



## Coalition for Responsible Sugarcane India (CRSI) *December 2024 Update*

### Introduction

Since its launch on July 30, 2024, the Coalition for Responsible Sugarcane India (CRSI), has worked collaboratively with leading sugar sector stakeholders to co-design and rollout its long-term strategy; governance systems of the Coalition; and ground-level activities. All of these have been done keeping with the overall vision to address systemic issues confronting the sugar sector, by embedding and promoting responsible and sustainable practices across the sugarcane value chain in India. Towards that end the Coalition has already initiated steps towards rollout of activities and initiatives, with guidance from the CRSI Steering Committee members.

### Focus areas

CRSI, has identified **three focus areas** that constitute its strategy and will include:

- **Coalition Building:** Leading sugar sector stakeholders have come together as the Steering Committee to develop the operational strategy of this coalition
- **Outcome oriented Projects:** piloting and scaling on-ground target driven outcome-oriented activities involving multiple stakeholders for the benefit of farm workers, small holder farmers and communities
- **Capacity building of Sectoral Stakeholders:** Trainings and workshops for sugar sector stakeholders including building the capacity of mills, small holder farmers, labour brokers, farm workers, and communities on responsible business conduct and the principles of sustainable sugarcane
- **Dialogues and Knowledge Creation:** Technology enabled tools and systems; action-based applied research; providing a platform for ongoing engagement and dialogues with workers, communities and their legitimate representatives, and conducting events with stakeholders at national, state and local levels. Documenting industry good practices and success stories to guide similar efforts outside the Coalition's work and creating a buy-in among stakeholders for principles of responsible and sustainable sugarcane for India

### Interventions

On each of these focus areas the following specific initiatives will be undertaken:

- A project in select location(s) of Maharashtra that is centred on a systemic approach to collaboratively finding solutions to improve social sustainability in the sugarcane value chain especially for farm labourers. The project that is likely to be on the ground in January, 2025, with an expert implementing agency is the setting up of migration centres specifically for migrant sugarcane farm workers as a one stop shop for pre-departure onboarding, information and services. Examples of support that is proposed to be provided to address challenges faced by migrant farm workers include provision of support services at the time seasonal migration to the sugar fields (pre-departure orientation on worker rights, first aid, health and safety, link to government schemes and services); training and support for entrepreneurship and improving access to grievance mechanisms. The project also aims to



build greater community resilience by working with local grassroot organisations on issues such as financial literacy, vocational trainings, etc.

Key aspects of this programme:

- The project is designed to address systemic human rights risks in districts of origin of migrant workers in Maharashtra, keeping in mind the need to address systemic issues that are rooted in the socio-economic, geographical and cultural contexts of the local population.
  - The project design includes building institutional capacities at a community level that will continue to positively impact the community beyond the project duration
  - The project is premised on the engagement and collaboration of key stakeholders in the sugarcane supply chains so as to ensure a comprehensive, participatory and sustainable approach
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- Onsite trainings for *Muqaddams* with the intent to improve farm worker wellbeing, including health and safety, wage transparency and redress mechanisms. The aim would also be to highlight benefits that would accrue to *Muqaddams* who take such measures.
  - Action research that identifies critical action areas on infrastructural facilities needed to improve working conditions (including work-related rest and sleeping areas); aid formalization of contracts between *Muqaddams* and farm workers; and related practical steps to ensure adoption of good practices related to decent work for farm labour

Design and implementation of these initiatives will be done based on inputs from the CRSI Steering Committee, experts and in partnership with key value chain actors. The CRSI Secretariat will coordinate the activities implemented in partnership with different specialised organisations.