
- The major medium for sharing information regarding job prospects is word of mouth.

Goals

The broad goal is to give the right to information, adequate wages and a level of autonomy to the people working in the informal sector, and give them an opportunity to avail social benefits and deal with unforeseen circumstances that they may face.

Some of the more specific objectives we have highlighted are to make sure we stay on track through the course of this project.

- To give bargaining power to the workers.
- To help them track their progress and give them a way to represent their skills.
- To give government data of the informal working sector for analysis and policy making.

Timeline

We hope to continue further User interviews and talk to experts who have interacted and worked with a diverse section of the informal workforce to gain their insights on the situation. We hope to narrow down to a more specific User group to focus the research we do and identify problems, opportunities and concerns at the ground level.

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