

UNDERSTANDING GAPS IN SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL WELFARE PROVISIONS FOR CIRCUITAL MIGRANT WORKERS IN RAJASTHAN AND UTTAR PRADESH



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ABBREVIATIONS

AAY	Antyodaya Anna Yojana
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIU	Active Internet Users
ASK	Apna Seva Kendra
BC	Banking Correspondent
BOCW	Building and Other Construction Workers
CSC	Common Service Centres
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DDUGKY	Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushal Yojana
DLSA	Delhi State Legal Services Authority
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GSVS	Gramin evam Samajik Vikas Sansthan
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Scheme
IDI	In-Depth Interview
IEC	Information Education and Communication
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISMW	Inter State Migrant Workmen
KII	Key Informant Interview
MGNREGS	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
ML	Machine Learning
MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
MoLE	Ministry of Labour and Employment
MoSPI	Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
NAPS	National Apprentice Promotion Scheme
NFSA	National Food Security Act

OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PDS	Public Distribution System
PHH	Priority Households
PLFS	Periodic Labour Force Survey
PMGKY	PM Garib Kalyan Yojana
PMJAY	Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana
POSH	Prevention of Sexual Harassment
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institution
SC	Scheduled Caste
SHG	Self Help Group
ST	Scheduled Tribe
UP	Uttar Pradesh
UPI	United Payments Interface
UW	Unorganised Workers



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 brought to light the vulnerabilities, precarity and exploitation faced by migrant workers, particularly in destination regions, due to the absence of adequate social protection and welfare measures, inadequate dynamic data, and lack of cohesive policy actions. Despite legislative frameworks governing the unorganised sector, employing the majority of India's workforce, implementation challenges persist, significantly impacting the lives and livelihoods of migrant workers operating within the informal economy.

According to the Census 2011, 45.6 crore migrants were enumerated based on place of last residence – a number representing 37 percent of the total population as per Census 2011 population. Of these identified migrants identified in Census 2011, nearly 4.14 crore reported work as the reason for migration.¹ During COVID-19 and its aftermath, multiple estimates of *temporary, short term or circuital labour migration in India* varied from 1.5 crores to 10 crores migrant workers, a variance that indicates the ambiguity of the phenomenon.²

Census data from 2011 revealed Uttar Pradesh as the state with the highest number of inter-state migrants, totalling 1.23 crores. Most male migrants in Uttar Pradesh cited work or better employment as primary reasons for migration (55.8%), exceeding the national average of 23.9 percent.³ In the case of Rajasthan, a 2014 report highlights that 46.3 percent of households have at least one member migrating for work, particularly in the unorganised rural sector, totalling 57.9 lakh individuals.⁴

This study focuses on internal labour migration in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh and attempts to shed light on the intricate dynamics of labour migration across two identified districts in each state (*Rajsamand and Beawar in Rajasthan, Bahraich and Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh*). It explores and attempts to unravel the patterns and trends of migration in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, with an emphasis on what drives people to migrate. It also looks at key challenges faced by migrant workers, specifically with regard to their individual as well as households' access to social security benefits, both in source and destination regions. The findings from this study will help multiple stakeholders like policymakers, philanthropies, multilateral organisations, etc. for well-informed programme financing, planning and execution of policy measures for the welfare of migrant workers.

The study reveals that the majority of migrant workers are males (77.3%), mostly from Other Backward Classes (63.2%), with no (36.7%) or little education (37.4% did not complete matriculation) and hadn't undergone any skill development training (97.4%). The median age for migrating for the first time was reported as 19 years by the migrant labourers.

The precariousness of labour migrants and the temporary jobs they are involved in was brought to the fore by the fact that almost half (44.6%) of the migrants reported moving to multiple destinations in a single migration event. Nearly 45 percent of migrant workers identified as intra-state migrants in the previous or present migration, while 37.1 percent reported themselves as inter-state migrants. Economic factors, such as *unavailability of work at the source* (44.6%), and *the pursuit of better employment opportunities* (38.9%) emerge as primary drivers of migration - underscoring the significance of economic considerations in migration decision-making.

Employment sectors vary substantially between the two states, reflecting regional economic disparities. While the construction sector dominates employment in Uttar Pradesh, drawing 71.7 percent of migrants, Rajasthan sees a significant proportion engaged in the *stone crushing and loading unloading activities as part of the stone Mining/Quarrying industry* (38.9%). Remittances play a crucial role in sustaining households, with migrant workers sending significant amounts back home, contributing to the broader community's economic

[1] Registrar General and Census Commissioner, Migration Tables: D3: Migrants by place of last residence, duration of residence and reason for migration – 2011, Census of India 2011, RGI, New Delhi, 2019

[2] Ravi Srivastava, "Vulnerable Internal Migrants in India and Portability of Social Security and Entitlements", Working Paper No. 02/2020, Centre for Employment Studies Working Paper Series, Institute for Human Development, New Delhi, 2020.

[3] <https://migrationaffairs.com/an-overview-of-out-migration/>

[4] Sharma, A. (2014). Their own country: A profile of labour migration from Rajasthan. Centre for Migration and Labour Solutions, Aajeevika Bureau.

well-being, averaging *INR 22,118* for each migration cycle having a median duration of five months. However, challenges persist, including substandard living conditions, irregular employment, and hazardous working environments, particularly in sectors like stone crushing and mining.

Gender dynamics also play a significant role, with female labour migrants experiencing a degree of financial independence but facing challenges in decision-making regarding migration. The study underscores the need for improved awareness and accessibility of social security schemes among migrant communities, despite government initiatives like the PM Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) and schemes under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

This study also brings forth some top-level recommendations based on the findings and discussions with multiple stakeholders across both states.⁵



Generate Dynamic Data: Periodic enumeration and evidence-generation exercises should be undertaken to identify trends in internal labour migration, enabling targeted policy planning and execution.



Establish Single Window Systems: Dedicated state-specific platforms for migrant worker registration and data management should be set up to facilitate access to social security benefits and enhance last-mile service delivery.



Prioritise Philanthropic Funding: Investment in grassroots organisations and data initiatives can help create Panchayat Level Migrant Workers Social registries, enabling better planning and implementation of welfare programmes.



Strengthen Rural Livelihoods and Climate Resilience: Efforts should focus on increasing work availability under schemes like MGNREGS and promoting natural resource management to create resilient livelihoods providing secondary income opportunities in the agricultural sector.



Establish Safe Migration Resource Centres: Centres providing information on social security benefits and offering grievance redressal should be set up in high out-migration districts and receiving regions to support migrant workers.



Enhance Support for Women and Children: Programmes should be strengthened to support the education of children accompanying migrant parents, and institutional mechanisms should ensure the implementation of regulatory provisions protecting the rights of women and children at work sites.

Internal labour migration in India is a complex phenomenon shaped by economic, social, and environmental factors. Understanding migration patterns, drivers, and challenges is crucial for policymakers, philanthropies, and multilateral organisations to formulate effective interventions aimed at ensuring safe and dignified migration. By addressing issues such as inadequate social protection, poor working conditions, and gender disparities, stakeholders can work towards creating an enabling environment that promotes the well-being and rights of labour migrants, ultimately fostering inclusive and sustainable development.

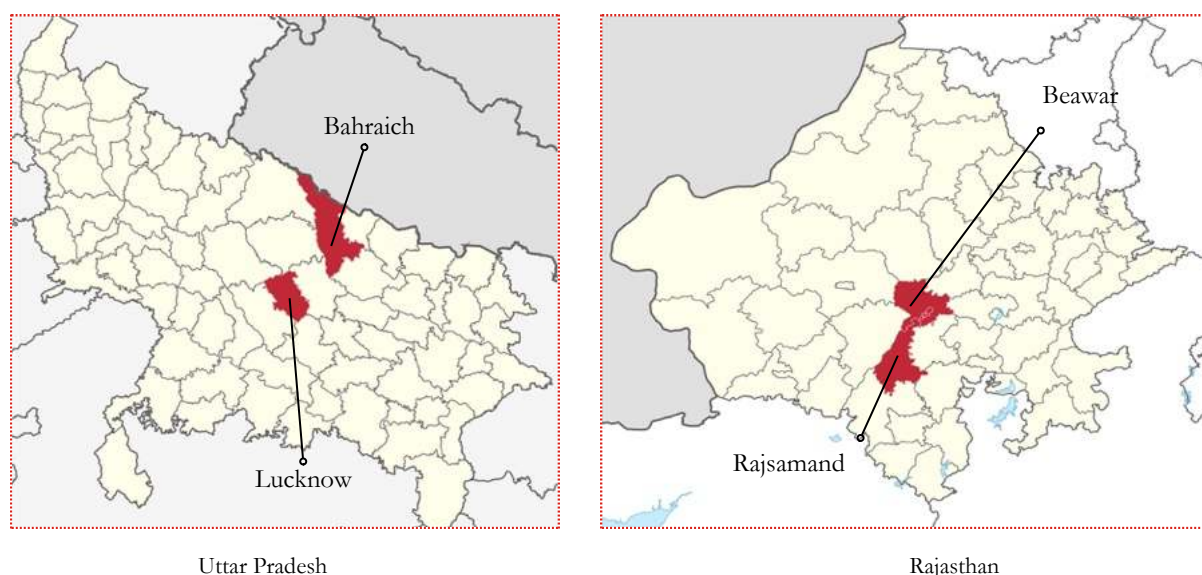
[5] Please see Role of Stakeholders and Recommendations for details.

ABOUT THE STUDY



The objectives of the study were assessed using a mixed methods approach. Using qualitative and quantitative research methods of data collection and analysis, the two methods were employed to complement each other. Thus, allowing for a comprehensive evaluation, wherein inferences are drawn after observations from both methods are compared and reflected upon. The study was conducted in two districts of Rajasthan – Beawar and Rajsamand, and two districts of Uttar Pradesh – Bahraich and Lucknow, between December 2023 and January 2024. The study districts were selected in consultation with the Tata Trusts, Centre for microFinance (CmF), local partners GSVS in Rajasthan, and Trust Community Livelihoods team in Uttar Pradesh. The study districts were selected based on a) High in-migration, b) High out-migration, and c) Presence and previous work of the Tata Trusts, CmF and the local partners on Mission Gaurav and the Tata Trusts Migration Initiative in general.

Figure A: Study geography



The study included

637

Household
Surveys

Tools for Data Collection

Quantitative

The quantitative method of data collection focused on examining the socio-economic characteristics of migrant workers in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, assessing the accessibility of social protection schemes for migrant workers, details around migration including the reason for migration and the frequency of migrating, the level of debt and its nature as well as the remittance pattern of migrant workers.

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data around these different indicators. Two different interview schedules were developed for conducting the surveys – household-level interview schedule for conducting interviews with migrant workers at the source and individual-level interview schedule for migrant workers at the destination. All the quantitative interviews were conducted using this structured schedule that was translated to Hindi and digitised using the SurveyCTO application. The consent form was integrated within the interview schedule and no interview could be initiated without the consent of the respondent.

Qualitative

The qualitative aspect of the study focused on understanding the experiences of migrant workers and their families at the destination as well as the source, their experiences and challenges in accessing social security schemes and bringing out the factors that trigger migration. The team undertook focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs) with the migrant workers at the source and destination regions to understand these in detail. It also conducted key informant interviews (KIIs) with government officials and project partners to understand their experiences of working for migrant workers and the various challenges they perceive.

Sampling Strategy and Data Collection

Quantitative

The sample size for primary data collection was determined using Cochran's sample size calculation at 95 percent confidence level and 5 percent level of precision to achieve robust estimates. The calculation further assumed 50 percent of maximum variability to take care of potential dropouts among the sampled units. Using this method, the data collection exercise aimed at conducting a total of 800 surveys across the states of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh but eventually ended up oversampling as respondents were keen on getting enumerated as part of the study.

For the purpose of the study, Rajsamand in Rajasthan and Bahraich in UP were treated as source districts from where migrant workers travelled to other districts or states to work. Beawar in Rajasthan and Lucknow in UP were treated as destination districts where migrant workers came from other districts in the state in search of work. Thus, in Rajsamand and Bahraich household level surveys were conducted with migrant households, while in Beawar and Lucknow individual level surveys were conducted with migrant individuals.

Table A - Sample size for the survey					
State	District	Block	Sample/ block	Sample/ district	Sample/state
Rajasthan	Beawar	Jawaja	146	366	434
		Masuda	124		
		Beawar	96		
	Rajsamand	Bhim	68	68	
Uttar Pradesh	Bahraich	Risiya	146	301	557
		Pakharpur	155		
	Lucknow	Lucknow Municipal Corporation	256	256	
Total					991

Qualitative

The qualitative research gives a snapshot of the experiences of the stakeholders i.e., the migrant workers and their families, and the functionaries associated with providing access to social security schemes to migrant workers through a representative sample. The sample fulfils all possible variability of data/information. In qualitative work, one way of assessing representation is thematic saturation or redundancy of additional information. Ideally, new data is collected within each group of interest (here programme functionaries and migrant workers) until saturation (i.e., to arrive at a juncture in data collection at which little to no new information is being gained in each additional interview).

The saturation principle was deployed and 11 focus group discussions were conducted with out-migrant households in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, 11 focus group discussions with out-migrant households and 22 key-informant interviews with government functionaries, community level functionaries (e-mitra, CSC operator etc) and program functionaries (ASK functionary) A reference questionnaire was prepared in advance for KIIs, FGDs and IDIs to guide the researchers. The tools were referential and researchers only used them to loosely structure the interviews, FGDs and interactions during the process of data collection. The verbal data was recorded using dictaphones and each of the interactions was transcribed into text for textual analysis; observations were systematically entered by researchers on a rubric. Names and other personal or professional details have been kept confidential or transcribed under an anonymous alias, to maintain the ethical integrity of the research.

Methodology

Quantitative

Quantitative data was collected through household and individual level surveys of migrant households and migrant individuals. In order to understand the coverage and challenges at the household level for migrant households and migrant individuals, at both the source and destination, stratified random sampling technique was followed. At the source, the respondents included households which experienced at least one incidence of migration by any member, either migrated at the time of survey (current labour migrant) or has returned from destination within the last 1 year (return labour migrant). At the destination, the respondents were individual migrant workers categorised according to the sectors of work available in the destination locations. A screening question was used to identify migrant households before deploying the core interview schedule. Since the primary concern of the survey was labour migration or labour migrants, we defined migrant households as, *any household with at least one adolescent or adult member who is currently either a current migrant worker and is present at the destination, or is a current migrant worker but is currently temporarily at home, or a return migrant worker who was a migrant worker anytime in the last 12 months for any duration of time*. For the purpose of the study, we took inter-district, intra-district, and inter-state labour migration into consideration.

Qualitative

The qualitative part of the study considered 'household' as the fundamental category with which discussions were conducted to understand the community perspectives and experiences of migration. Focus-group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDI) with migrant households were supplemented with key-informant interviews (KII), which were conducted with various government officials to understand the institutional perspectives on migration. The focus-group discussions (FGD) were conducted with 'out-migrants' across marginalised social groups (SCT, ST and OBC) to understand the challenges they faced in accessing social security measures at source locations and the levels of access they had to social security measures in destination locations with the aim to inform local public service delivery as well as to ensure inter-state coordination.

On the other hand, in-depth interviews were conducted with 'in-migrant' households at destination locations. Various studies have informed that migration is seldom an individual strategy and is largely undertaken as a household strategy, and it was important to understand the entire household's experience as migrants as well as the entire household's perspective on access to social goods and services. At this point, in-migrants were disaggregated as intra and inter-district migrants and also across their social group categories to bring out carefully the differences in their experiences and levels of access. Gendered experiences of migration were brought out from household interactions, as such experiences are intersectional and not overshadowed by male experiences. However, wherever required women respondents were engaged separately to ensure that their voices were not drowned out by the presence of male respondents.



Chapter 1

INTERNAL LABOUR MIGRATION IN
INDIA – AN OVERVIEW

Since Independence, India has passed through more than seven and a half decades of phased economic growth. Initially focused on agriculture and state-led heavy enterprises development (steel plants, power plants, dams, mining, etc.) for energy production, the nation's growth trajectory shifted considerably towards manufacturing, textiles and apparels, information technology and services with the post-1991 economic reforms.

Over the last two decades, there have been considerable capital expenditure-driven growth in the public sector and private sector investments in developing critical road infrastructure, new technologies, ports and shipping, and airports, thus making the construction sector the biggest labour-intensive sector, followed by manufacturing. Much of this economic growth, as evident from the table below, has been possible only with the blood and sweat of crores of migrant workers travelling thousands of kilometres from their non-descript villages to urban and peri-urban metropolitan areas, contributing to achieving such mammoth projects. Migrant labourers have acted as the wheels of progress for economic growth and development.

Time Period	Key Industries	Major Out-Migrating States	Major Destination States	Key States of Industrial Advancement / Key Anchoring States	Social Security Measures, Acts and Legislations
1950-1970	Agriculture, electricity, steel, machinery, chemicals, transport, coal, steel, petroleum	Himachal Pradesh, Mysore, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Tripura	Punjab, Kolkata, Maharashtra,	Punjab, Gujarat, Madras, Mysore, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar	1. The Personal Injuries (Emergency) Provisions Act (1962) The Maternity Benefit Act (1961) 2. The Employees Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act (1952) 3. Plantation Labour Act 1961 Contract Labour Act (1970)
1971-1990	Textiles, electricity, chemicals, steel, agriculture, mining and quarrying, coal, petroleum, non-metallic minerals	Andaman and Nicobar, Chandigarh, Himachal, Haryana, Meghalaya	Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Orissa	Maharashtra, Gujarat, West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana	1. The Payment of Gratuity Rules (1972) 2. Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act (1979) 3. Child Labour Act (1986)

Time Period	Key Industries	Major Out-Migrating States	Major Destination States	Key States of Industrial Advancement / Key Anchoring States	Social Security Measures, Acts and Legislations
1991-2000	Electricity, coal, telecom, textiles, renewable energy, machinery and transport equipment, steel, petroleum, Information Technology, Services	Haryana, Maharashtra, West Bengal	Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh	Orissa, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Punjab, Assam, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu	1. National Social Assistance Program (1995) 2. The Employees Provident Fund & Miscellaneous Provisions Act (1996) 3. The Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Cess Act (1996)
2001-2010	Telecom, Beverages, Tobacco, Transport equipment, Metals and alloys, non-metallic minerals, chemicals, IT and electronics, agriculture	Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Goa, Daman and Diu	Maharashtra, Delhi, Chennai, Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar	Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh	1. MGNREGA, 2005 National Pension Scheme (2004) 2. The Unorganised Workers Social Security Act (2008) 3. Right to Education (2009)
2011-Present	Electronics, services, steel, petroleum products, textiles, transport manufacturing, metals, steel, electricity	Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan	Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana	Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh	1. National Food Security Act (2013) 2. Employees Compensation (Amendment) Act (2017) 3. Maternity Benefit Act (2017) 4. Code on Wages (2019)

The Economic Survey of India for the year 2017⁶ in its chapter on Internal Migration in India, analysed railway passenger data between 2011-2016 and analysed Census 2011 migration data, to show that estimated internal work-related migration for the period 2011-2016 indicated an annual average flow of close to 90 lakh people across the states. Similarly, it also used a Cohort-based Migration Metric (CMM) estimating that annually, inter-state labour mobility averaged *50-60 lakh people*, comparing Census data between 2001 and 2011. This surge represented a nearly double increase in the span of 20 years.

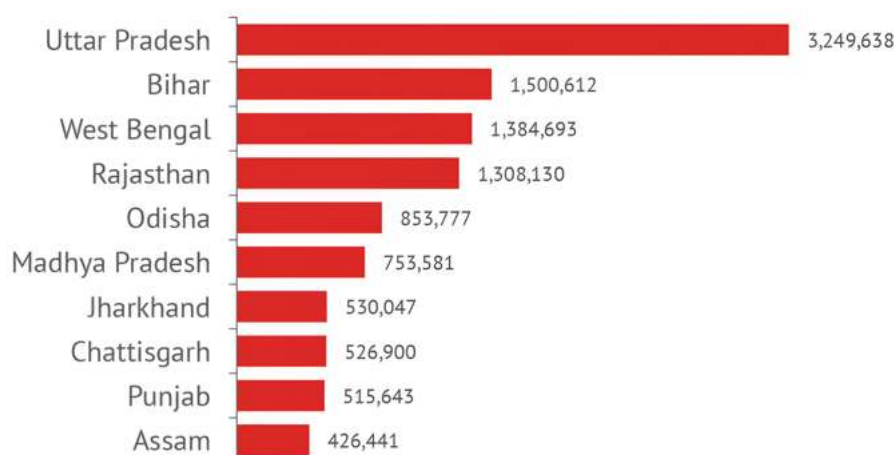
[6] <https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/budget2017-2018/es2016-17/echap12.pdf>

As per the 2011 census, the data on migration by place of last residence in India shows that the total number of migrants is 45.4 crores (considering all durations of residence), of which 14.1 crores (31.1%) are men and 31.3 crores (68.9%) are women. Among women, marriage is the most important reason for migration (Census, 2011). This count is likely to miss a significant number of short-term ‘circular’ or circuital migrants⁷ because they have as much chance of being counted in their place of birth or last residence as they do at their new destination.⁸ While Census migration data is useful for understanding certain aspects of migration, it has limitations in capturing circular migration and female migration for work.⁹

According to Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS 2020-21), the total migration rate in India was 28.9% in 2020-21, of which 10.8% migrated due to employment-related reasons such as *in search of employment/better employment, to take up employment/work including business, proximity to place and transfer and loss of job/lack of employment opportunities*.¹⁰

After the first lockdown during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India, in its reply to Lok Sabha in September 2020, stated that close to 1.06 crores returned to their home states on foot during March-June 2020, including those who travelled during the COVID-19 pandemic-induced lockdown.¹¹

Figure 1: Distribution of 1.06 crore migrant workers who returned during the pandemic



Source: MoLE's reply to Lok Sabha, September 2020

[7] Review of existing studies and instances from the field-work allowed us to understand that the terms used for classifying the migration of the marginalised sections reflect inherent limitations. Prevalent classifications such as, seasonal migration correlate to specific seasonality of engagement, especially co-relating to agricultural seasons. Our experiences, on the other hand, reflect that such specificity does not hold when migrants break out of such seasonal arrangements in favour of other engagements, rendering such definitions moot. Cyclical migration specifies a repeated periodicity and temporal fixity in going out for and returning from work spells, which also does not hold when migrant workers stay back for indefinite periods and do not maintain any periodicity due to various contingencies. Circular migration also fails to capture the empirical complexity adequately as its correlation with a fixed destination often falls short of reflecting the shifts migrant workers undergo in terms of their destinations, once away from their home, for marginally better wages or other conveniences. Reflecting upon the inadequacies, this study decided to employ the term ‘circuital’ in order to capture the complexities involved in such migration which otherwise tends to get invisibilised given the limitations of the terms previously used.

[8] The definitions adopted by the NSSO and the census are unlikely to result in reliable estimates of short-term migration. The census defines a migrant as a person residing in a place that is different from his or her place of birth or “usual place of last residence”, where the latter refers to a place of residence for six months or more. This is likely to miss a significant number of short-term migrants who have as much of a chance of being counted in their place of birth or last residence as they do at their new destination.

[9] <https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/budget2017-2018/es2016-17/echap12.pdf>

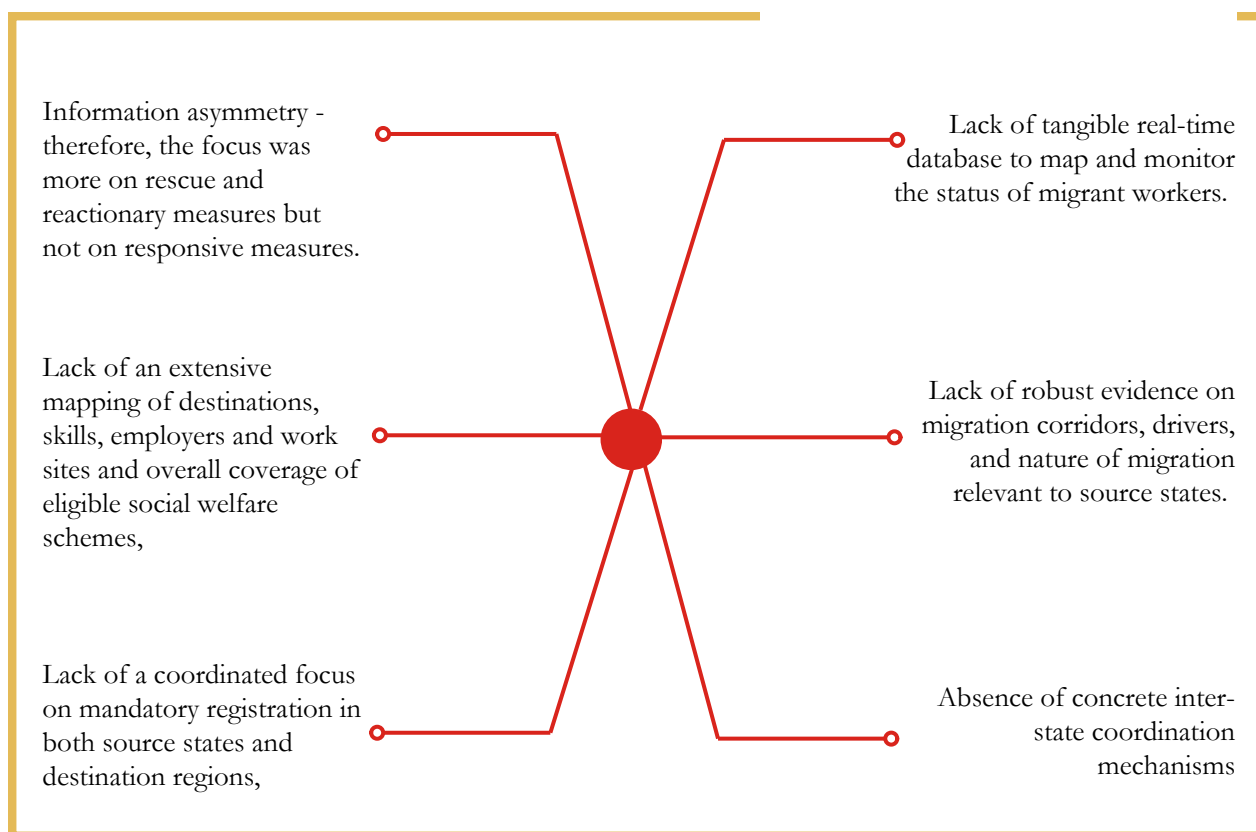
[10] <https://labour.gov.in/sites/default/files/pib1941077.pdf> accessed on 12th March 2024

[11] <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/over-1-crore-migrant-labourers-return-to-home-states-on-foot-during-mar-jun-govt/article61702000.ece>

However, the Supreme Court during the hearing of the case on migrant workers, referred to the PLFS 2017-18 which estimated approximately 38.4 crores unorganised sector workers as migrant workers.¹² According to PLFS 2020-21, India's total migration rate is 28.9%, with 87.5 % being intra-state migrants, 11.8 % inter-state migrants, and 0.7 % international migrants.

Despite legislations, laws, and statutes governing the unorganised sector of India, which employs nearly 83% of the workforce,¹³ the lack of enforceability, compliance, and implementation has strongly impacted the lives and livelihoods of migrant workers, who operate on the fringes within the informal sector.¹⁴ The informal sector remains a significant job creator in developing countries like India, contributing significantly to income and employment generation. Currently, it is estimated to comprise over 38 crore workers in India.¹⁵

The COVID-19 pandemic, its aftermath and the unprecedented migrant workers crisis brought to the fore some key policy and institutional gaps which were highlighted by researchers, civil society organizations, state governments and even the judiciary, i.e., the Honourable Supreme Court of India in its judgement on the plight of migrant workers. They include -



In response to the crisis, both the Central and State governments swiftly implemented relief measures, such as the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) and direct cash transfers by multiple state governments. PMGKAY provided free good grains at 5 kg per person per month to over 81 crore beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act (NFSA). In December 2023, the Central government announced that it would provide free food grains to about 81.35 crore beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) for the next three years from Jan 1, 2024.¹⁶

[12] <http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/content/474428/order-of-the-supreme-court-of-india-regarding-migrant-and-unorganised-workers-in-india-31012023/>

[13] Murthy, S. R. (2019, November). Measuring informal economy in India-Indian experience. In Seventh IMF Statistical Forum, Washington, DC. (Computed from NSS 68th unit level data on employment unemployment, 2011-12 and Periodic Labour Force Survey, 2017-18)

[14] Ibid.

[15] https://mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Migration%20in%20India%20RI.16082023.pdf

[16] <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/pm-garib-kalyan-anna-yojana-cabinet-extends-free-foodgrain-scheme-for-five-years/article67586534.ece>

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Standing Committee on Labour, Textile & Skill Development, Lok Sabha in 2021-22 in two subsequent reports, recommended the setting up of a real-time & robust database of intra and inter-state migrant workers by both source and destination state and its integration with portals of various converging departments. The Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan was launched to provide employment in 116 districts across six states with a high concentration of returning migrant workers.

The NITI Aayog also worked on a Draft Policy on Migration and Welfare of Migrant Workers and submitted the following recommendations to the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India:

The need for convergence across different line departments and the establishment of a special Migrant Workers Welfare Directorate at the Ministry of Labour and Employment which will work closely with other ministries.

The need to improve data on migration by having a central database to help employers “fill the gap between demand and supply” and ensure “the maximum benefit of social welfare schemes”.

Create migration resource centres in high out-migration and in-migration zones.

Facilitate Migration: Government policies should not hinder but seek to facilitate internal migration.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs should address issues of night shelters, short-stay homes, workers’ hostels, and seasonal accommodation for labour migrants in cities.

Setting up grievance handling cells and fast-track legal responses by state governments with high outflow of migrant workers and high inflow of migrant workers.

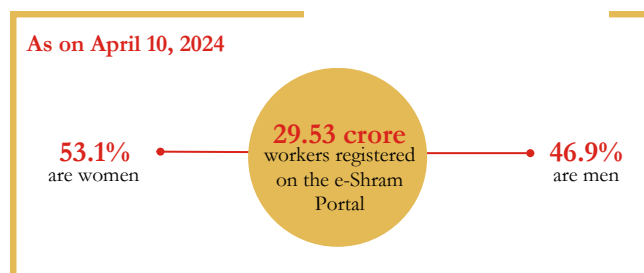
Bringing together different sectoral concerns related to migration, including social protection, housing, health, and education.

The top five source states, including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Rajasthan, and Odisha, accounted for 72.5% of returning migrant workers as per the data that was submitted by the Government of India in Lok Sabha (Refer to Figure 1 earlier).¹⁷ Post-COVID-19, after the reverse exodus of migrant workers, the state governments also made efforts to absorb the increased workforce at the source locations through schemes like MGNREGS and other welfare activities. The Government of India scaled up the One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) initiative across all states upon the Supreme Court's directive in 2021, to ensure the portability of welfare schemes, especially access to the Public Distribution System (PDS) - envisaged to enable labour migrants (inter-state and intra-state) to avail ration from the nearest PDS shop in the place of their current stay.

[17] <https://sansad.in/getFile/annex/255/AU2193.pdf?source=pqars>

Further in 2022, and then in 2023 the Supreme Court in the same case instructed the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India to enable and ensure linkages of welfare benefits to all workers registered through the e-Shram Portal.

In 2021, the Ministry of Labour and Employment launched the e-Shram¹⁸ portal for the creation of a comprehensive national database of unorganised workers, aimed to register the unorganised sector workers, highlighting the need for a robust and long-term social security framework to address the significant volume of migrant workers across the country.



In the National Conference of State Labour Ministers in August 2022, the Ministry of Labour and Employment also reiterated¹⁹ the need to integrate multiple national and state-level data stacks (particularly the ONORC/NFSA Ration cards) to identify migrant workers for targeted welfare schematic coverage. In 2023, the Honourable Supreme Court directed the Government of India to ensure strict compliance to link all workers registered under e-Shram to NFSA and all migrant workers under e-Shram to ONORC.²⁰

In a recent order,²¹ the Supreme Court has instructed all state governments and union territories to provide ration cards to about eight crore ‘migrant’ workers registered in the e-Shram portal but not covered under the National Food Security Act within two months.

As evident above, despite genuine concerns and will to act, the public policy discourse in India is still unclear on how to delineate, in clear terms, *who a migrant worker is*. Instead, by considering ‘unorganised workers’ as a broad category for intervention, policy actors seem to have blurred the critical differences between migrants and non-migrants. This is especially a problem in the context of identification for social welfare schematic eligibility, access and uptake, much of which in India is targeted based on domicile specifications.

Other than vulnerabilities associated with the unorganised nature of work, migrants routinely experience poor access to civic amenities because they are unaccounted for in official data/estimation exercises due to the short-term and circuital migration patterns and are often unable to verify their identities at destination locations. Without minimal social networks and no voting rights in destination regions, political intermediaries in major destination regions often have no incentive to connect them with services, rendering them ‘invisible’.

Labour migration from Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan

As of April 10th, 2024, a total of 29.53 crores of unorganised sector workers have registered on e-Shram across India. Uttar Pradesh has the highest registration at 8.35 crore workers, and Rajasthan at the 6th position with a total of 1.37 crore registered workers.²²

The top sectors of work in both states are *agriculture, domestic and household work, construction, and apparel*, with Rajasthan having a disproportionately high number of workers engaged within the agriculture sector compared to Uttar Pradesh. Post-lockdown data submitted by Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan to the Ministry of Labour and Employment indicates that 32.49 lakh and 13.08 lakh migrants, respectively, returned to their home states.²³

[18] <https://eshram.gov.in/>

[19] <http://www.nclt.nipathi2022.in/images/Thematic%20Session%201%20eShram%2025%20-%2026th%20August%202022%20V6.2-2.pdf>

[20] https://www.livewlaw.in/pdf_upload/215720224150243621judgement20-apr-2023-469326.pdf

[21] <https://thewire.in/law/sc-reiterates-april-2023-order-directs-states-uts-to-provide-ration-cards-to-8-crore-migrants>

[22] <https://eshram.gov.in/dashboard>

[23] <https://sansad.in/getFile/annex/255/AU2193.pdf?source=pgars>

Census data from 2011 revealed Uttar Pradesh as the state with the highest number of inter-states out migrants, totalling 1.23 crores. While Census 2011 primarily represents long-term migration, a report by Aajeevika Bureau on “Labour Migration from Rajasthan” highlights that 46.3% of households in Rajasthan have at least one member migrating for work for at least three months. The total population estimated to be migrating for work in the unorganised, informal sector from rural Rajasthan is 57.9 lakhs.²⁴

Using the unit level data from the 64th round (2007-08) of the National Sample Survey (NSS), Singh²⁵ tried to explore the determinants of rural male outmigration from Uttar Pradesh. The study revealed that most of the male out-migrants were from the household type self-employed in agriculture and moreover those who were having marginal landholdings. The trend of rural male out migration was dominant in the eastern region of the state. The major destinations of rural male out migrants were Delhi, Maharashtra, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Gujarat, Uttarakhand, and Daman & Diu. Majority of the rural male out-migrants (52.27 percent) belonged to the OBC category. The paper also highlighted that the major reason of the rural male out migration was employment oriented and in that highest number of out migrations was to take up employment 33.60 percent, followed by in search of better employment (24.99%) and in search of employment (19.8%).²⁶

MAJOR DESTINATION STATES FOR RURAL MALE MIGRANTS



Another primary study conducted by the same author tried to comprehend the relationship between caste and migration in rural Uttar Pradesh. In consonance with all India trend the study portrayed that male migrants from the village's higher castes tended to have advanced degrees and worked mostly in skilled occupations. Caste affiliation frequently affected the availability of economic opportunities in rural Uttar Pradesh. The author mentioned that a considerable degree of educational attainment was supporting the reduction of disparities among different castes.²⁷

Based on the data obtained from the Census of India 2001, 2011 and using data from the 64th round (2007-08) of the National Sample Survey (NSS), Mashkoor Ahmad tried to explore the trends of male out-migration from the urban geographies of Uttar Pradesh.²⁸ Although the state has accounted for nearly 12% of the total urban population in the country, it has contributed to more than one-fourth of the total inter-state urban out-migrants in India. Data analysis shows that due to widespread poverty and underdevelopment in urban and peri-urban areas of the state, out-migration has been adopted as a prevalent livelihood strategy, and the state has emerged as a leading supplier of cheap labour within and across the national border. Citing Kundu and Bhatia (2002), the paper has pointed out that the economic liberalisation of 1991 affected the growth of small and medium cities in the states, weakened their economic base and gave impetus to the strategy of migration.

[24] Sharma, A. (2014). *Their own country: A profile of labour migration from Rajasthan*. Centre for Migration and Labour Solutions, Aajeevika Bureau.

[25] http://nirdpr.org.in/nird_docs/srsc/srsc261016-20.pdf

[26] Ibid.

[27] Singh, R. (2023). Caste and Migration: Insights from Study of Migrant Men from Rural Uttar Pradesh. *Migration and Diversity*, 2(2), 137–148. <https://doi.org/10.33182/md.v2i2.2863>

[28] Ahmad, M. (2018). Determinants of Male Out-Migration from Urban Uttar Pradesh.

Additionally, urban systems and opportunities in the class I cities have been distorted and top-heavy due to population pressure.²⁹ Ahmed also pointed out that post-liberalisation inter-district migration decreased, and due to the proximity to industrialised and urbanised neighbouring states, migrants preferred to take up inter-state migration rather than inter-district migration. In consonance with the all-India trend, the study showed that the intra-district and inter-district male migration in urban Uttar Pradesh is not very dominant. Rather, these two types of migration are dominated by females. The most favoured destination state for male migrants from Uttar Pradesh is Maharashtra (with 28.45% of the total inter-state out-migrants from Uttar Pradesh), followed by Delhi (18.89%) and Gujarat (13.07%). Madhya Pradesh and Haryana are the other two most prominent destination states.³⁰

Analysing data obtained from the Census of India's Migration D-Series table 2011, Choubey and Rai (2021) in their paper highlighted that the district of Lucknow has experienced a significant internal migration influx, constituting nearly 40% of its total population. Analysing data from 2001 to 2011, the study revealed a notable trend of urban areas attracting more migrants than rural areas.³¹ In 2011, urban migrants numbered 13.85 lakhs, with a remarkable growth of 103.4%, surpassing the growth of rural migrants at 35.7%. The driving factors for this in-migration to Lucknow are its high urbanisation, improved amenities, abundant economic opportunities, administrative convenience, and higher-order services availability. Spatial patterns indicate a notable rise in intra-district migration, growing from almost 35% in 2001 to 45.6% in 2011. This increase is attributed to Lucknow's expanding city limits and rural fringe development, suggesting continued growth in intra-district migration. Inter-state migration, though proportionally low at 8% in 2011, did see significant contributions from neighbouring states. Bihar emerged as the top contributor of in-migration. Primary drivers for migration to Lucknow include marriage (30.2%) in 2011, household movement, and 'other' reasons, encompassing distress, natural calamities, and social conflicts. Surprisingly education, employment, and business related migration were reported to be low.³²

Their Own Country (Sharma, 2014) provides some robust insights into the conditions of migration from Rajasthan, which remains relevant even in contemporary times.³³ The report stated that there was a disproportionately high dependence on agriculture for employment in the state, along with a high number of small and marginal farmers who faced uncertainty in agriculture due to climate change, soil degradation and lack of assured irrigation facilities. The production from agriculture was not sufficient to fulfil household needs, let alone providing for a surplus production to be sold in the market. This chunk of the population was dependent on wage-labour via migration for sustenance. The canal-irrigated eastern region of Rajasthan was an exception in this matter. In the dry and deserted western and central Rajasthan, agriculture shifted to capital-intensive deep tube wells and contract farming agreements, where the smaller farmers are leasing out their land and opting for wage labour within and outside the state. In the tribal-dominated southern regions, the population was landless, which increased their dependence on migration even more. The other livelihood opportunities available to the state's population were livestock rearing, mining, and handicrafts, but these failed to become sustainable options.

Using the secondary data from Census (2011) Trivedi (2018) tried to understand the phenomenon of migration both from rural and urban Rajasthan through a gendered perspective.³⁴ Jain & Sharma (2019) offered an account of labour migration of Adivasi workers from southern Rajasthan to growth centres in Gujarat. Focusing on three industries - construction, textile and hospitality (small hotels and restaurants), which employ migrant workers the article presented evidence on labour market segmentation and resulting unequal wage distribution between migrants in this corridor by their social group. Additionally, there was an extensive

[29] Kundu, Amitabh and Sutinder Bhatia (2002): "Industrial Growth in Small and Medium Towns and Their Vertical Integration: The Case of Gobindgarh, Punjab, India", Management of Social Transformation Discussion Paper 57, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Paris.

[30] Ahmad, M. (2018). Determinants of Male Out-Migration from Urban Uttar Pradesh. Sarkar, P (2020). An Overview of Out-Migration from Uttar Pradesh Using Census 2011, Journal of Migration Affairs Vol. II.

[31] Choubey, A & Rai, G. (2021). Study of In-migration in Lucknow district, Uttar Pradesh. 67. 20-33. 10.48008/ngji.1758.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Sharma, A. (2014). Their own country: A profile of labour migration from Rajasthan. Centre for Migration and Labour Solutions, Aajeevika Bureau

[34] Trivedi, Hemant. (2018). Reasons of Migration from Rural, Urban Regions of Rajasthan: A Gender Based Study.

mapping of the informal practices that violate applicable legal provisions found in these industry segments. The article highlighted that Gujarat's economy utilises the historically low socio-economic position of Adivasis for capitalist accumulation, such that the community's poverty and disadvantaged position is reproduced intergenerationally, instead of being interrupted by their employment in the growth centres of the state.³⁵

The migration trend from Rajasthan is not older than twenty years, going back to the mid-90s, when liberalisation hit the rural economy in full-fledged form.³⁶ Our observations in the districts of Beawar and Rajsamand resonate with these findings. It was observed that migration from these districts started around the 1990s when the major industrial units in the area began to shut down. It further peaked in the 2000s with the expansion of the stone-cutting/polishing/crushing, grinding industry and, to a smaller extent, due to the growth of the tourism industry. However, this migration was largely intra-state. Large-scale inter-state migration began as a response to growing awareness about the dangers of silicosis - a disease caused by prolonged exposure to silica in stone-related industries, mining, quarrying, and crushing. The major corridors that emerged were Gujarat and Maharashtra. While people from Rajasthan migrated outside the state, in-migrants from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Odisha came in to take their place mainly in the stone-related industries. In the next few sections, we shall delve further into the complexities of both in and out-migration from Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

[35] Jain, P., & Sharma, A. (2019). Super-exploitation of Adivasi Migrant Workers: The Political Economy of Migration from Southern Rajasthan to Gujarat. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics*, 31(1), 63-99. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0260107918776569>

[36] Sharma, A. (2014). *Their own country: A profile of labour migration from Rajasthan*. Centre for Migration and Labour Solutions, Aajeevika Bureau

Chapter 2

PATTERNS AND EFFECTS OF INTERNAL LABOUR MIGRATION



Internal labour migration in India is typically a household-level decision, often arising out of distress, while aspirational migration is far and few. The effects of such migration extend beyond individual households to the local economy and the community, presenting various socio-economic implications.³⁷

The most tangible effect is the inward remittance received by migrant households from their migrating members, while a less tangible outcome is observed in terms of social mobility. *The nature of migration, whether long-term (lasting for more than a year), mid-term (more than six months but less than one year), or short-term (lasting for more than one month but less than six months), including circuitual and seasonal migration, plays a role in determining these effects.*

On the one hand, migration helps some of the most vulnerable families avoid sliding into abject poverty and starvation in times of environmental and market shocks, by helping them accumulate savings. At times, these savings are also invested into land, agriculture, housing and education, offsetting loans from local money lenders and helping reduce poverty and vulnerability in the long term.

On the other hand, migration, especially the inter-state type, has significant costs as it

- leads to a loss of social protection coverage (ONORC is the only scheme which allows portability of ration cards under the PDS. Ayushman Card allows to seek outdoor medical assistance and hospitalisation anywhere in the country but only in empanelled hospitals under the scheme),
- an increased vulnerability to diseases and health conditions, and higher out of pocket expenses on food, lodging and health including mental health issues owing to long periods spent away from the family.
- migration of working-age men typically, it has been argued, also increases the burden of work, including that of agricultural work, of the women and other elderly who stay behind.^{38 39 40}

Patterns of internal labour migration

The inherent problem with the existing statistics on migration is that official statistics do not include short-term migration and tend to underestimate temporary, circuitual migration. The definitions adopted by the Census and the National Sample Survey (NSS) do not provide reliable estimates of short-term migration. Census 2001 defined a migrant, as a person residing in a place different from his or her place of birth or 'usual place of last residence', where the latter refers to a place of residence for six months or more. However, as will be evident in the upcoming sections, most migration is shorter than six months, with a preference towards making many short trips around the year – coinciding with the agriculturally fallow season and times of agrarian distress due to sudden climate shocks like droughts, floods etc. Thus, the official statistics are likely to miss a significant number of short-term migrants who have as much a chance of being counted in their place of birth or last residence as they do at their new destination.

Short-term migration, often termed circular or circuitual migration, is the dominant trend for poorer groups, who have little or no education and take on unskilled jobs at their destinations. However, these trends are not fully understood across regions experiencing high out-migration. No reliable state-level data or estimates are available beyond some case studies and project-based assessments. In the absence of adequate, reliable data on

[37] For more see - <https://iimad.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Rajan-and-Bhagat.pdf>

[38] Rogaly, B. Who Goes? Who Stays Back? Seasonal Migration and Staying Put Among Rural Manual Workers In Eastern India, *Journal of International Development* J. Int. Dev. 15, 2003, P-624, 2003, Published online in Wiley InterScience (www.interscience.wiley.com). DOI: 10.1002/jid.1020

[39] Mezzadri, A & Majumder, S. (2019). The 'Afterlife' of Cheap Labour: Bangalore Garment Workers from Factories to the Informal Economy Workers from Factories to the Informal Economy

[40] Shah, A, Lerche, J. Migration and the invisible economies of care: Production, social reproduction and seasonal migrant labour in India. *Trans Inst Br Geogr.* 2020; 45: 719–734. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12401>

the pattern of circuitual migration, the needs, issues, and vulnerabilities of those who undertake it are not recognised exclusively by policymakers and, therefore, do not get addressed through social protection and welfare programmes alone, either at the source state or in the destination states. These issues often primarily pertain to targeted coverage and domicile status. Information on the trends of circuitual migration and the profile, vulnerabilities and needs of those who migrate and those who stay back will help policymakers understand the complexity and diversity of migration. It will subsequently ensure optimal interventions - excluding as few people as possible. It will also help fine-tune interventions to suit different communities and areas (including both the destination sites and source sites of migration).

Socio-economic characteristics of migrant workers

In the study, 77.3% of the migrant individuals were male and around 22.7% were female migrant workers. Most of the workers belonged to OBCs (63.2%), did not receive any formal education (36.7%) or had not completed secondary education (46.2%) and a significant chunk reported that they did not undergo any skill-development training (96.4%). They also reported to have made their first migration at a median age of 19 years, indicating that migration started quite early in their life cycles and most of them reported being married (81.6 %).

Figure 2: Gender-wise distribution of migrant workers
(n = 545)

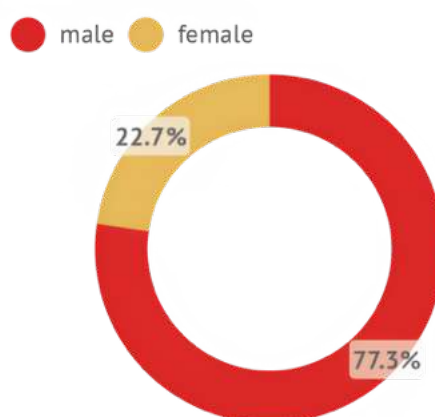


Figure 3: Social category-wise distribution of migrant workers
(n = 545)

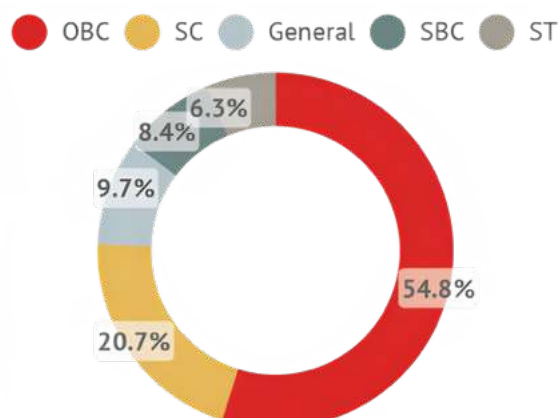


Figure 4: Highest education level of migrant workers
(n = 545)

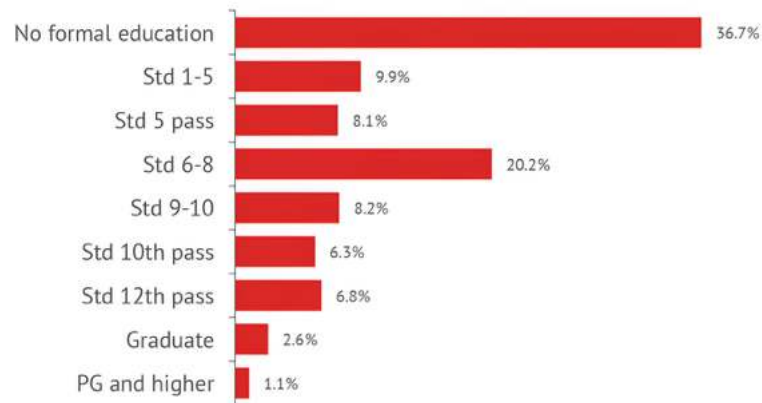


Figure 5: Marital status of migrant workers
(n = 541)

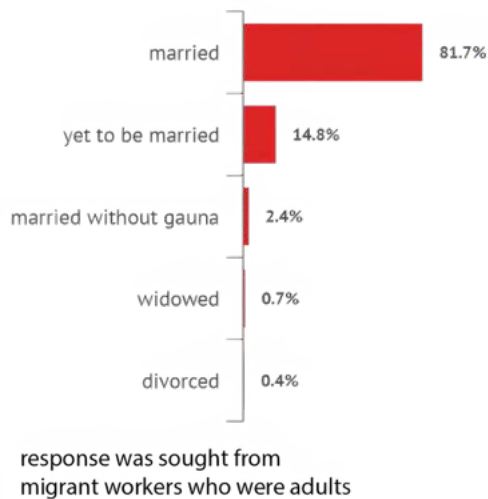


Figure 6: Migrant workers with skill development training (n= 545)

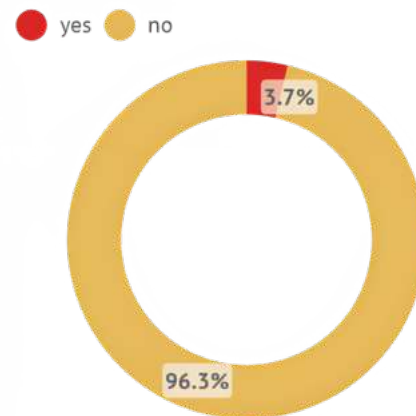


Figure 7: Number of migration events in the last 12 months
(n = 545)

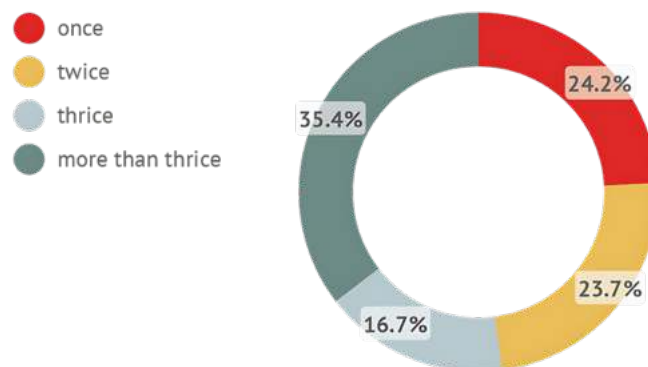
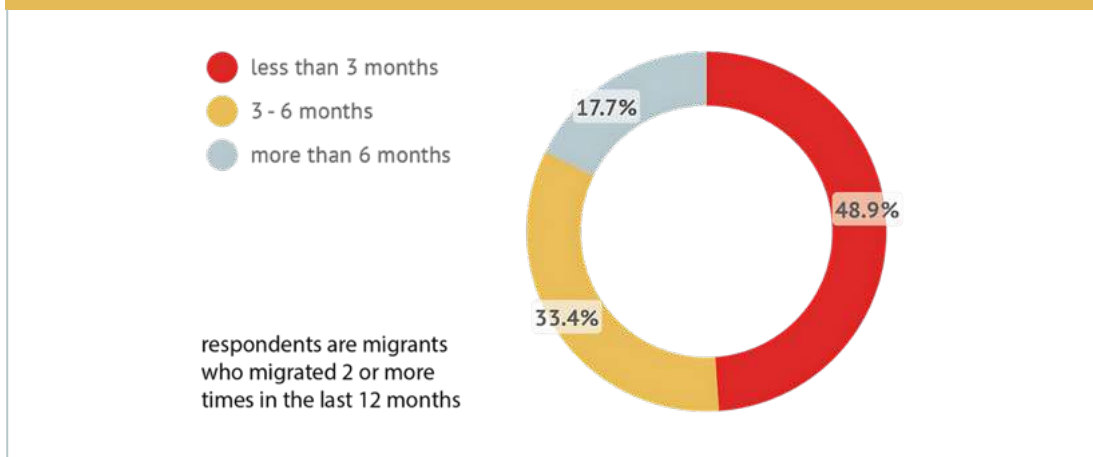


Figure 8: Duration between the last two migration events
(n = 413)



Migration patterns and trends

Most migration events reported in this study by workers have been short-term and circuital in nature. Almost a third (35.4 %) of the migrant workers reported having made more than three migration events in the last 12 months, while around a quarter (24.2 %) of them made just one trip.

Amongst the ones who made two trips or more (75.8%), nearly half of them reported that the duration between the two most recent migration events was less than three months, and 33.4% between 3-6 months. Only 17.7% reported a gap of six months or more between the last two events. As per the findings of the study, census and NSS definitions of migration would miss the migration events by 4.8 times. The median reported duration of migration was five months.

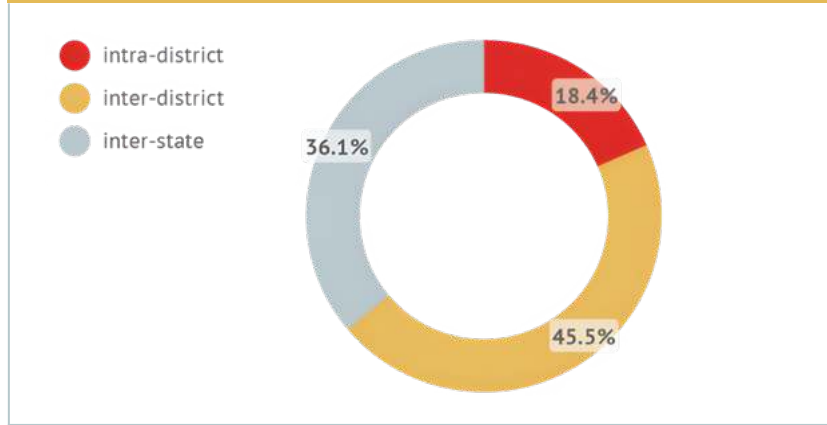
Conversations with migrant households and their members during the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) pointed out that the duration of stay is significantly shaped by the sector of work and demand for labour in the sector, with most respondents resonating as,

“We stay as long as we get work...until and unless there is an emergency at home.”

Further, insights from the FGDs and In-depth Interviews (IDIs), showcase that significant intra-sectoral differences exist in the duration of migration. For example, in the stone-crushing industry the intra-state migrants who despite owning land, are mostly engaged as loaders of trucks, work for only two-three months - typically in the lean agricultural seasons, whereas inter-state migrants from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, who work primarily as sack fillers and binders work almost around the year, with little breaks as short as one month a year. Similarly, our insights from Uttar Pradesh point out that the construction sector varied from about a month in inter-district migration to well above six months in inter-state migration.

Also, almost half (44.6 %) of the migrants reported moving to multiple destinations in a single migration event. Such mobility patterns exhibit the ephemeral nature of a migrant worker's work and make it very difficult to design targeted policies or schemes around real-time location, which would be the basis of most portability measures.

Figure 9: Destination wise distribution of migrant workers
(n = 545)



Nearly 45% of migrant workers identified themselves as intra-state or inter-district migrants in their previous or present migration, while 36.1 % reported themselves as inter-state migrants. Only 18.4% identified as intra-district migrants during the last or present migration.

There was also a substantial number of migrants who were accompanied by one or more members of the family during the migration event. Almost half (49.1%) of the migrant workers reported that their family members accompanied them. 86.1% of these accompanying family members were also involved in income-generation activities at the destination region.

Figure 10: Migrant workers accompanied by family members (n = 352)

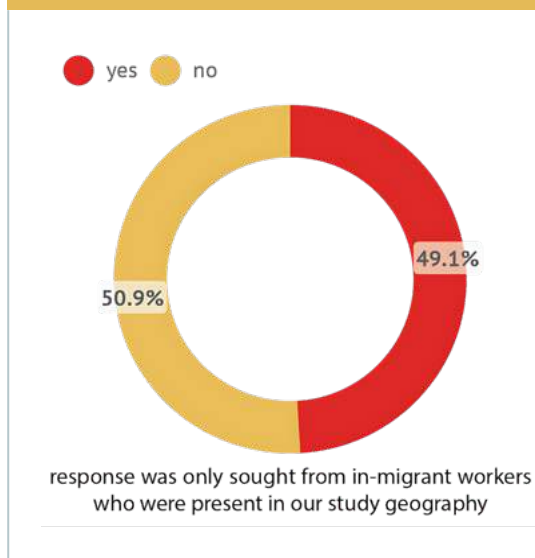
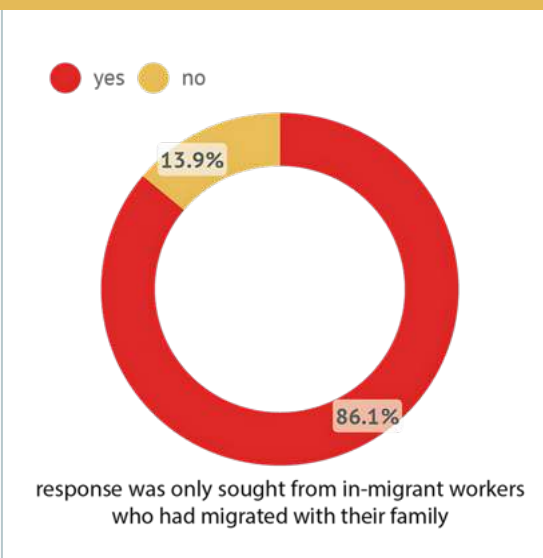


Figure 11: Employment status of accompanying family members (n = 173)



Conversations with migrant households during the study indicated that while the primary migrant typically secures employment opportunities through existing networks before traveling to the destination, secondary migrants, particularly women, often find employment spontaneously and on their own without access to any existing network. This spontaneous employment-seeking leaves them vulnerable to low wages and various forms of exploitation, including sexual harassment at worksites. Further discussions with both male and female migrants in both states revealed that decisions regarding solo migration depend on factors such as the employment sector, the likelihood of finding work for both genders, and the relative economic status of the

migrating households.

In Masuda block of Beawar district in Rajasthan, where men from the Meghwal (SC) community largely migrated to Gujarat to dig wells, the respondents observed that -

“Women hardly go for such work, what work will they do there...it is very heavy work...and there is no proper place to stay...”

However, the same group of respondents observed that their women also migrate to work in the stone-crushing sector -

“Our women mainly migrate to Jodhpur and Kharwa...There are stone-crushing units, so they move whenever apprised of any suitable opportunities.”

This can probably be attributed to the fact that the stone-crushing industry, compared to other industries, had a long trend of employing women in specific roles. Women were employed in lower-paid roles, which did not require carrying extremely heavy loads, such as loading stone pieces to the crushers. The work was also not continuous, allowing women to tend to their children between work shifts.

On the other hand, the Rawat (OBC) women from Rajsamand whose husbands worked largely in the hotel industry and as drivers noted –

“Women from our community/area do not work...what work will we do?”

The reluctance of women to migrate in this case was probably shaped as much as the lack of suitable work in the sectors to which their husbands migrate, as much as by caste norms about gendered work.

A woman from Madhya Pradesh working at a stone-crushing unit in Beawar observed, when asked why she chose to migrate with her husband to work in Rajasthan,

“What would I do by sitting at home? There is no work there...There is no agricultural work there... we do not own land...at least here we are able to earn something...”

This sentiment was consistently echoed by other women from migrant households working in the stone-crushing units from Bihar as well. The experience of landlessness or marginal land holdings, coupled with the general availability of work in the stone-crushing sector and the history of women's work in this sector then acted as a primary motivating factor for women's migration along with their husbands. However, it was not always the case that women worked in the same sectors as their husbands upon migrating. For example, in Uttar Pradesh women from migrant households where the men were involved in waste-picking, women worked as domestic workers, probably due to community norms regarding gender-appropriate behaviour.⁴¹

Thus, the decision to migrate together or only sending the men must be understood as a collective decision of the household. It rather depends on a complex interplay of multiple factors such as *ownership of land and availability of other livelihood options at the source, the relative socio-economic position of the household in question, the possibility of finding suitable work at the destination*, the conditions of work including that of housing and ration at the destination and so on. These conditions are further exacerbated by caste and religious norms associated with women's paid work.

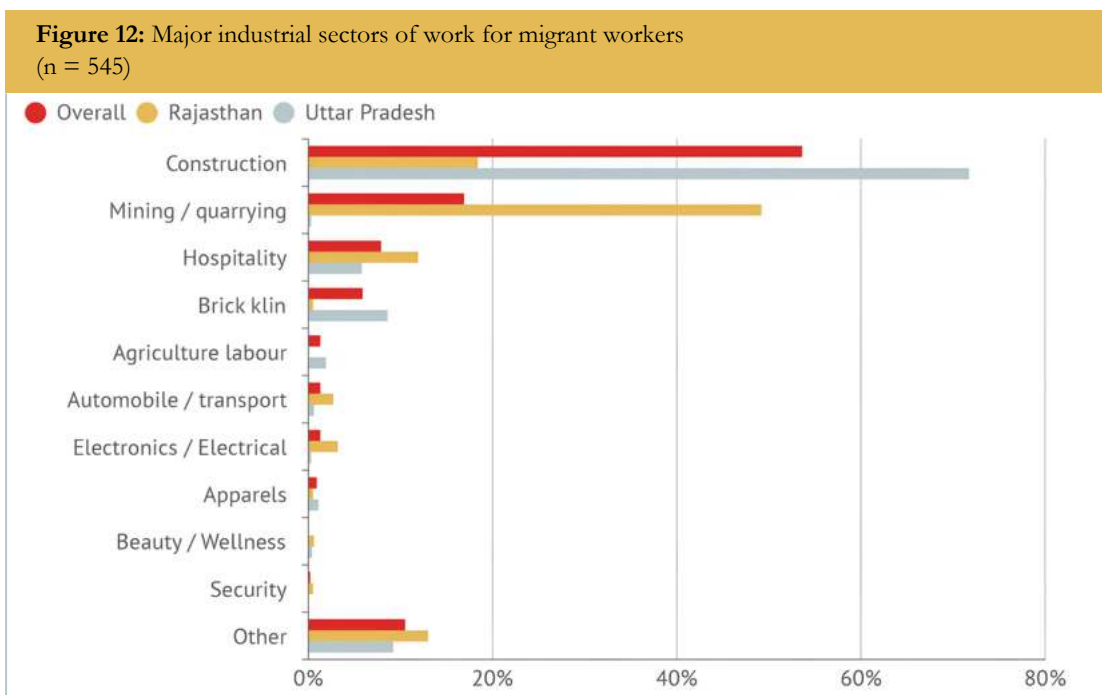
From a broader understanding of the two states, it can be inferred that women, especially after marriage, often relocate with their spouses primarily due to a perceived lack of gender-appropriate productive opportunities at

[41] It must also be noted here that while the literature on internal migration has noted single-women migrants as an important section of internal migrants, we did not come across such migrants in this study.

the source, and due to the presence of optimal work opportunities at the destination. Conversely, women are more inclined to stay back when viable livelihood options are available at the source. Our quantitative data reveal that families who migrated together had 86% of their members engaged in some form of employment after migration.

The specificities of the work sector shaped the choice of *migrating alone versus migrating with the entire household*, with almost 71% of the respondents in the stone-crushing industry migrating as entire household units, followed by 47% of those in the construction sector. Thus, future policy actions on migrant workers should reflect *the realities faced not only by the primary male migrant member but also the others travelling with them, particularly women, who are more vulnerable*.

The major employment sector for migrant workers, however, varied massively between the two states. While in Uttar Pradesh, 71.7% of migrants were employed in the construction sector, it was only 18.4% in Rajasthan. In Rajasthan, however, most migrant workers were employed in the stone-crushing industry (38.9%). Other than construction, the brick-kiln sector (8.6%) and hospitality (restaurants/hotels) (5.8%) attracted most migrant workers In Uttar Pradesh. In Rajasthan, however, the two other noteworthy sectors were hospitality (11.9%) and mining and quarrying (10.3%).



Our observations from FGDs, IDIs and several informal interactions with out-migrants and in-migrants across Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh point out that this destination and sector-wise patterns across both states emerged primarily due to the networked nature of migration.

Thus, male out-migrants from Jawaja block in Rajasthan observed in an FGD,

There is no reason...It's just about having links...Now I had a link, so I became a mason (mistri)...every link is connected to some other link (link se link juda hua hai) ...My father was a mason. I used to go with him, and after a while, I learnt the work too...We go wherever we get labour work...but we get to know about work largely through our links...Now, suppose I want to go to Tamil Nadu...How will I get to know about work there without knowing anyone there... to get work, one must know people there...Who will I contact to ask for work if I do not know anyone there...When we go to Ahmedabad for work, we call the contactor and ask "There is so and so working under you from our village. Do you have some work for me as well?" ...Once we find work three-four of us pool in our resources together and cook together and eat at the destination...

This indicates that corridors emerge primarily because of knowledge of opportunities, and accessibility to such opportunities mainly depends on personal networks - that is, caste and community-based. Further, being together at the destination with people having existing social ties helps navigate the logistics of migrant existence easily. Sometimes, it is also the case that Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities are excluded from certain occupations, forcing them to take up the limited opportunities that are available. For example, in Rajasthan, people from SC and ST communities are not allowed to take up more lucrative positions in the hospitality sector, like kitchen staff, waiters, etc, because of notions of caste-based purity, and they are restricted to doing only cleaning work, which is why they have been increasingly taking up work in the construction sector even if it means moving to another state. Similarly, in Uttar Pradesh, the rag-picking work was predominantly taken up by lower caste Muslim communities from Assam because of caste and regional links with the contractors in the waste segregation and management sector.

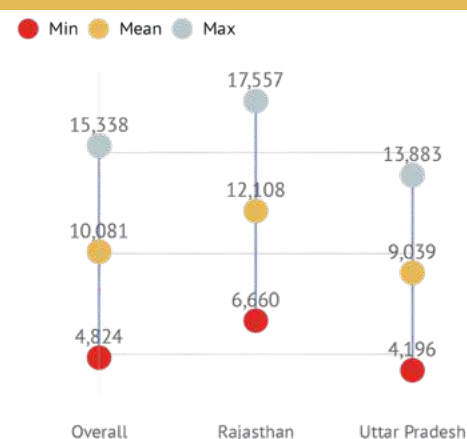
Effects of internal labour migration

Economic effects

This study reported that on average migrant workers were able to earn *INR 10,081* per month with significant variation between the two states, *INR 12,108* in Rajasthan and *INR 9,039* in Uttar Pradesh.

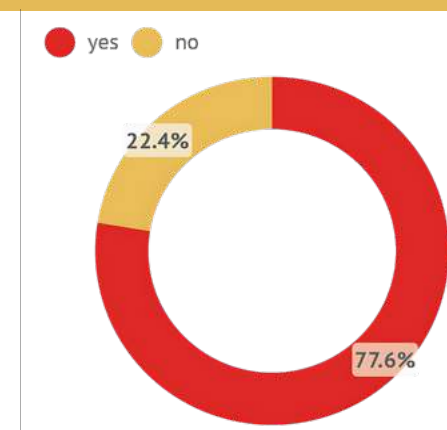
For the financial year 2022-23⁴² the annual per capita income in Rajasthan was reported at *INR 156,148* and, in Uttar Pradesh *INR 83,565*, which amounts to *INR 13,012* and *INR 6,965* per month, respectively.

Figure 13: Monthly income reported by migrant workers (n=545)



While the migrant workers' *income in Rajasthan may be slightly lower than the state average, it is much higher in the case of Uttar Pradesh*. Our observations from the field indicate that the slightly higher wages in Rajasthan possibly can be attributed to the hazardous nature of the stone-related industries, which was the predominant sector of employment. Higher wage rates could be understood as luring migrants to a sector that posits a potent threat of contracting silicosis.

Figure 14: Migrant workers sending remittances to their families (n = 545)

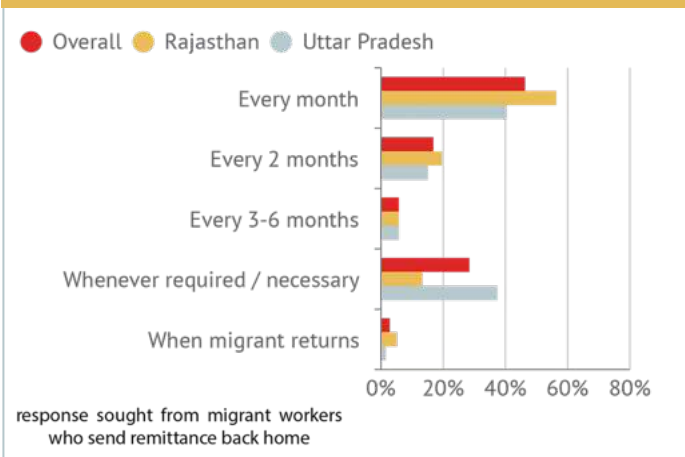


Given that our respondents included both in-migrants and out-migrants, we may also compare it to the country's per capita income which was reported as *INR 98,374* for 2022-23⁴³ or *INR 8,197* per month. Thus, migration may have been a means for households to accumulate savings that would help them deal with future shocks and crises. While a significant amount of that income would be routed towards meeting accommodation at work sites and out-of-pocket expenses on food and incidental health issues, most migrant workers also sent back a significant amount of money to their families at the source. In this study, almost three-fourths (77.6%) of migrant workers send remittances to their families. Of these, almost half (46.3%) sent remittances every month, while another 16.8% reported sending remittances every two months.

[42] <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/india/memo-items-state-economy-net-state-domestic-product-per-capita/nsdp-per-capita-rajasthan>

[43] <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1945144>

Figure 15: Frequency of sending remittance
(n = 423)

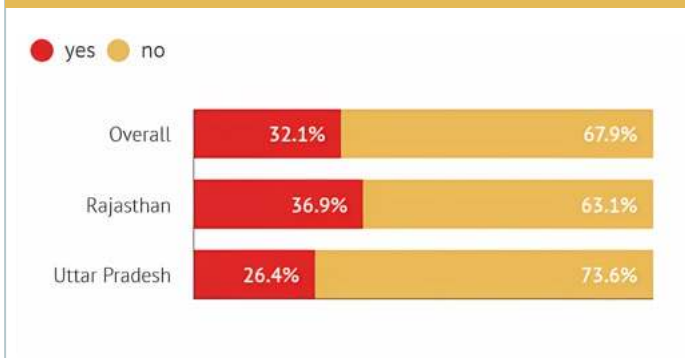


On average, INR 22,118 were sent as remittances during the last or current migration spell. Its impact on not only the households but the larger community itself can be understood by the total amount of remittance that was reported to be sent back, which stood at INR 93.5 lakh (by 423 migrant workers), INR 58.5 lakh (by 158 migrant workers) in Rajasthan and, INR 35 lakhs (by 265 migrant workers) in Uttar Pradesh. However, this should be considered a conservative estimate, given the tendency for individuals and families to underreport their income and remittances.

While most of these remittances were utilised by the households at the source regions, almost one-third (32.1%) of the households in this study reported that this remittance was put into savings and investment. Savings Bank accounts (45.9%) were reported as the preferred mode of savings, while a quarter of the households (25.7%) preferred to save.

Thus, in the long run, the savings from remittances help to provide the required cushion, increase economic resilience, and act as a tool to mitigate sudden income loss, health shocks and poverty traps for migrating households.

Figure 16: Households remittances savings pattern
(n = 571)



Non-economic effects

Labour migration can be understood to be a social leveller in certain aspects, impacting the caste hierarchies. While in the village, the traditionally lower(ed) castes- often landless to marginal landholders had minimal income opportunities, migration has allowed them to earn at par with the castes higher in the social order, particularly the OBCs.

The survey findings suggest that the average remittance sent home by both migrants belonging to SC and OBC families were equal, at around INR 5,000 which were further corroborated through qualitative interviews and discussions.

For example, in Rajasthan at the source, there were significant differences among communities belonging to the SC category as compared to those from OBC communities in terms of land holding. Moreover, in Rajasthan, while OBC communities like Jats and Gujjars had established themselves through a robust livestock rearing business, SC communities such as Meghwals and Regars had been able to carry out only modest trade in livestock.

Migration had allowed Meghwals in many cases, to earn closer to what OBC communities such as Rawats earned, though this was not a uniform observation. Often Rawats worked in better-paying job roles than SCs, but migration did allow men from SC families to become painters, and masons, (i.e., more lucrative positions in the labour market) even if only infrequently. Additionally, most job opportunities were in urban areas, where overt caste-based discrimination was much less, even if not totally absent.

Thus, during the FGDs and IDIs, upon inquiring about whether caste-based discrimination formed a part of their experience as migrant workers, the Meghwal community emphatically denied this, and responded –

“It is not there; we have to do hard labour...that is it...but there is no discrimination.”

Moreover, the new job roles in cities have also helped the migrants develop new skills and experience that helps to break caste/class inequalities.

Further, in Rajasthan, our group discussions revealed that migration enabled, for the first time, a person belonging to the Meghwal community to accumulate enough capital to become a labour contractor, a position which was usually held by the Jat or Gujjar castes. However, the fact that migration did not manifest caste hierarchies in other ways, in this case, should be read cautiously. In Rajasthan, qualitative field observations point out that most of the migrants from Bihar working as sack fillers and binders in the stone-crushing industry were from the landless SC communities. They were relegated to doing the most arduous kinds of labour and simultaneously faced the highest risk of contracting silicosis. Similarly, it was largely the SC communities from Assam that were engaged as waste-pickers in Lucknow – a profession traditionally associated with caste groups recognised as SCs and both these groups had very little to no protection while working in hazardous environments.

A female migrant worker Malti (name has been anonymised) from Madhya Pradesh, who has been working in the stone-crushing industry in Rajasthan for the last six years, said-

“We try to find a factory where both of us can work together as a pair, this is more lucrative. If they do not give me the job, I also restrict my husband from working there, then the owner feels pressured and agrees to my demand”

In the case of Malti and her family, migration for work thus, had led to an increase in women’s participation and decision-making as compared to their situation in the source region. However, this is not a general scenario. Often in the case of women who migrated with their families, especially with their husbands, migration meant shouldering the burden of paid and unpaid work including that of childcare. The load of performing about twelve to fourteen hours of heavy work on factory sites coupled with the demands of household work, often severely affected their health and well-being. Partner organisation staff mentioned that such women migrants often suffered from prolonged gynaecological issues, extreme stress, and anaemia. Such a burden of labour often, however, did not mean increased status and decision-making powers within the family or increased economic independence, unlike Malti.

The gendered implications of migration on women who stayed behind, however, did have some general positive trends. In the out-migrating geographies, women’s participation in the Gram Sabha has increased significantly with the mandated 33% reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). Women were also found to be actively engaging with village-level institutions like Self-help Groups (SHGs) and SHG clusters, which is synonymous with the active growth of self-help groups and clusters under the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) over the last decade. This active participation has also led to an increase in awareness of government schemes and an understanding of the need for financial and income security. This, however, had come with an increased burden of shouldering both domestic and non-domestic responsibilities. Women from out-migrating households now had to take care of the activities in the public domain – including visiting banks, hospitals, children’s schools, and bureaucratic offices to sort out the various kinds of paperwork. Travelling long distances for such work using an inadequate public transport system in the far-flung villages had significantly compounded the economic and time costs borne by these women.

A woman from Masuda, thus, noted -

“We are the ones who must go out and deal with the paperwork for various schemes...Often we do not know, but then we ask around... Who else will do such things for us... when men are away, we women only must do it... we also have to take care of things at the schools where our children study...”

Remittances brought back from migration fuel changes within the household. Migrants tend to spend more on their children's education and send children to private schools. For example, a father who was an erstwhile inter-district migrant worker from Masuda, Beawar to Bijoliya working in the stone cutting and polishing sector mentioned that despite his health being severely affected by his migratory labour practices, the income earned had allowed him to educate his son, who had completed an ITI degree and during the time of the interview was earning a good income, despite having become a migrant himself.

However, it must be noted that while most families from the area had at least one member who had migrated or continues to migrate, the children of not many families had been able to get into higher education. Migration has also led to some limited social and cultural capital accrual by the migrants. It has augmented their knowledge about different sectors of possible employment and destinations which offer better pay and other amenities like housing, mess, holiday leaves and other plausible benefits. This has substantially increased the available choices before them and has helped migrants to switch sectors and job roles which are more lucrative.

Detailed interactions with other fellow migrant workers in destination locations also brought cultural shifts in the village. Migrants from Masuda block, Rajasthan, mentioned that as men started migrating to the hospitality sector, now, there is a trend of celebrating and organising birthday parties in the village.

Nitish Rawat (name has been anonymised) from Jawaja block of Beawar district mentioned -

“In our childhood there was no concept of celebrating birthdays or anniversaries. Now most of the men from the village work in the hotel industry and they witness grand celebrations of such events there. So, now people in the village have also started buying cakes and decorating their houses with balloons on such occasions”.



Chapter 3

DRIVERS, MOTIVES AND MEANS OF
LABOUR MIGRATION

The 2011 Foresight report⁴⁴ put forward a conceptual framework characterising five drivers of migration – *Social, Political, Economic, Demographic and Environmental*. This framework represents the integrated multi-causal dimensions of mobility and underscores the interaction of social, political-economic-cultural factors that lead people to choose to either migrate or remain at their source regions.

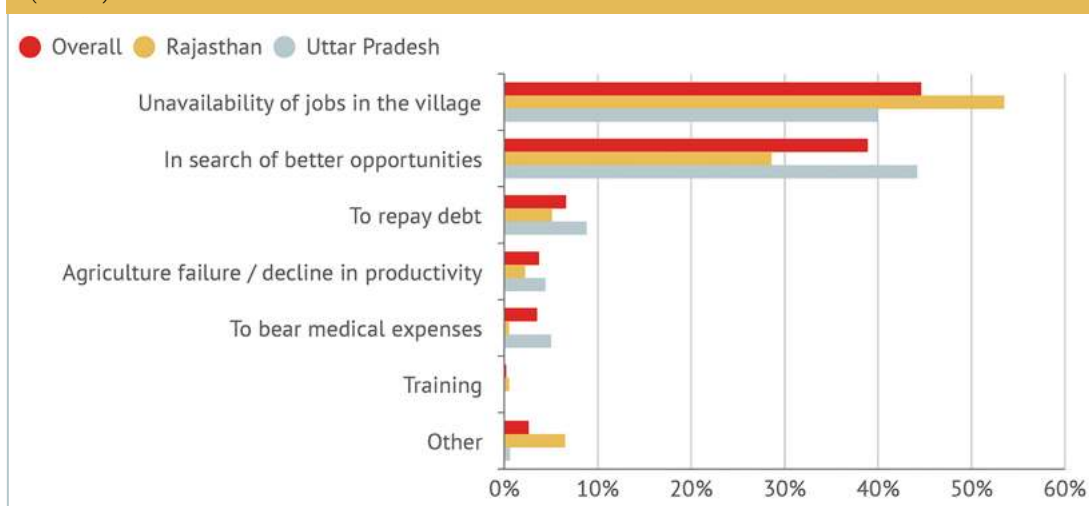
Table 2 - The Drivers of Migration [Adapted from the Foresight Report, 2011]

Social drivers	Education, family / kin
Political drivers	Discrimination/persecution, conflict/insecurity, policy incentives, direct coercion
Demographic drivers	Population size/density, population structure, disease prevalence
Economic drivers	Employment opportunities, incomes/wages/well-being, producer prices, consumer prices
Environmental drivers	Exposure to climate hazards, ecosystem services such as land productivity, habitability, food/water/energy security

However, it is crucial to understand that the mere presence of drivers does not guarantee migration. The role of personal agency is paramount to undertaking migration. For example, as discussed in the previous section, women might not have the personal agency to migrate, as the males in the household make the final decision.

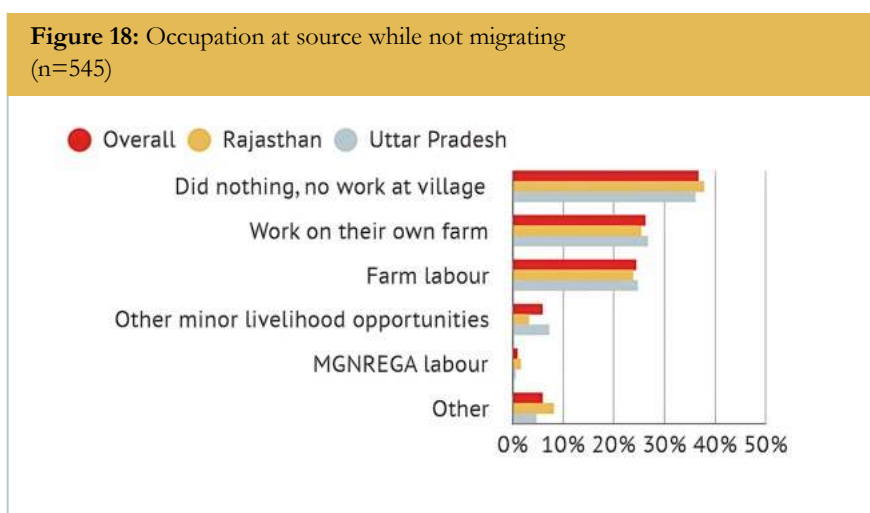
In this study, unavailability of work at the source region (44.6%) was reported as the primary reason for migrant workers. It was closely followed by 38.9% of migrant workers reporting that they migrated in search of better work opportunities in the village or nearby regions to their source. The other reasons cited were debt (6.6%), decline in agricultural productivity (3.7%) and bearing medical expenses (3.5%). Thus, it is evident that economic drivers and environmental drivers were the main drivers of migration.

Figure 17: Reasons for migration
(n=545)

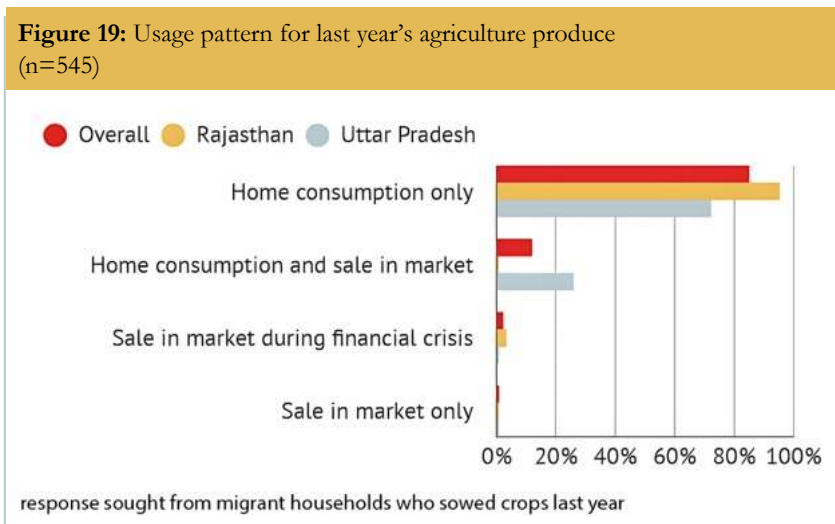


[44] Foresight: Migration and Global Environmental Change. 2011. Final Project Report. The Government Office for Science, London, UK.

Further, insights on the respondents' activities when not migrating further help drive home the previous point. More than one-third of the respondents (36.7%) suggested that they didn't do anything due to lack of any livelihood opportunities at their village. Almost a quarter of the respondents (26.2%) worked on their own farmland, while another quarter (24.2%) performed agricultural labour on other farms. Only 6.8% of respondents engaged in other livelihood activities, including MGNREGS. These observations suggest that a *lack of (meaningful) employment opportunities, declining farm productivity and income from agricultural activities, agri-wage labour, and household financial exigencies* are the main reasons due to which individuals or households decide to migrate.



Small landholding size and low agricultural productivity



Most households (84.6%) in this study, with at least one migrant member, practiced agriculture. Of these, a significant majority (85.7%) reported doing so exclusively on their own land. However, the average landholding was reported to be as low as 0.6473 hectares (2 bighas). This value was slightly higher in Uttar Pradesh (0.713 hectares) than in Rajasthan (0.595 hectares). The average farmland area, including sharecropping,

increased slightly (0.713 hectares), which was similar to the latest available figures from the Agriculture Census, 2015-16 for Uttar Pradesh (0.732 hectares), but was much lower than the average farmland area for Rajasthan (2.73 hectares). This meant that agriculture was mostly subsistence in nature. Only 15% of the households practising agriculture reported selling the produce in the market.

During the field site discussions, migrant communities across both states observed that land fragmentation had led to farm sizes becoming increasingly smaller - "Our land holdings have become really small" being the common refrain. It might be noted that the decreasing trends of the average farming area due to family land

getting parcelled into smaller areas as it moves from the parental generation to the present generation are significant for the two states involved in the study, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh, as they have higher birth rates as compared to the rest of the country.

They also noted that increased pressure on land meant the sharing of groundwater, leading to a decline in agricultural productivity -

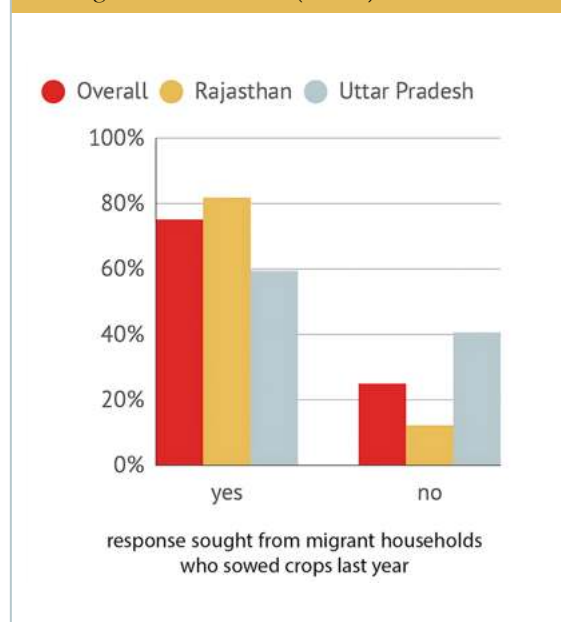
“Earlier, there used to be one well; now, in that same piece of land, there are fifty wells ...but the amount of ground-water present has remained the same after all...so there is a shortage of water”.

A negative impact of climate change on agriculture was also observed as three-fourths (75%) of agricultural households in this study reported having experienced a dip in agricultural productivity owing to extreme weather events. In Rajasthan, most migrants who also practised agriculture noted that

“Earlier there used to be some rain, at least, we could grow some crops...now there is no rainfall at all...our lands have fallen barren.”

Further, in both Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, man-animal conflict was cited as an essential factor that led to the decline in agricultural productivity. People in Rajasthan observed that wild animals such as Nilgais (a large antelope) and wild boars often entered their fields, destroying their crops, and such incidents had only been on the rise. In Uttar Pradesh, it was observed that due to restrictions on selling cattle, farmers released male calves and old cows annually ‘into the wild’. The ensuing situation made it a struggle for farmers to protect their crops from stray cattle.

Figure 20: Perceived impact of climate change on farming activities 2022-23 (n=502)



Limited alternative sustainable livelihood opportunities at source regions

In addition to farming, migrant households in this study were also involved in livestock rearing, with almost three-quarters of the households (71.6%) reporting practising it. However, there was a high deviation between Rajasthan (84.9%) and Uttar Pradesh (56.5%). Overall, only about two-fifths of the households owning livestock were able to generate some form of income from the same.

In Rajasthan, where livestock rearing has traditionally been a significant livelihood activity, the recurring note was -

“The livestock markets are all gone...Now, we do not sell sheep or goats anymore, only cattle...How will we rear livestock? There is no grass to feed them...Whatever little grass grows, the Nilgais eat them all...it is too expensive to buy fodder from outside...”.

Figure 21: Migrant Households owning livestock (n=637)

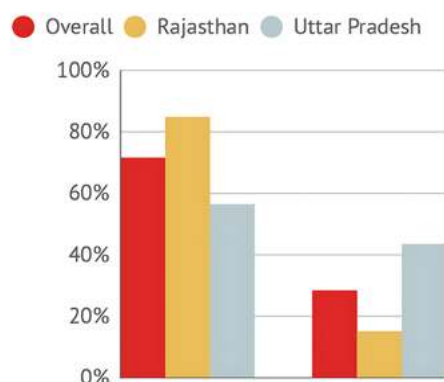


Figure 22: Livestock owning migrant households generating income from livestock (n=456)

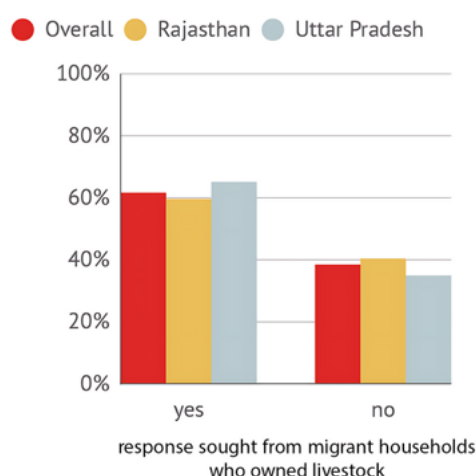
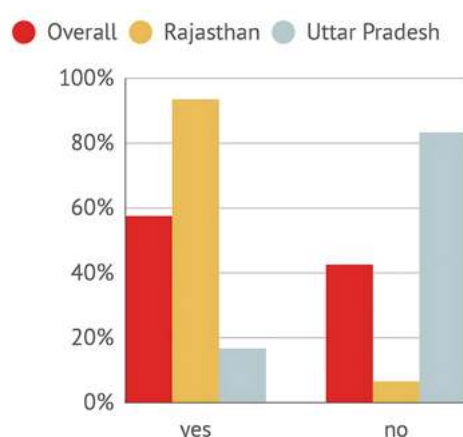


Figure 23: Migrant Households having MGNREGS card (n=637)



Along with additional/alternative opportunities in the agricultural sector, the declining opportunities in the nearby urban centres had significantly propelled out-migration. In Masuda and Jawaja blocks of Rajasthan, it was narrated to us that migration had peaked since the textile mills and cement pipe manufacturing units in the nearby cities that had provided employment opportunities till the late 1990s had shut down. This corresponds with the findings from the report by Aajeevika Bureau (2014) that circuital out-migration from Rajasthan started largely in the 1990s.

In circumstances of low agricultural productivity and a lack of other employment opportunities, MGNREGS has often been hailed as a critical social protection platform in terms of agricultural distress or backup income cushioning, enabling households to get paid labour work of 100 days a year, as a reliable source of livelihood.

However, during this study, only about half (57.5%) of the households reported having an MGNREGS job cards. We also observed high variability in households and individuals who reported having a MGNREGS job card in the two districts of Rajasthan (93.5%), which demonstrated almost near-universal access, and the two districts of Uttar Pradesh (16.7%) which was much lower than expected.

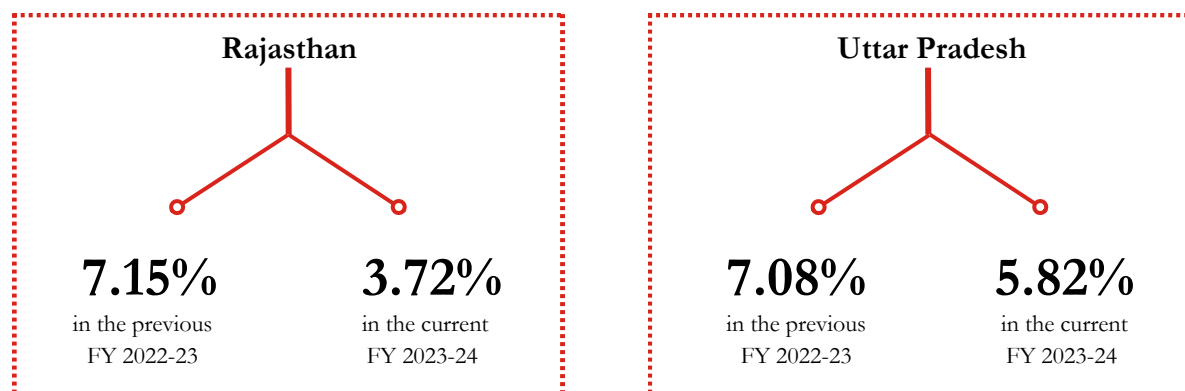
These numbers need to be read with caution as they are reported for only two blocks within the two districts in each state and cannot be generalised at a state level. Moreover, these numbers are reflective of only migrant households.

Additionally, although MGNREGS guarantees 100 days of work, households in this study reported only 46.2 days. A high variability was observed here between Rajasthan (51.5 days) and Uttar Pradesh (13.1 days).

Another important reason why people migrate, apart from distress, is low wages through MGNREGS for unskilled labour. The latest available data from 2023⁴⁵ suggests that in Uttar Pradesh, the wage rate for unskilled labour through MGNREGS was INR 230 per day, while the same in Rajasthan was INR 255 per day. Thus, a month of unskilled labour through MGNREGS would convert to INR 6,900 and INR 7,650 in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, respectively.

[45] <https://housing.com/news/govt-hikes-nrega-wage-rate-for-fy24/>

A quick analysis of the MGNREGS MIS of the Ministry of Rural Development revealed the active working households that received 100 days of employment in MGNREGS



Further, the percentage of active working households receiving 100 days of employment at the district level is 9.83% for Rajsamand in FY 2023-24 and 15.3% in the previous FY 2022-23, 5.5% for Ajmer⁴⁶ in FY 2023-24 and 13% in the previous FY 2022-23.

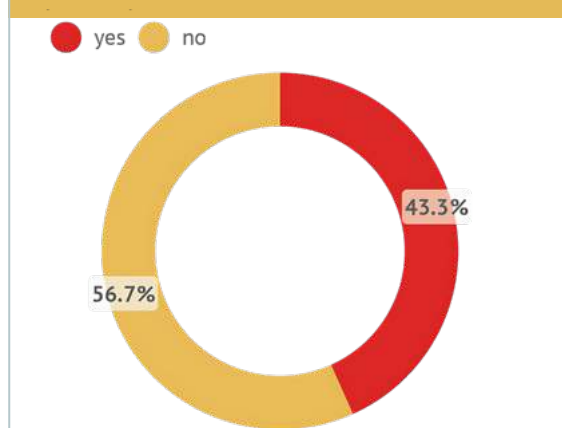
In the case of Bahraich in Uttar Pradesh, the percentage of active working households receiving 100 days of employment is 11% for FY 2023-24 and 14.7% in the previous FY 2022-23.

Moreover, in villages in Rajasthan (especially in Masuda and Jawaja block of Beawar) where the study was conducted, people at large observed that despite getting 125 days of employment through central and state government assistance, men continued to migrate, often involving women of the household in MGNREGS activities in place of them, because income from MGNREGS even when its potential as realised to its maximum was not enough to provide holistically for the household.

However, during the study, migrant workers were able to earn an average of *INR 10,080* per month – *INR 12,108* through migration in Rajasthan and *INR 9,039* in Uttar Pradesh, or a hike of 58% and 31%, respectively with respect to their MGNREGS wages.

Financial exigencies and lack of access to formal financial institutions

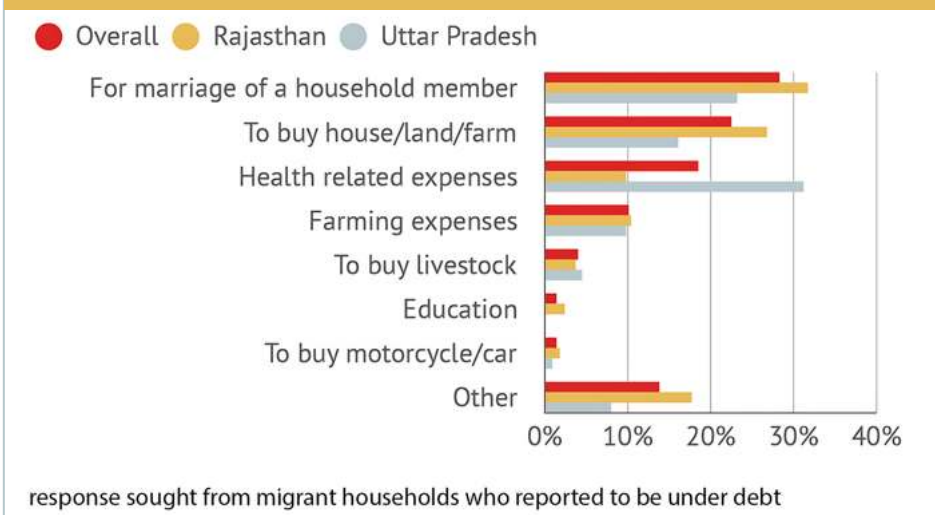
Figure 24: Migrant households having debt (n = 545)



Financial exigencies, especially debt, appear to be a significant driver in a household's migration decision. 43.3% of migrant households reported during the study mentioned that they were in debt. Of these households, 28.3% claimed to have taken loans for family member's marriage expenses, followed by another 22.5 % who took loans to buy land, farm, or home and 18.5% of households who took loans to meet medical expenses.

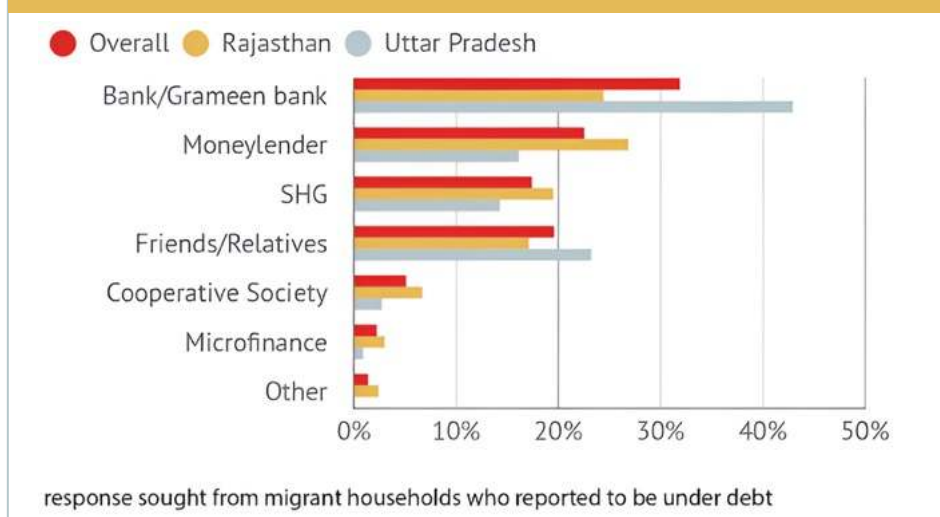
[46] The district of Beawar was carved out of the district of Ajmer on 5th August 2023

Figure 25: Purpose of taking loan among migrant households in debt
(n = 276)



While 31.9% of all such loans were taken from banks, showing increasing access to institutional credit, moneylenders continue to be a popular source of credit, with 22.5% of loans attributed to them, followed by friends and family at 19.6%, and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) at 17.4%. Borrowing from moneylenders has historically incurred higher interest rates and ends up trapping these households in a vicious debt cycle. Also, 38% of the households mentioned that they had yet to be able to repay any part of their loan, while another 34.5% of the households reported that they had repaid less than half of their loan amount.

Figure 26: Sources of credit for indebted migrant households
(n = 276)



The unsuitability of livelihood opportunities available at the source locations

While the above sections deal with the lack of livelihood opportunities at the source, it must also be noted that in some cases, even if certain opportunities were available, people chose to migrate because of their reluctance for such opportunities. During field interactions, workers noted -

“People do not want to do all kinds of work here because of stigma (shame)...They will do the kinds of work upon migration that they would never do here...because nobody knows them there”

Particularly in Rajasthan, it is interesting to note that the average monthly income of inter-district migrants was *INR 13,353* while the same for inter-state migrants was *INR 11,740*. This would imply that employment opportunities within the state were more lucrative than outside.

However, in most FGDs, workers and other household members spoke of opportunities being mostly available in the stone-related industries. Workers associated with stone-related industries observed -

“Here there is always a labour shortage...in this industry, there is never a dearth of work...yet people chose to migrate out”.

Thus, the reason for migration cannot be simply attributed to non-availability of work. In fact, despite better pay in nearby areas people choose other longer-distance destinations and sectors with lower pay because of the physical harm people associated with working in stone-related industries, particularly in contracting silicosis. Several out-migrants from Rajasthan thus mentioned -

“Earlier we would go to the stone related work...but then we started getting the disease...entire generations came to suffer...then we stopped... we now go to the construction sector or for digging wells...”



Chapter 4

CHALLENGES FACED BY INTERNAL
LABOUR MIGRANTS

Multiple challenges confront migrant households, most significant of them being the economic, social, and health-related out-of-pocket expenditure during migration. While migrant workers experience an average increase of 30-60% in monthly incomes during migration, they also bear significant out-of-pocket expenses on food, stay, health and loan repayment. Pursuing better employment and living standards exposes them to uncertain, precarious job conditions, inadequate housing facilities, and restricted access to vital public services. Economically, they grapple with meagre earnings, which often results in vicious cycles of debt and economic instability.

Social challenges encompass isolation from their communities in the source areas, discrimination at worksites, and integration hurdles in new communities, leading to profound feelings of alienation and detachment. Health issues are equally critical, with poor living conditions and hazardous work settings undermining their well-being.⁴⁷ These multifaceted challenges, depicted through qualitative narratives and quantitative data, highlight the complex vulnerabilities faced by migrant populations. The study delves into particularly four industries—the stone crushing, quarrying, and mining; well-digging, the hotel industry in Rajasthan, and the rag-picking sector in Uttar Pradesh, drawing heavily from migrant workers' experiences in these sectors to depict the specific challenges associated with each sector.

Long working hours and high living expenses

In Rajasthan, the migrant workers working in the stone-crushing industry had long work hours associated with most job roles. Migrant men mainly took up the roles of stone loaders and sack fillers, and in a few cases, migrant women had to work for 12-hour long hours, mostly without any breaks. Inter-state migrants also worked night shifts.

There was also significant variation in pay between the job roles taken up by inter-state migrants and those taken up by local labourers.

Inter-state migrant men and women labourers mostly worked as stone loaders and earned as low as INR 2500 every 15 days. Those inter-state labourers who worked as sack fillers would get paid at the rate of INR 700-800 per day, every 15 days, but such work put them at a higher risk of contracting silicosis. In contrast, native labourers of Rajasthan would work in the most lucrative job roles with short working hours and earn INR 400-500 per day (INR 6000–INR 7500 for 15 days).

A migrant woman from Bihar stated-

“You know, I just came to the Bahvari (creche) between my shift to breastfeed my baby and got into talking with you. It has been twenty minutes, and I must compensate for the lost time by working extra. Much work would have piled up in the meantime, and I must rush now.”

Wages were generally higher in the hospitality sector in Rajasthan. However, they varied across job roles and whether the labourer was placed in the kitchen or the food and beverages department.

Helpers in the kitchen tend to earn INR 7,000-11,000 per month, depending on experience, while chefs earn INR 15,000-16,000 per month. Similarly, helpers and waiters make INR 6,000-12,000 monthly in the dining area, while supervisors (captains) make INR 15,000-20,000 monthly.

The well-digging industry attracted many out-migrants from Rajasthan to Maharashtra and Gujarat, who were primarily engaged as well-diggers and infrequently as contractors. While contractors earned INR 3,000-5,000 per foot up to the depth of 40 feet and INR 10,000 per foot beyond that.

[47] Chitra, K. (2019). Encountering Alienation: A Situational Review of Inter-state Migrant Workers from the North Indian States in Kerala. In: Panneer, S., Acharya, S., Sivakami, N. (eds) Health, Safety and Well-Being of Workers in the Informal Sector in India. Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-8421-9_13

Scholten, P. (2019): Mainstreaming versus alienation: conceptualising the role of complexity in migration and diversity policymaking, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2019. 1625758

Labourers working as helpers were paid a wage of *INR 10,000* to *INR 12,000* per month. There is a high risk of accidents associated with this sector. A labourer from the Masuda block who migrated to Gujarat stated,

“We start working as soon as the dawn breaks, and the work will continue as long as there is daylight. Multiple accidents also happen during work when loose stone chunks fall unexpectedly on someone working inside the well.”

Thus, other than the stone-crushing industry, migrant workers either out-migrating or in-migrating to Rajasthan could earn an average of *INR 10,000 per month*, a considerable increase from daily wage rates in other sectors. However, this increase in wage payments is often offset by the costs associated with staying in the destination region – food, accommodation, health, and local commute. In this study, migrant workers reported an average expenditure of *INR 4,115* per month on food.

Only 7.5% of all migrant worker respondents in our study received ration from their employers once a month, and only 10.3% of all migrant worker respondents reported receiving two meals per day from their employers.

Migrant workers in the hospitality sector reported receiving food from employers, with 67.4% receiving two meals daily.

Figure 27: Migrant workers receiving ration from employer (n = 545)

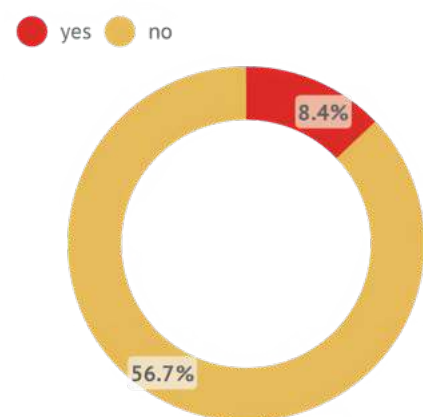


Figure 28: Frequency of receiving ration from employer per month (n = 46)

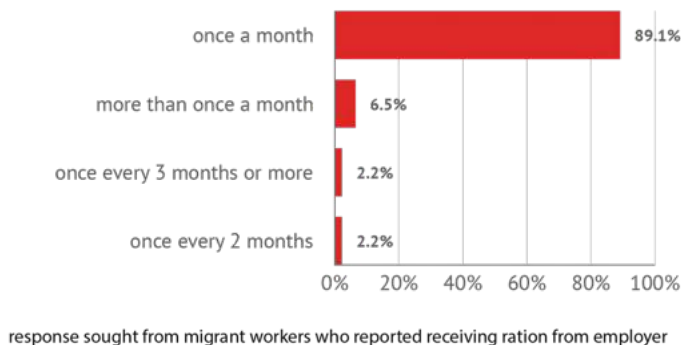


Figure 29: Migrant workers receiving meals from employer (n = 545)

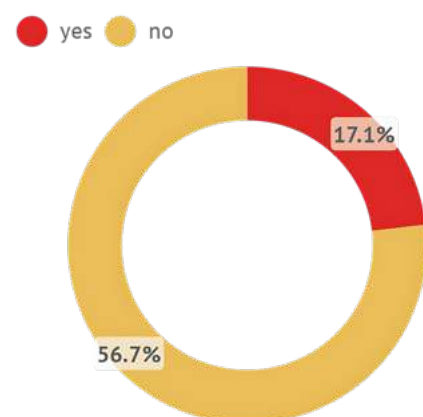
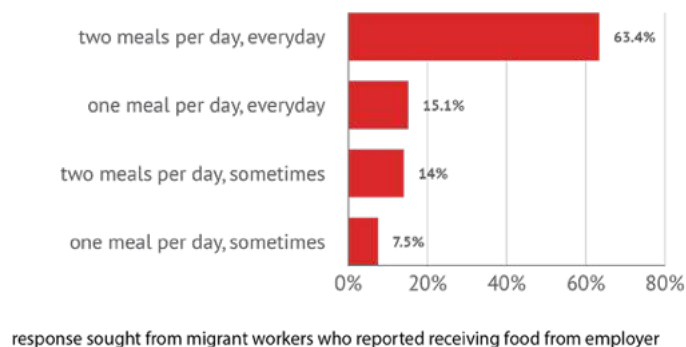


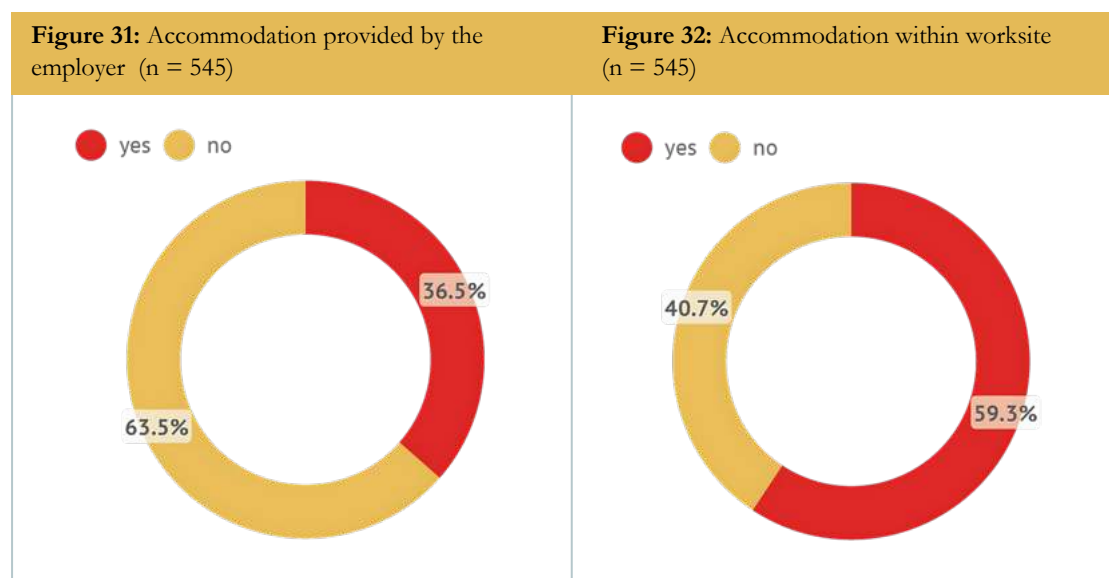
Figure 30: Frequency of receiving meals from employer per month (n = 93)



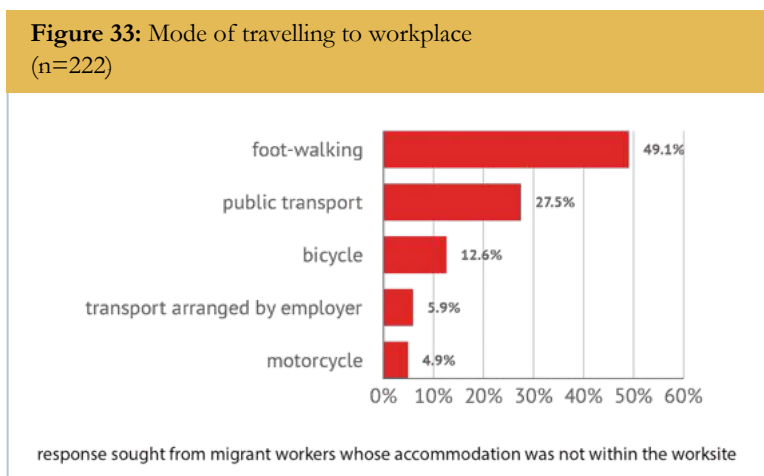
Less than 10% of migrant workers in the construction sector, which emerges as the most significant sector for absorbing migrant workers, reported receiving food from the employer.

63.5% of the migrant workers also reported that they had to provide for their accommodation, incurring a monthly average expenditure of *INR 1,876*.

27% (construction), 70% (hospitality) and 62.5% (stone crushing) of the migrant workers across these sectors reported employers providing lodging/accommodation facilities at the destination locations.



Almost 40% of workers reported staying far from their worksite and needed to commute to their workplace. 32.4% who needed to commute, did so either on public transport (27.5%) or on motorcycles (4.9%), incurring expense on public transport tickets or fuel charges. All these expenditures led to migrant workers' net earnings remaining modest.



Poor living conditions

Being forced to live in poor-quality accommodation is a common experience for migrant workers in the destination region. In the study, only 42% of migrant workers across two states reported staying in accommodations with a concrete roof, while accommodations with asbestos roofs or other metallic sheets were reported by 37%. 13.2% of the workers reported accommodations with thatched roofs.

Figure 34: Types of accommodation facility (n = 545)

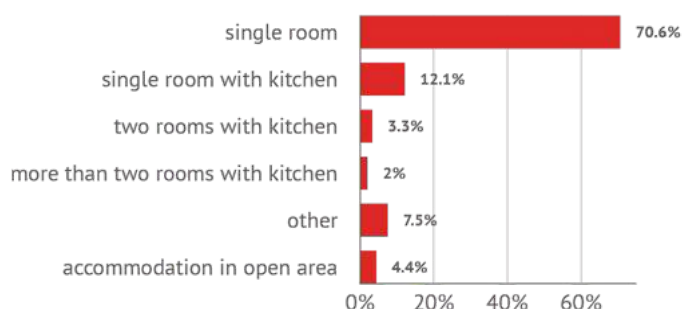
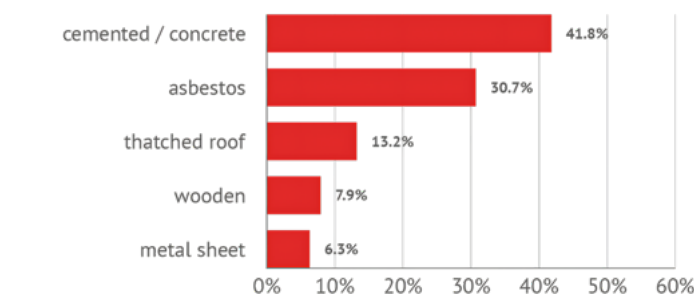
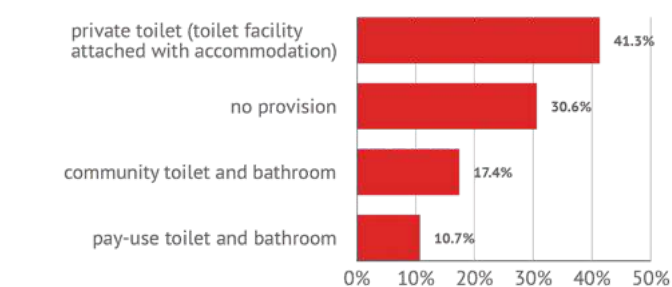


Figure 35: Ceiling types of accommodation facility (n = 521)



response sought from migrant workers who reported staying in a house

Figure 36: Types of sanitation facilities (n = 521)



response sought from migrant workers who reported staying in a house

A single-room accommodation without a kitchen is inhabited by 70.6 % of the respondents, while 17.4 % have access to a separate kitchen area.

Sanitation facilities are also reported to be lacking, with 30.6% of the population reporting the practice of open defecation due to no provision of any toilet. While 41.3% have toilet facilities attached to their accommodation, 17.4% and 10.6% utilise community and pay-and-use toilets, respectively. To curtail expenses, migrant workers also live in some of the most cramped spaces. On average, four individuals share a single room, exposing them to health and sanitation risks, as was seen during the country's peak of the COVID-19 wave.

In the stone-crushing units of Beawar, migrant workers usually lived in single-room quarters (with no kitchen space) within the factory premises, with tin roofs and did not have access to toilets. They had access to electricity, but drinking water was not clean. The premises were covered with stone dust, and some complained that there was no clean place for them even to eat properly. The workers who migrated to well-digging and stone-cutting industries from Rajasthan lived in makeshift shelters near the workplace because no specific facilities were provided for the workers at the work site. People relied on the nearby forests for sanitation, as there was no provision for toilets at the workplace. On the contrary, the living arrangements provided by the employers in the hotel industry were satisfactory, with proper rooms, electricity, and sanitation facilities.

In Uttar Pradesh, many workers who migrate to Lucknow from the nearby districts of Bahraich, Barabanki, and Sitapur often reside in rain-baseras (night shelters) or migrant shelters provided by the government and run with the help of CSOs. While the facilities in these shelters are adequate, the number of beds is limited, excluding many who search for decent stay. On the other hand, in-migrants from other states, such as those from Assam working as waste-pickers, experienced deplorable living conditions, with their houses being makeshift shelters made from plastic sheets and bamboo poles. The contractors who employed them provided the land for constructing such houses. Their housing premises also functioned as working areas, where waste would be segregated, resulting in them living around huge piles of waste.

In both the states, the migrant workers had very little access to proper healthcare and educational services for their children. While providing healthcare led to huge out-of-pocket expenditures, children's education was often compromised, given the exigencies of migrant lives.

The efforts of the CSOs working to ensure better healthcare for migrants, including better maternal and child care and connecting children from migrant households with educational facilities, had met with limited success. Along with little state government attention towards migrant households, given they did not form a part of the registered vote-bank in the state, the itinerant nature of such households often made it

difficult to connect them to crucial services like Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) services and continued primary and secondary education for children.

Poor working conditions and occupational hazards

The condition of work varies based on the sectors and job roles in which migrants are engaged. Elements such as irregular availability of work, uncertainties due to the absence of formal contracts, lack of provision for weekly paid holidays, difficulties in obtaining experience certificates at the time of resignation, and hazardous working conditions are prevalent in every sector. Inter-district migrants often have better bargaining power than inter-state migrants within a particular sector, and inter-state migrants predominantly take up the most vulnerable job roles.

The stone-crushing industry, particularly in Rajasthan is a high-risk sector. Many workers reported losing limbs while operating machinery, and instances of children of migrant workers falling inside or getting stuck in machines were reported. Exposure to quartz and feldspar stone dust without protective gear led to many workers developing silicosis. Similarly, the rag-picking industry in Uttar Pradesh, attracting migrant workers from other states, is vulnerable to health hazards, especially respiratory issues, as workers deal with waste without protective gear like gloves or masks.

Migrant workers in the well-digging industry reported fatalities caused by falling stones while digging at deeper depths. In the restaurant industry, significant occupational hazards reported by migrant workers were the lack of systems against fire hazards and the non-maintenance of gas stoves and cylinders, leading to multiple deaths due to kitchen fires and gas cylinder explosions over the years.

Surveillance and hindrance to collectivisation

In destination locations, migrant workers often reported living and working under close surveillance. Their perception as outsiders within local communities, stemming from their origin and legal status, resulted in constant monitoring by local law enforcement. This is especially true for migrant workers from West Bengal and Assam, as their language often leads local communities to believe they hail from Bangladesh.

Regular police verifications underscored the precarity of their existence, rooted in a lack of documentary proof to establish their Indian citizenship unequivocally. This surveillance impacted their daily lives and instilled a sense of fear and insecurity, affecting their sense of belonging and community cohesion. The rag-picking community in Uttar Pradesh, mostly hailing from Assam, was particularly vulnerable to these precarities. These waste-workers also faced hostility from the local waste-working communities, such as the Valmiki.

Another form of surveillance reported by migrant workers was constant CCTV surveillance during working hours. Respondents stated they had been thoroughly monitored, and workers had lost payment due to resting or not performing their work properly, especially affecting those in the stone-crushing industry. Such surveillance caused severe anxiety among the workers. Sexual violence was also reported as being used as a

tool to coerce women into compliance but was almost always never reported, even though women-led trade unions had encouraged local women labourers to report and seek legal recourse in cases of sexual violence.

Their status as migrants keeps workers from joining unions. At destinations, it is a common phenomenon to find migrants from the same source geography living together. As migration in the informal sector primarily occurs via social networks, living in a close-knit group provides them protection in an alien destination. Despite adversities, there is an underlying theme of collectivisation among them. Their shared experiences of migration, work, and living in a foreign space foster a sense of community. They arrive in the city through networks facilitated by contractors and live in slums rented out by these contractors, creating a collective living situation.

Often, such informal networks are trusted more by workers than formal unionising processes. While informal networks have their benefits, the lack of formal unionising significantly affects the collective bargaining power of migrants.

In Beawar, Rajasthan, trade unions were in place for female and male workers. However, migrant workers surveyed as part of this study were not part of any of these unions, possibly because a major strategy for mobilising support for unions was helping workers access stipulated social security benefits. Since migrant workers, especially inter-state workers, did not have access to social security measures in the destination state, such mobilisation strategies were ineffective for them. Also, they are far more dependent on factory owners for their survival in the city, especially in terms of housing, making it difficult for them to unionise and collectivise against factory owners.

Legal provisions for unorganised workers and their violations

Of Labour standards have been defined both by international standards and by countries. Labour standards in India uphold all the seven core principles as elucidated by the International Labour Organization (ILO). A glaring problem in the ratification of these conventions, however, is that it only exists for the organized sector in India⁴⁸ and unorganised sector workers fall through the gaps.

Among the unorganized sector workers, migrant workers display a greater level of vulnerability as the crossing of administrative borders devoid them of social security protections and leads them to certain sectors, geographies, and employment arrangements where their rights and labour laws pertaining to them get violated. The laws which predominantly deal with the rights of migrants are the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act (ISMW) (1979), and The Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act (1996). Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions Code (2020) as part of the newly introduced Labour Codes will subsume the ISMW 1979 on the day it is notified. There are several problems with the provisions of each law, making their reach and applicability limited:

- The ISMW Act is for migrants who are hired by contractors in another state, and in many cases, majority of the workers do not even get recognized under that category as the contractors they work with are not registered. Contract Labour Act and BOCW Act are for workers of more than 20 and more than 10 workers, respectively, and do not apply to many worksites. The Minimum Wage Act also covers only specific sectors. There is no Act covering domestic work at all.
- The procedure for filing a complaint is complicated. It requires the complaint to be registered by a Labour Inspector under ISMW and by the union head under BOCW Act. Women face the problem of persuading an inevitably male person to register their complaint.
- The workers must first establish they are covered by that law, then persuade someone to register their complaint and then furnish proof of agreement, which is usually made orally.

[48] <https://www.ilo.org/static/english/protection/travail/pdf/rdwpaper22a.pdf>

- The Interstate Migrant Workmen Act of 1979 provides rights to migrants to be sent back to their homes by train, released from forced debt when they return to their hometown, etc. However, because of non-recognition as migrants under this Act due to the constraints stated above, migrants most often are not able to avoid such a provision, leading to bonded labour-like situations.
- Many workers do not have local Identification Cards (IDs)⁴⁹ and are also unable to access benefits under the Public Distribution System (PDS). They also did not have local voter IDs. The most possessed ID was the Aadhar, but it does not help them access benefits. The problem of rights is intimately connected with the problem of identity, as migrants do not have identity documents.

Moreover, employers are required under The Contract Labour Act 1970 to provide safe housing to migrant workers, but this legally never comes to fruition. Workers continue to live in squalid conditions, often in makeshift tents, as observed in this study. This is especially important as a greater number of women have also joined the migrant workforce in recent years, many of them being children under the age of 14.⁵⁰ The wages of migrant workers are often much lower than what they should be legally, and it comes with a set of exploitative practices as the workers are not covered by any social-safety laws and are forced to work for long hours. They are frequently paid late wages, which are low because of pre-existing debts with the employers. Many are asked to do jobs that are not a part of their work profile, and many are not paid extra for any of the extra work they do. They are also insulted and abused if they are late for work. Women bear the additional burden of childbirth and child-rearing, which is not compensated for by the provision of maternity leaves or provision of creches or private areas for breastfeeding. Female migrants are frequently subjected to domestic violence and sexual violence at the hands of their partners, contractors, and employers but with little legal recourse, with them often not being covered by the Sexual Harassment at Workplace - Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal Act 2013.

Even though India was one of the first nations to outlaw bonded labour through the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1970, structural inequalities persist to give rise to bonded labour-like situations, especially in cases where advance payments are made. The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020⁵¹ & The Inter-state Migrant Workmen Act, 1979.⁵² Both have provisions for travel allowance (for journey between source - destination and back) to be paid to the inter-state worker, and to ensure that they are not forced to work against their will, whereas the ground reality is starkly different. The employers not only refrain from providing any travelling allowance, but the money taken in the form of advance also restricts migrants' free decision about his/her plan of movement. The Central Sector Scheme for Rehabilitation of Bonded Labourer - 2021, provides rehabilitation assistance of INR 1,00,000 per adult male beneficiary and INR 2,00,000 For special category beneficiaries such as women, children including orphans or those rescued from organized and forced begging rings or other forms of forced child labour.⁵³

But as per the 2022-23 annual report of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, the number of beneficiaries and the amount given to the Beneficiaries for this scheme during 2022-23 is zero⁵⁴ implying that despite the continued occurrence⁵⁵ of cases of bonded labour little has been done towards rescue and rehabilitation in actuality. It has been further observed that migrant workers are not often aware of their rights or labour rights, like the right to equality, right to work, right to secure work, a living wage, and a decent standard of life, right to form association, right to freedom, cultural and educational rights, etc.⁵⁶

[49] These local identity cards could be IDs issued by the employer to the migrant labourer. Many NGOs as part of their migrant support initiatives do this. This has also been recommended by the National Commission for Rural Labourers, and the Second National Commission for Rural Labourers. (Srivastava, R. (2020). Vulnerable Internal Migrants in India and Portability of Social Security Benefits)

[50] Baid, N. (2021). Problems of Migrant Workers in India. *Supremo Amicus*, 24, 756.

[51] <https://dofasli.gov.in/public/Admin/Cms/AllPdf/650059fbb8f1a9.98699174.pdf>

[52] [https://clc.gov.in/clc/acts-rules/inter-state-migrantworkmen#:~:text=1979%20and%20came%20on%20the,1979%20\(30%20of%201979\).&text=An%20Act%20to%20regulate%20the,and%20for%20matters%20connect,ed%20therewith](https://clc.gov.in/clc/acts-rules/inter-state-migrantworkmen#:~:text=1979%20and%20came%20on%20the,1979%20(30%20of%201979).&text=An%20Act%20to%20regulate%20the,and%20for%20matters%20connect,ed%20therewith)

[53] <https://www.ilo.org/static/english/protection/travail/pdf/rdwpaper22a.pdf>

[54] https://labour.gov.in/sites/default/files/ar_2022_23_english.pdf

[55] https://nhrc.nic.in/sites/default/files/SPEECH_2012_10_25.pdf

[56] Srivastava, Ravi S., 2005. "Bonded labour in India : its incidence and pattern," ILO Working Papers 993779363402676, International Labour Organization.



Chapter 5

SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAMMES – ROLE
IN INTERNAL MIGRATION

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines social protection as a nationally defined set of basic social security guarantees that should ensure, as a minimum, that, over the life cycle, all in need have access to essential healthcare and to basic income security which together secure effective access to goods and services defined as necessary at the national level.⁵⁷ Seasonally migrant and circulatory labourers and the lower categories of rural-urban migrants suffer from vulnerabilities due to their status as migrants. Their numbers are very large, and unless social protection programmes are designed and implemented to deal with their specific vulnerabilities, they will continue to be the victims of structural violence (Deshingkar, 2022).

As pointed out by Srivastava (2012a), in the Indian Constitution, subjects which are covered under social protection can be in either

in the exclusive domain of states - these include:

- public health and sanitation, hospitals, and dispensaries.
- relief of the disabled and unemployables.

in the concurrent domain of Centre and States – these subjects include *vagrancy, nomadic and migratory tribes; social security and social insurance; employment and unemployment; welfare of labour including conditions of work, provident funds, employers' liability, workmen's compensation, invalidity and old age pensions and maternity benefits; and education*; or

in the concurrent domain of the Centre, States, and local bodies through Schedule 11 and 12 of the Constitution.

The Central government alone exercises limited power in the domain of social protection, and a greater degree of coordination between varied apparatus of the state and the central government seems essential to make the lives of migrant workers less precarious by providing them with the necessary social security net. Additionally, state apparatus and institutions' lack of robust knowledge about the lived experiences of migration functions as an epistemic barrier in the formation of pertinent policy discourse and actions.

The Government of India has a long history of running a 'safety net' and adaptive social protection programmes to reduce distress migration. These were designed with the aim to help rural communities increase agricultural productivity during agriculture's lean periods or during climate extremes like droughts or floods.

Effective social protection programmes can mitigate the pressures of distress migration by providing people with local livelihood options. It is important to note that distress-induced migrant workers may be the most disadvantaged in an urban labour market and are prone to be exploited.

[57] <https://www.ilo.org/secsoc/areas-of-work/policy-development-and-applied-research/social-protection-floor/lang-en/index.htm>

Some of these schemes are listed in the table below:

Table 3: Schemes for Workers' Benefits	
Schemes	Objectives
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)	To provide 100 days of guaranteed wage employment annually per household in rural areas when demanded
Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Welfare Board Benefits	To provide different types of financial and insurance assistance to workers in the construction sector upon fulfilment of certain provisions of service in the preceding year
Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Gramin (PMAY-G)	To provide houseless people and those living in dilapidated houses with financial assistance for constructing a durable house with toilet facilities
Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY)	To provide for life insurance cover due to natural or accidental death
Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY)	To provide for life and disability cover due to natural or accidental death
Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY)	To provide INR 5 lakh per family for secondary and tertiary health coverage for eligible beneficiaries as per SECC 2011
One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC)	To facilitate portability of provisions of ration for PDS cardholders through PDS shops across the country for migrant workers and their families.
Pradhan Mantri Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)	To provide for subsidies to set-up new micro-enterprises in the non-farm sector.

Additionally, few schemes were launched post-Covid-19 to support migrant workers who were facing job loss.

Table 4: Post COVID-19 Schemes for Workers' Benefits	
Schemes	Objectives
Atmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana (ABRY)	To provide for life and disability cover due to natural or accidental death
Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY)	To facilitate portability of provisions of ration for PDS cardholders through PDS shops across the country for migrant workers and their families.
Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Rozgar Abhiyan (PMGKRA)	To provide for subsidies to set-up new micro-enterprises in the non-farm sector.
PM Svanidhi Scheme	Working loan capital of INR 10,000 to urban street vendors in subsidized internet rates to be returned within 2-3 years

Further, both Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh have launched their programmes to provide social security coverage. Some well-recognised schemes from this study state are listed in table 5.

Table 5: Schemes by Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan Government for Workers

State	Scheme	Objective
Rajasthan	Mukhyamantri Chiranjeevi Swasthya Bima Yojana Scheme	Health insurance coverage at the household level
	Mukhyamantri Chiranjeevi Durghatna Bima Scheme	Accidental death and disability coverage at the household level
	Mukhyamantri Chiranjeevi Jeevan Raksha Yojana	Life insurance coverage at the household level
	Mukhyamantri Aawaas Yojana	Financial assistance for the construction of houses with toilet
	Rajasthan Vishwakarma Kaamgaar Kalyan Yojana	Distribution of work tools for certain trades
	Ek Rupaye Prati Kilo Gehun Yojana	Subsidised food grains for households
	Rajasthan Mukhyamantri Grameen Rozgar Yojana	Monetary support to help develop rural local enterprises
Uttar Pradesh	Uttar Pradesh Mukhyamantri Gramudyog Rozgar Yojana	Monetary support to develop small enterprises at the village
	Uttar Pradesh Mukhyamantri Jan Aarogya Yojana	Health insurance coverage at the household level
	Uttar Pradesh Mukhyamantri Durghatna Bima Yojana	Accidental death and disability coverage at the household level
	Uttar Pradesh Berozgari Bhatta Yojana	Monetary support for unemployed people
	Uttar Pradesh Mukhyamnatri Yuva Swarozgar Yojana	Monetary support for self-employment and entrepreneurship
	Uttar Pradesh Vishwakarma Shram Samman Yojana	Distribution of work tools for certain trades
	Uttar Pradesh Nirmaan Kaamgaar Gambhir Beemari Sahayta Yojan	Health insurance benefits for construction workers

While both the union and state government run several schemes targeted towards livelihoods, food security, health and life insurance and housing; their uptake with the target population is often hindered by roadblocks.

The Public Distribution System (PDS) functions through local registration and often fails to deliver rations to the migrants at their destination. The take-up of the post-pandemic edition of One Nation One Ration Card is also very low among the migrant population due to a lack of awareness and orientation about the process and the left-behind family's dependence on the ration at the source, which makes the migrants reluctant to withdraw ration at the destination. Besides this, there are also irregularities in the distribution of the ration on the distributor's part.⁵⁸ Schemes which can take care of the health needs of the migrants like PMJAY witness scant enrolment in several states (3.25% enrolment in Gujarat, 3% in Maharashtra, 3.5% in Haryana).

According to the latest data available on the NHA dashboard, Uttar Pradesh records the highest number of Ayushman Cards (PMJAY) cards at 5.02 crores, however in terms of people availing treatment through the scheme, it only stood 9th in the overall ranking of states with only 0.28 crores recorded hospitalizations, under the scheme.

Rajasthan, although 7th in terms of a total 2.13 crores cards being issued, fared better (ranking 3rd across Indian states) in terms of actual hospitalizations with 0.57 crore cases of admissions, under the scheme. The better performance of Rajasthan could be attributed to the better functioning of Chiranjeevi, the state's own health insurance scheme. The insurance amount in Rajasthan under the scheme was also high, with the benefits being in tune with INR 0.25 crores. This performance, though as observed through this study, was far from universal, and a significant scope of improvement existed in connecting migrant households to the benefits of the Chiranjeevi Scheme.

In Uttar Pradesh, the discrepancy between issued cards and actual hospitalisations points to very low uptake or substantive access to the scheme, an observation that is supported by our study.⁵⁹

Policies like MGNREGS don't apply uniform minimum wage directives across states; hence, many labourers are paid below minimum wage.⁶⁰ The lack of political and civic identity in the states they migrate to exacerbates many of the socio-economic disadvantages they already face.⁶¹

Despite the number of measures announced and implemented by the Central and the state governments, as well as community-level measures undertaken by NGOs and CSOs in the post-Covid-19 pandemic period, the migrant's access to social security benefits in the study geographies remain limited as will be seen later in this section. It is to be noted that both in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh since in-migrant workers were not considered a part of the state's political economy, their access to social welfare schemes was limited. At the personal level e-Shram was found to have the highest uptake at 37.1% while BOCW was the lowest at 6.6%, and only 1.3% were covered by e-Shram, BOCW and ONORC (Table 7). At the household level PDS had the highest uptake at 88.7%, followed by MGNREGS at 57.5%, and health insurance at 17.4%. Only 8.5% migrant households had access to all three (Table 6).

Thus, an in-migrant noted -

"What will we get here... We get nothing... we get some services from our employer... the rest we buy... We have our documents in our village... there we get a few things".

[58] Vamakshi, V. (2022). Examining the effectiveness of One Nation One Ration Card Scheme.

[59] <https://dashboard.pmjay.gov.in/pmj/#/>

[60] Satpathy, A., Estupinan, X., & Malick, D. B. K. (2021). Strengthening Wage Policies to Protect Incomes of the Informal and Migrant Workers in India. Labour and Development, VV Giri National Labour Institute.

[61] Srivastava, R. (2020). Vulnerable internal migrants in India and portability of social security and entitlements. Delhi: Institute for Human Development.

Awareness, uptake and challenges with the uptake of social security and welfare benefits

For this study, we focused our attention on the following social security schemes at the household level:

- Public Distribution System (PDS) under the broader ambit of the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013
- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)
- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) - Aayushman Yojana or any other state-supported health insurance scheme

This bucket of schemes was chosen given their universal adoption status in the country. Since they address three key areas—ensuring food security, generating local livelihoods, and ensuring universal health care coverage—the primary reason that propels people to migrate. However, it's important to note that the PMJAY was not implemented in Rajasthan, and in its place, the Mukhyamantri Chiranjeevi Swasthya Bima Yojana Scheme was being run.

At an individual level, the study also examined

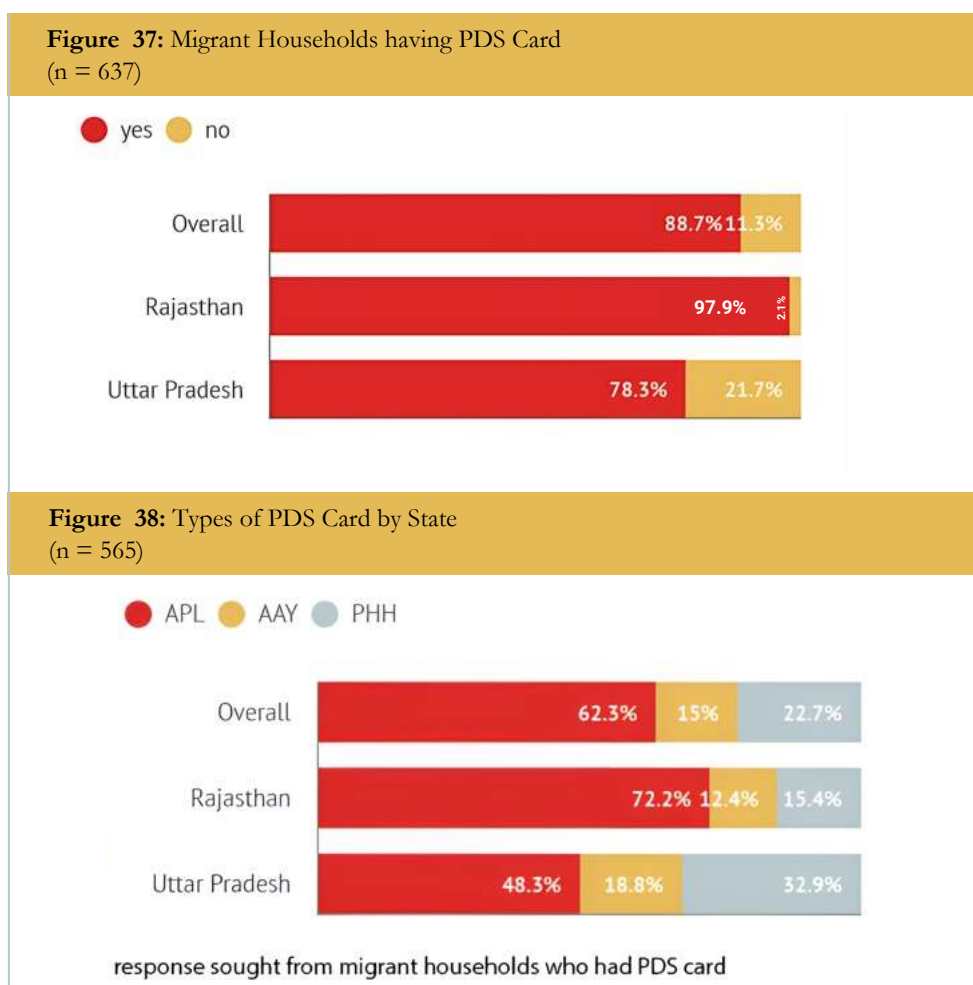
- e-Shram,
- BOCW Welfare Board Benefits
- One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC).

While the household-level benefits provide a safety net to all households regardless of their participation in migration, the individual schemes are much more focused on citizens who are deciding to migrate.

The study also looked at the status of *select state government-run schemes* and tried to understand their uptake. However, such state government-run schemes would only cover the migrant households at the source regions.

Public Distribution System (PDS)

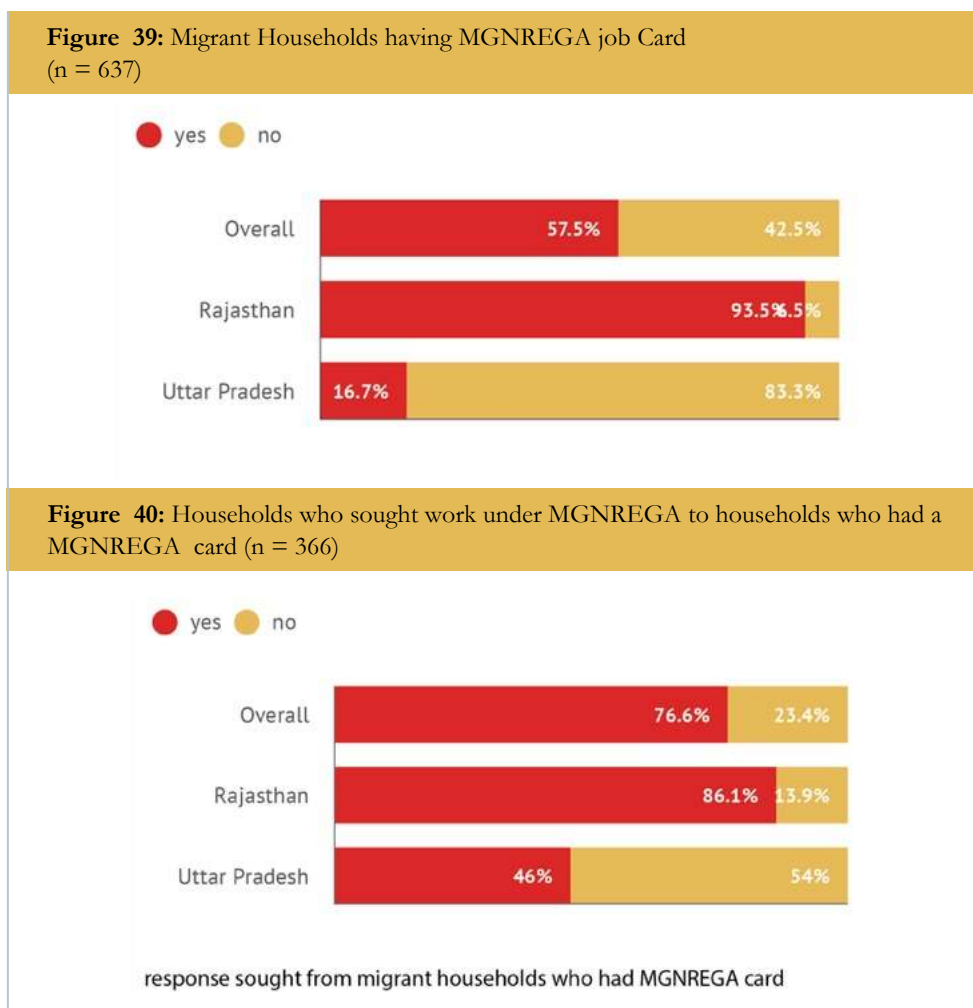
At the household level PDS has been one of the most universally accessed schemes over the years. However, in this study, PDS was not found to be universally accessible. While 88.7% of the households claimed to have ration cards, disaggregating by state it was 78.3% in Uttar Pradesh and 97.9% in Rajasthan. Interestingly disaggregating the ration cards further by the type of card in both these regions, about a quarter of ration card holders in Rajasthan (27.8%) had either a PHH or AAY card, while in the case of Uttar Pradesh half of the households (51.7%) having a ration card were under PHH or AAY. Almost all households (96.7%) belonging to this vulnerable segment used their ration cards to get ration either in the month of the survey or the previous month.



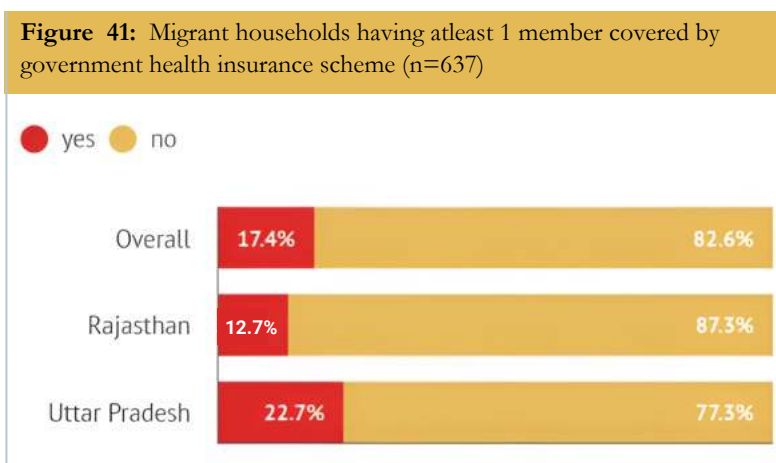
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)

On average, about three-fifths of migrant households (57.5%) reported having an MGNREGS card. Disaggregating by state, drastic scenarios exist between Rajasthan, where 93.5% of households had an MGNREGS card, and Uttar Pradesh, where the same was only 16.7%. Further, the percentage of households that worked in MGNREGS to those that had an MGNREGS card was 86.1% in Rajasthan, as compared to 46% in Uttar Pradesh.

On average, MGNREGS provided 46.2 days of guaranteed employment to migrant households, although the average days varied between the two states - 51.46 days in Rajasthan and 13.12 days in Uttar Pradesh. As per the latest data available for these two states, in Rajasthan, the average workdays in 2022-23 were 56.3 days, while in Uttar Pradesh, the average workdays in 2022-23 were 44.4 days. Since these are state-level aggregated shares of workers, it would be unwise to draw comparisons.

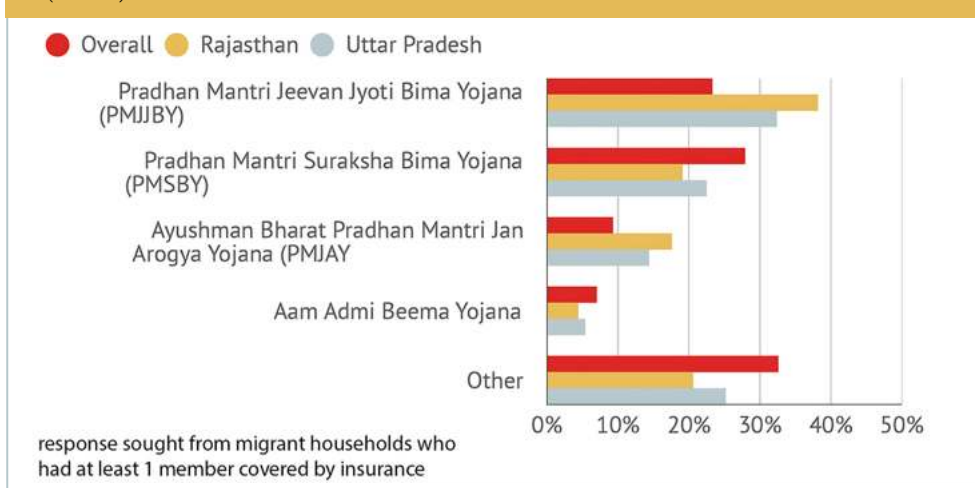


Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) and other public health insurance schemes



While at least half of the migrant households reported having access to PDS and MGNREGS, the same cannot be said about access to government health insurance schemes. 82.6% of households did not have a single family member covered under any government health insurance program, and this remains true even when we disaggregate by states - 87.3% in Rajasthan and 77.3% in Uttar Pradesh. Even coverage for a flagship scheme like the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) was reported to be as low as 17.6% in Uttar Pradesh.

Figure 42: Types of health insurance
(n=111)



e-Shram

While e-Shram is not a scheme by itself but a centralised database of all unorganised sector workers (UWs), including construction workers, migrant workers, gig and platform workers, street vendors, domestic workers, agricultural workers, etc., its importance lies in the fact that it helps central and state governments identify migrant workers by checking against their current and original address – thus helping to locate them at the time of crisis, with the assumption that the migrant worker is still at the destination region as mentioned at the time of registration. A more pertinent use of the data, however, would be to identify eligible workers who are migrant workers across the 13 social security welfare schemes and seven employment schemes as mentioned in the e-Shram portal and extend these schemes to them if not already covered, thus broadening the safety net.

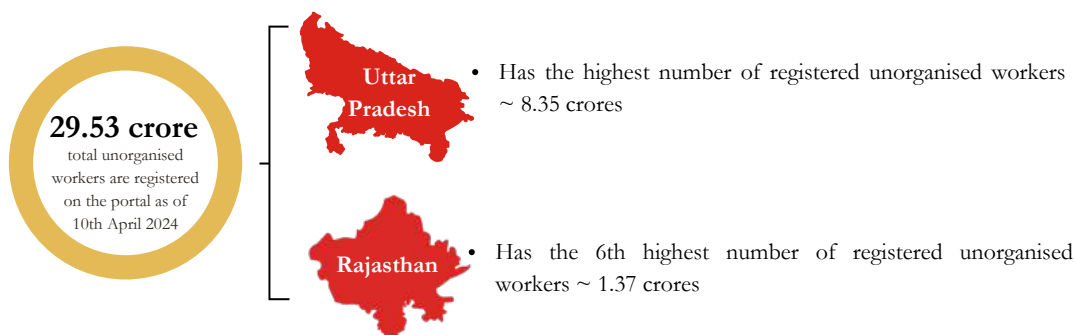
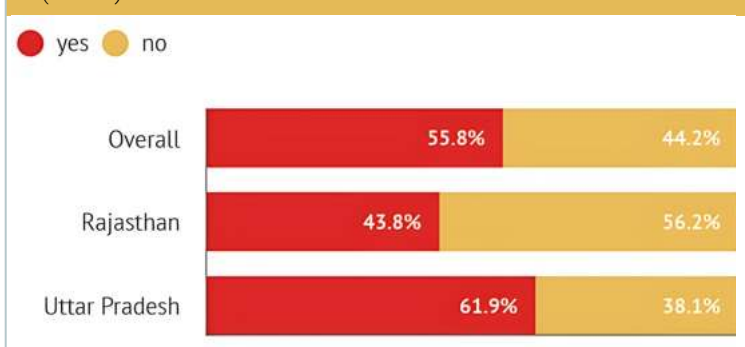
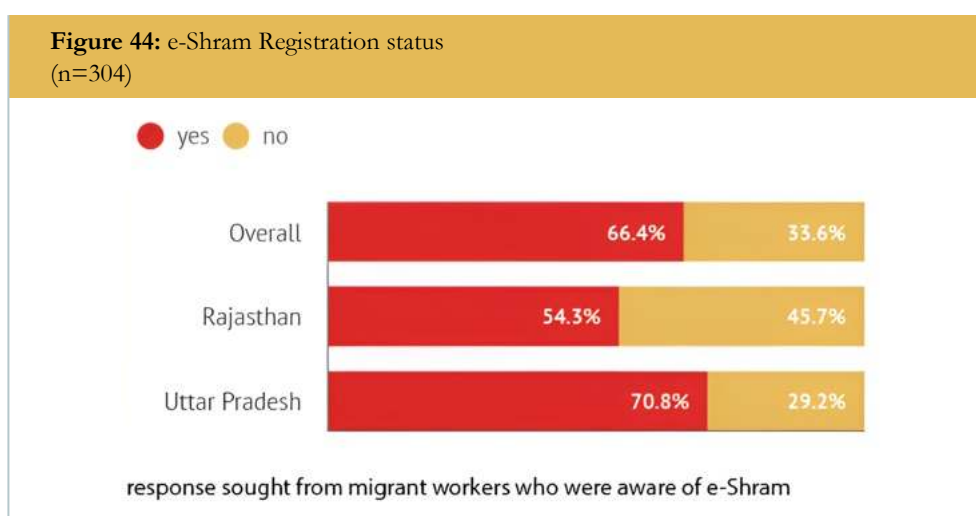


Figure 43: Awareness regarding e-Shram
(n=545)

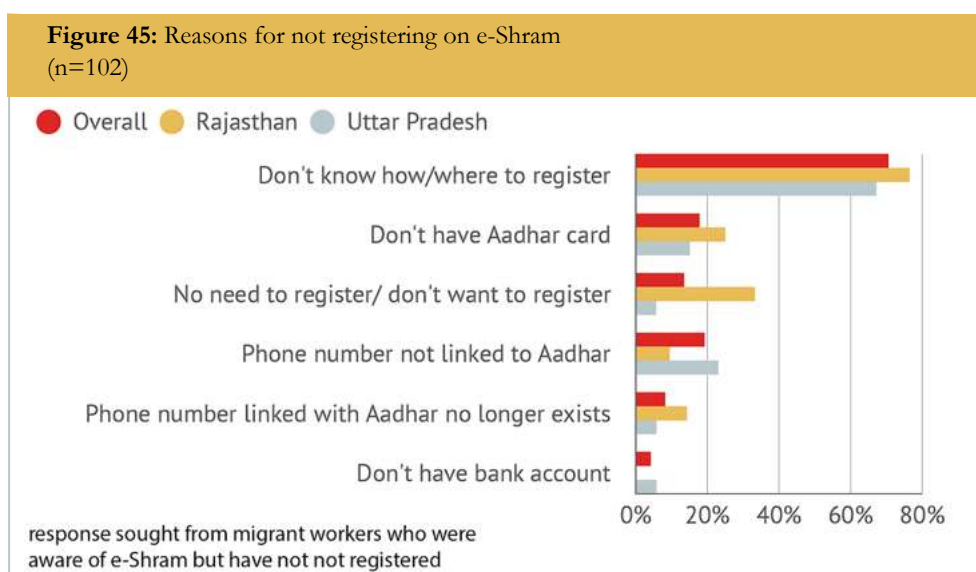


While such high registration numbers would indicate excellent accessibility and awareness, a little over half of the migrant workers (55.8%) during the study were aware of this scheme. Such figures indicate that in spite of such a vast number of registrations on the platform, information regarding the same is yet to proliferate.

Almost two-thirds of the respondents (66.4%) who were aware of e-Shram were already registered on the database although there was considerable variation between Rajasthan (54.3%) and Uttar Pradesh (70.9%). Among the workers who have not registered on the portal, 60.8% reported that they don't know where or how to register. Discussions with respondents and their families during the field study revealed a general disenchantment regarding the scheme with the unorganised workers as it does not provide any immediate benefit. Additionally, we also learnt that most migrant workers had learnt about this scheme from the partner institutions and ground-level staff of the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.



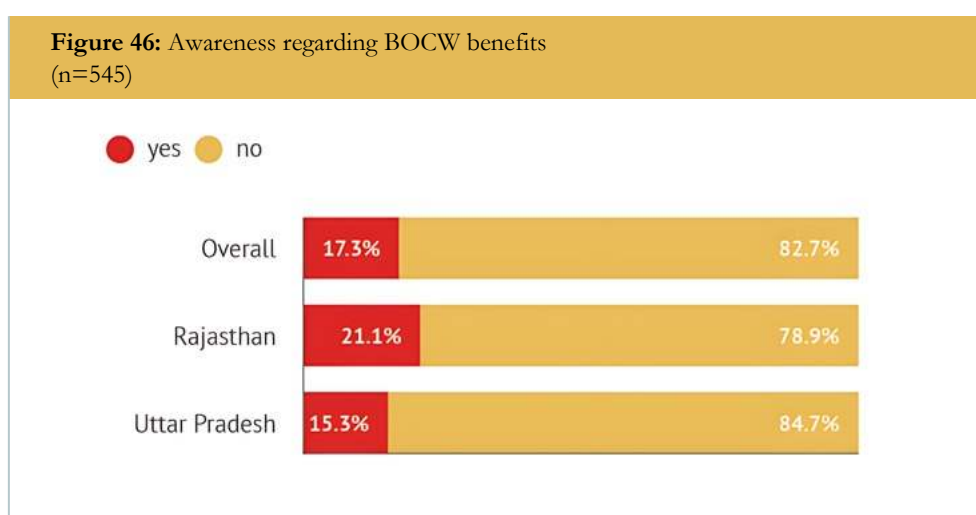
The registration was also being hindered by documentation challenges – including not having an Aadhar card, and current phone number not being linked to Aadhar. While Aadhar is mandatory for signing up, an active phone number linked to Aadhar is required for receiving the OTP of Aadhar-based verification. The practice of changing phone numbers to get the best deals from telecom service providers is a common practice among unorganised workers and migrant workers. However, having a bank account which is another requirement for Aadhar was rarely cited as an issue.



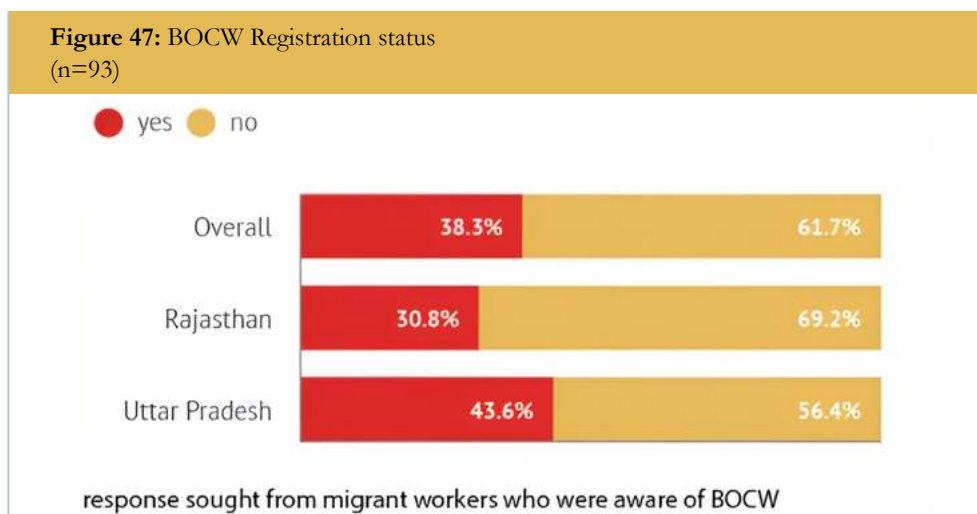
Benefits under the Board of Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Scheme

The basket of welfare schemes under the Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Welfare Board, established through the BOCW (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act of 1996 for regulating the safety, welfare, and other conditions of service for construction workers, has been implemented by every state government through its own BOCW Welfare Board to support workers employed in the construction sector of the concerned state. Under the provisions of the BOCW Act, a cess is collected from all construction activities within a state by the state BOCW board to create a BOCW fund, which is used to provide social security benefits to all registered workers. Any construction worker between the ages of 18 to 60 years who has completed 90 days of work in building or other construction activity in the preceding 12 months, is eligible for registration with the board and receipt of benefits. While this basket of benefits and the exact provisions may vary from state to state, commonly, they cover medical assistance, monetary assistance for the marriage of self and children, pension benefits, disability benefits, death benefits, funeral assistance, maternity benefits, and the purchase of tools, among others. Thus, BOCW is one of the most comprehensive social security schemes for unorganised workers, especially including a significant portion of migrant labourers by default.

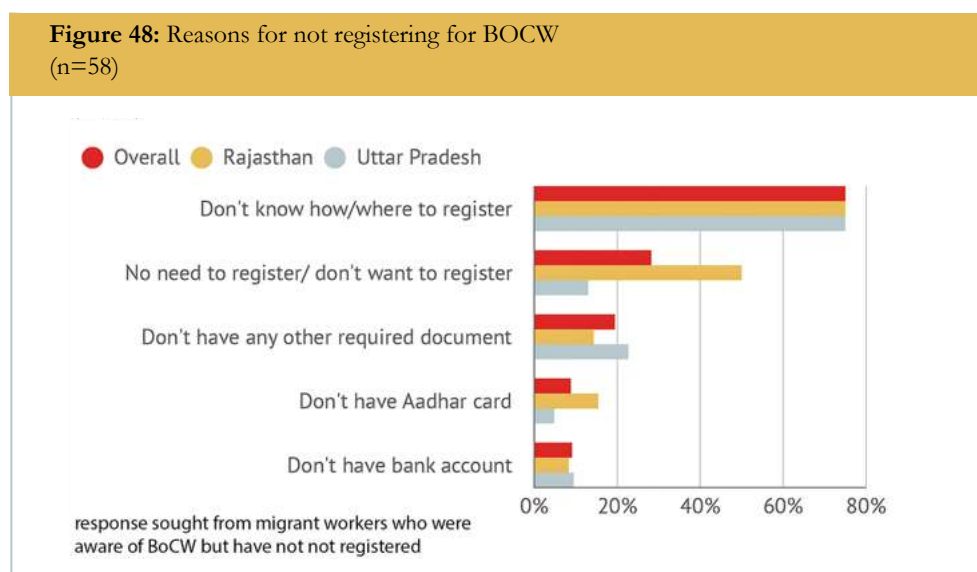
As already reported in previous chapters, construction was the most significant employment sector for migrant workers, especially in Uttar Pradesh (71.7%). However, the meagre 17.3% awareness about the provisions and entitlements under the BOCW Act within this universe respondents is indicative of a huge gap in knowledge and access that requires immediate attention. Unlike e-Shram, the BOCW welfare board provides a basket of benefits to the registered workers and governments. Therefore, it becomes imperative for CSOs and NGOs working on labour rights to focus on propagating better awareness and access to these entitlements.



Not only was awareness regarding BOCW very low among the respondents, so were the registration numbers. Of the people who were aware only 38.3% were registered with BOCW boards. The number again was higher in Uttar Pradesh (43.6%) compared to Rajasthan (30.8%).



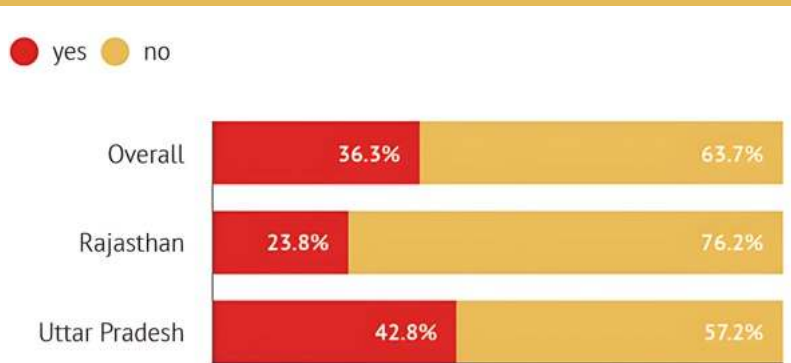
75% of migrant workers who were aware of BOCW but had not registered for the same reported not knowing where or how to register as the reason behind not registering. Documentation issues, especially proof of at least 90 days of work in the construction sector in the past year was massive challenge for migrant workers.



One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC)

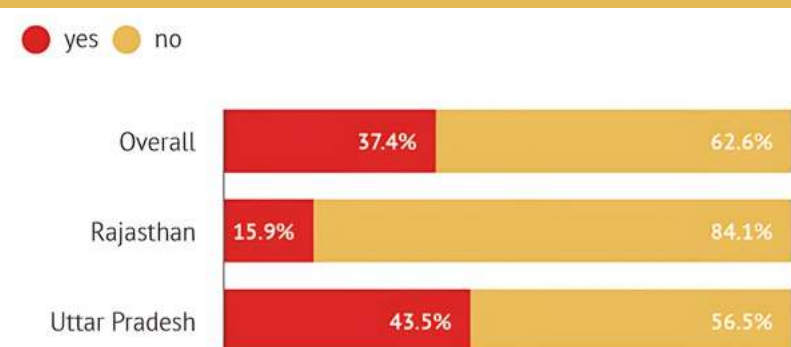
The One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) scheme introduced in 2019 enables migrant workers and their families to access PDS from any fair price shop in the country. Its stated objective is to ensure food security through the inter-state portability of ration cards. Rajasthan started implementing this scheme in October 2019, and Uttar Pradesh followed suit in May 2020. While ONORC is still one of the newer schemes, it's one of its kind regarding the provisioning of portability. In this study, 36.3% of migrant workers we spoke to were aware of the scheme and its benefits.

Figure 49: Awareness regarding ONORC
(n=545)



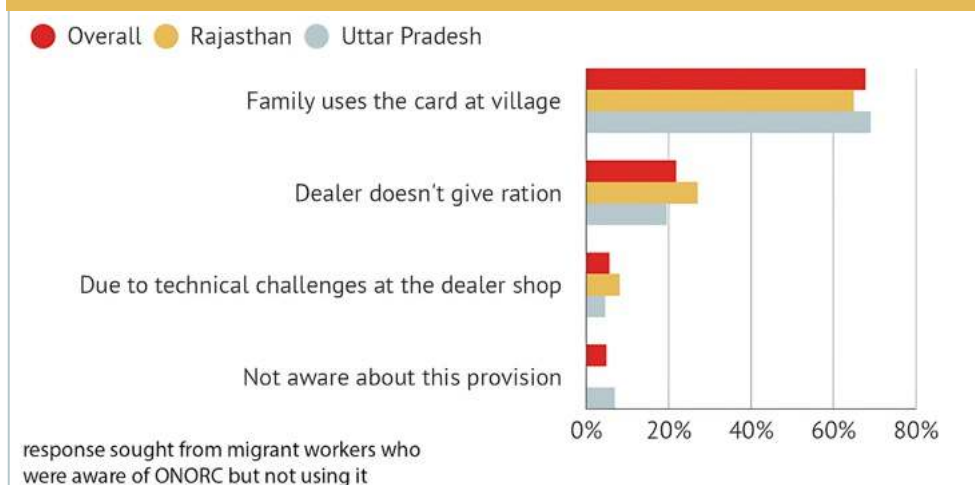
ONORC too faced a similar challenge with uptake. Only a bit more than one-third of the respondents (37.4%) who were aware about the scheme were availing ONORC benefits. However, ONORC uptake is spectacularly low in Rajasthan (15.9%) as compared to Uttar Pradesh (43.5%). Among those not availing of the benefits under ONORC, 67.7% reported that their ration card is being used by their family in their village and 21.8% reported that the dealer at the destination doesn't give ration.

Figure 50: ONORC usage status
(n=198)



response sought from migrant workers who were aware of ONORC

Figure 51: Reasons for not availing ONORC
(n=58)



response sought from migrant workers who were aware of ONORC but not using it

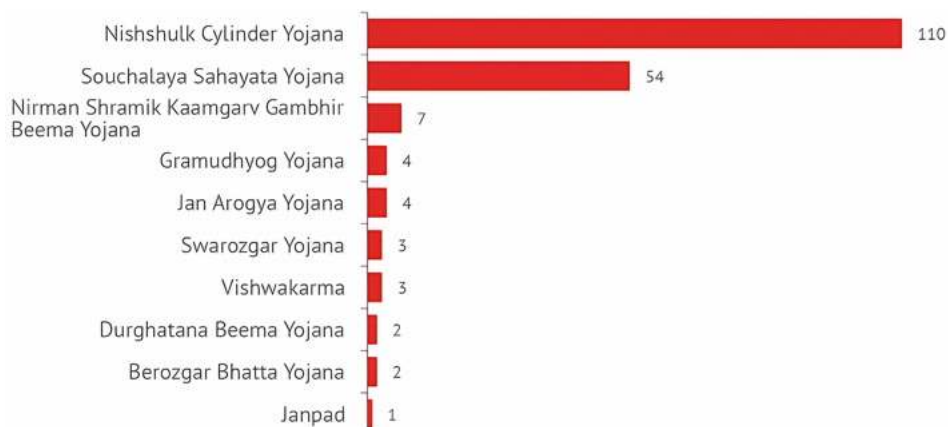
Social security schemes implemented by state governments

Respondents in our survey were also asked about enrolment in social security schemes implemented by the state governments of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. While uptake was overall on the lower end, it was especially so in Uttar Pradesh. However, across both states schemes related to subsidised gas cylinders (Ujjwala Yojana) had the highest uptake.

Figure 52: Enrollment in select social welfare programme by the Government of Rajasthan (n=183) [multiple responses per respondent]



Figure 53: Enrollment in select social welfare programme by the Government of Uttar Pradesh (n=360) [multiple responses per respondent]



Among the Universal schemes, in Uttar Pradesh, the out-migrating population did have access to the Public distribution system, but access to employment under MGNREGS had been discontinued for the last two years.

In Rajasthan, access to both PDS and MGNREGS was substantial as discussed previously in this section (Refer to figure 37 and 39). However, the awareness about and access to PDS significantly dropped upon migration. Migrants from Uttar Pradesh reported a slightly higher percentage of awareness regarding ONORC as compared to Rajasthan, but overall, migrants from both states were grappling with the procedural aspects of ONORC (Refer to figure 49 & 51).

Migrants were largely confused about whom to contact and register themselves with, to avail of the ONORC scheme, and what exact documentation and paperwork was required for the same at both source and destination regions. There was also a lack of clarity among them regarding the provisions pertaining to the portability of the scheme – whether they can withdraw ration for two consecutive months at their destination location and return to availing the PDS at the source location on the third month. Additionally, from conversations with partner organisations in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, we learnt that ration dealers too, on a majority of occasions were completely unaware of the procedural aspects of ONORC. The process of porting the beneficiary, and doubts on how more stock could be procured to meet the demands of this fleeting population without affecting supply to the regular customers were top challenges being faced by fair price shop owners.

Our qualitative analysis also suggests that while people were somewhat aware of the general schemes in both states, whether in or out-migrants, there was little awareness about migration and labour-related schemes and databases.

We look at the procedural challenges and roadblocks to provisioning in the upcoming section

Roadblocks and hindrances

It is clear from the section above that the uptake of social security benefits is not at optimum standards. This becomes more evident when looking at the access to social security not as individual schemes, but as a larger safety net of food security, guaranteed livelihood, and enrolment in health/life insurance programmes.

- About 8.5% of households were covered by all three of them,
- 14.9% of households were covered by insurance and a MGNREGS card.
- 8.8% households had a ration card and were covered by insurance and
- 56.2% households who had a ration card, were also covered by MGNREGS.

Table 6: Percentage of Migrant Households' Enrolment in Various Schemes

Ration Card	MGNREGS job card	One member in the household enrolled in a health insurance scheme	Percentage of migrant household in study (n = 637)
✓	✓	✓	8.5%
✓	✓		56.2%
	✓	✓	14.9%
✓		✓	8.8%

The numbers remain low when we look at the individual schemes as a broader framework of individual social security safety net as well

Table 7: Percentage of Migrant Workers' Enrolment in Various Schemes

e-Shram	BOCW	ONORC	Percentage of registered respondents (n = 545)
✓	✓	✓	1.28%
✓	✓		3.67%
	✓	✓	1.83%
✓		✓	6.79%

This study provides further information about a few identifiable roadblocks which prevent the universalisation of this safety net. We discuss these in detail in the following sections.

Incomplete information and information asymmetry

Of the respondents who were unable to register on e-Shram, and BOCW in spite of having knowledge about the same, the majority (70.1% and 75% respectively) (Figure 45 and Figure 48) cited that they did not know how or where to register. Also, amongst respondents who were not using ONORC almost two-thirds (67.7%) of respondents cited that their family was using the card at home. (Figure 51)

However, the design of the ONORC is such that a single member could get his or her share of the household's ration entitlements at the destination location while the household can keep on receiving entitlements for the rest of the members at the base location. This clearly suggests a lack of information amongst the population.

In the case of all the major schemes, a small percentage of respondents also suggested that they felt no need for them to register for the benefits. These may be due to multiple factors like a lack of trust in the state to deliver promises or a lack of awareness leading to the individual being unable to understand how a certain benefit may be beneficial to him or her.

Also, in the case of ONORC, technical failures at the Fair Price Shop due to mismatch of fingerprints, or link failure, and denial by the dealer to provide ration were also reported. In the case of the dealers denying ration, it mostly stems from the lack of awareness from the dealer regarding the benefit. It has also been reported that dealers often fear that he or she may run out of stocks if the ONORC demands are met. Regarding technical failures, the government has over the years added alternative systems that can be utilised to deliver ration in case of such technical failures, but the dealers often were not aware and equipped with the knowledge to utilise these alternative systems leading towards a denial in service delivery.

Further, it has been often noted that migrants are not able to access benefits either in their source or destination locations because their contractors do not register themselves through required provisions in the ISMW Act. A vignette from our qualitative study informs that it was not always due to the ill will of contractors but because they did not know how to register themselves and received no information or assistance from anyone in this regard, making it difficult not only for them but those working under them to be legally recognised.

A labour contractor from the Meghwal community in Masuda noted, who knew that he had to be registered thus expressed his frustration saying,

“I have tried so many times to register myself, but nobody tells me how to...I am routinely harassed by the police for trafficking people but I am helpless...I want to get registered as soon as possible...Can you please help?”.

Documentation issues

Once respondents were able to cross this information threshold their non-access was majorly caused by issues with documentation. Respondents were unable to furnish all necessary documents that are required for these registrations. In fact, insights from our qualitative study suggest that there was a marked discrepancy between the access of out-migrants at their source locations to general provisions and specific provisions meant to address specific conditions of distress. One of the major reasons for such discrepancies was related to the processing of documents. Whereas generalised schemes had lesser documentary requirements the process of application for specific schemes was understood to be long and tedious.

For example, labourer or migrant labourer-specific schemes required the migrants to apply separately and furnish several documents and proofs that were not always available to them. For example, accessing the BOCW schemes required the migrants to obtain a letter of confirmation issued by the employer in Rajasthan. This was often difficult to obtain given most stone-crushing units where the migrants worked were illegal. While the registered Trade Unions in an area were allowed to verify the workers, they could only do so for the workers of the district they operated in and not for the others. This resulted in many inter-district migrant workers being left out of the purview of the BOCW.

Moreover, in the case of BOCW another major hindrance was producing the eligibility proof that the person has completed 90 days of work in building and other construction activity in the preceding 12 months. This was made complicated by the nature of migration that most migrant workers participate in – multiple short-term migrations as well as multiple destinations within a single event. This constant change of employers and destination regions made it challenging for construction workers to get these eligibility proofs. In case of e-Shram respondents reported not having an Aadhar card, which is mandatory for registering on the platform. Amongst such respondents who had an Aadhar card, many times their phone numbers were not linked to Aadhar, or the linked phone number no longer existed. In both these cases, the inability to receive the One Time Passwords (OTP) on their phones prevented them from moving ahead with the registration.

Similarly, the out-migrating labour force from Rajasthan received entitlement from the Public Distribution System and MGNREGS on their own. But on their path of enrolling and receiving entitlements of other elaborate and complicated schemes like Chiranjeevi, PM Awas Yojana, scholarships, and PM Kisan Samman Nidhi they needed assistance. The long-drawn application process, lack of clarity about required documents, terms and conditions of eligibility, number of required follow-ups and the costs associated with that made it difficult for the migrants to navigate through the administrative structure on their own and called for interventions like that provided by GSVS.

Therefore, during an FGD in Masuda, out-migrants noted that,

Nothing reaches here...By the time the schemes reach Beawar district there is nothing left of them." Moreover, Rawat women in Masuda noted, since men were migrating, it was these women who had to go and get the documentation processes done. They noted, "Travelling long distances by foot is difficult...We also do not get to know about the requirements of documents in time... We do not even know whom to ask.

It is understandable that since traditional gender roles had kept women from navigating the public sphere, they found it difficult to navigate it when forced to do so by the absence of men in their families. Their lower educational levels presented a further challenge. Furthermore, some migrants claimed that to seek social security benefits from the government required a certain kind of orientation (implying awareness and political agency) and they attributed their inability to claim benefits to such lack of orientation among the residents of their village. However, the same residents noted that they were benefiting from general schemes like MGNREGS, PDS - except for two or three families who had problems with fingerprint verification and pension schemes.

Rent seeking and delivery leaks

A surprising finding in this study was the lower-than-expected demand for MGNREGS workdays especially in the case of Uttar Pradesh amongst interviewed migrant workers. One of the main reasons discussed by the respondents was the rent-seeking behaviour of the local mukhiyas. The mukhiyas would invariably use his or her higher social and political capital to seek MGNREGS workdays in the names of the actual beneficiaries and would manipulate the system in a way that he or she would receive the payments on these beneficiaries' behalf even though no work was being done. They would also have the original beneficiaries' ATM card and would use it to withdraw money from their account, of which most of the payment would be usurped and a small payment would be made to the actual beneficiaries.

Corruption in the disbursement of government benefits both in terms of generalised schemes and specific schemes was quite common across other states and other schemes as well, significantly affecting substantive access.

A woman migrant from Madhya Pradesh working in Rajasthan mentioned -

"We do not get any benefit either in MP or here. They charge INR 1000 to 2000 to make ration cards even... How can we then get ration cards here without any help... I had gone to the Mukhiya back at home who said that only if we gave him money will he get us PM Awas".

Similarly, another woman from Uttar Pradesh. mentioned -

"Those who have ration cards do get ration, but they often get between 29 to 30 kgs of rice instead of the mandated 31 kilos."

Lack of digital literacy and low digital skills

Finally, most of the migrant households, especially women of the households, did not possess smartphones which had become an important source of information dissemination, restricting their access to vital information regarding social security schemes. The impact of the awareness campaign by Vigyan Foundation and Haqdarshak was evident as workers spoke with confidence about the Labour Helpline, showcasing their faith in the police for support during grievances. A stark digital divide was evident, evoking frustration among

workers without smartphones, limiting access to crucial government services. The assumption of digital literacy by the government created misinformation gaps, pushing workers to rely on middlemen for transactions. Many Common Service Centres (CSC) operators bought their IDs by paying hefty sums, passing the financial burden on to the workers. CSCs raised scepticism, emphasising the need for Apna Seva Kendra (ASK) with trained personnel and fixed rates, offering a more reliable and accountable alternative. Further, the migrants usually mentioned contacting E-Mitras, CSCs, Gram Sevaks and Panchayat members for information. Our interactions with these key personnel confirmed that they were often aware of the application processes for general schemes but not for specific schemes themselves.

With the increasing digitalisation of awareness, registration, and access to social security benefits, the importance of access to supporting devices, the internet, and digital literacy has grown significantly. According to the Internet in India, 2022 report by Kantar-IAMAI, as of 2022,⁶² there were 759 million active internet users (AIU) in the country (52% of the population), estimated to grow to 900 million by 2025. The report also stated that 87 % of AIUs access the internet through smartphones. This is echoed in the TMT Predictions, 2022⁶³ report by Deloitte, which estimated smartphone users in India at 750 million, expected to grow to 1 billion by 2026. The country also has one of the cheapest mobile data plans globally, with 1 gigabyte (GB) of data costing around INR 13 or 0.16 dollars (1 USD = 83 INR).

Contrary to these findings, however, the MoLE's data from the E- Shram dashboard⁶⁴ itself provides evidence of the difficulties that unorganised workers (UWs) face while trying to register for e-Shram independently. Of the 29.36 crores UWs registered on the platform, 60% used Common Service Centres (CSCs) to register. Thus, it can be argued that while we have addressed ubiquity and made devices and data accessible to the masses, digital skills and literacy are significantly lacking.

On closer examination, we also find that this ubiquity of access is not homogeneous, as there remains a gap between Active Internet Users (AIU) in urban and rural areas. While 71% of the population in urban areas were AIUs, in rural areas, it was only 41% of the population.

From this study, we found that 43% of migrant households (47.6% in Rajasthan and 37.8% in Uttar Pradesh) and 47% of in-migrants had access to smartphones. We also found that 84.3% of migrant households who owned a smartphone used it to access the internet, while for in-migrant individuals who owned a smartphone, 71.6% used it to access the internet. Among out-migrant households and in-migrant individuals who did not have access to the internet despite owning a smartphone, 58 % within both groups reported that they did not know how to use the internet.

[62] Vamakshi, V. (2022). Examining the effectiveness of One Nation One Ration Card Scheme.

[63] <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/in/Documents/technology-media-telecommunications/in-TMT-predictions-2022-noexp.pdf>

[64] <https://eshram.gov.in/dashboard>

Figure 54: Smartphone ownership status of migrant households
(n = 637)

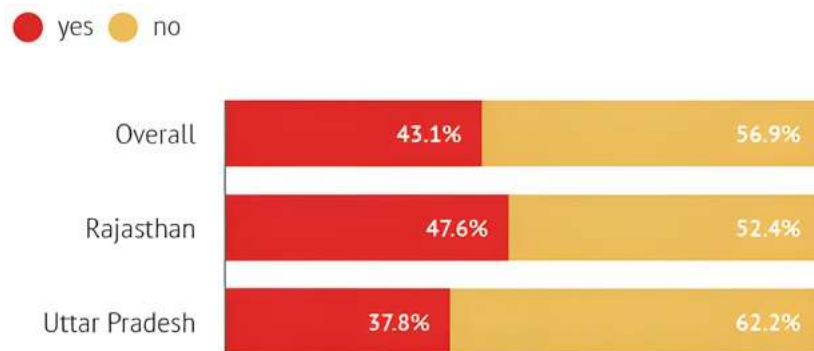
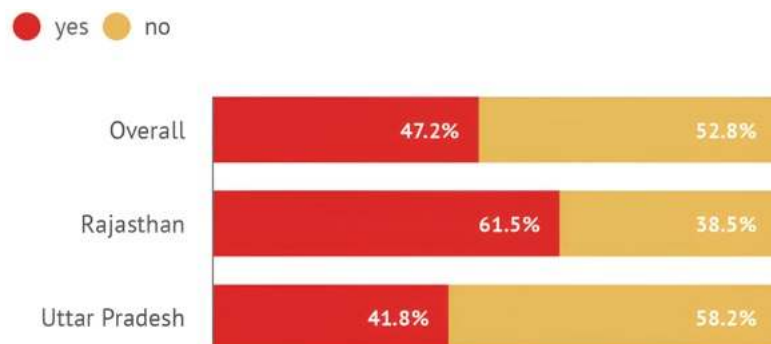


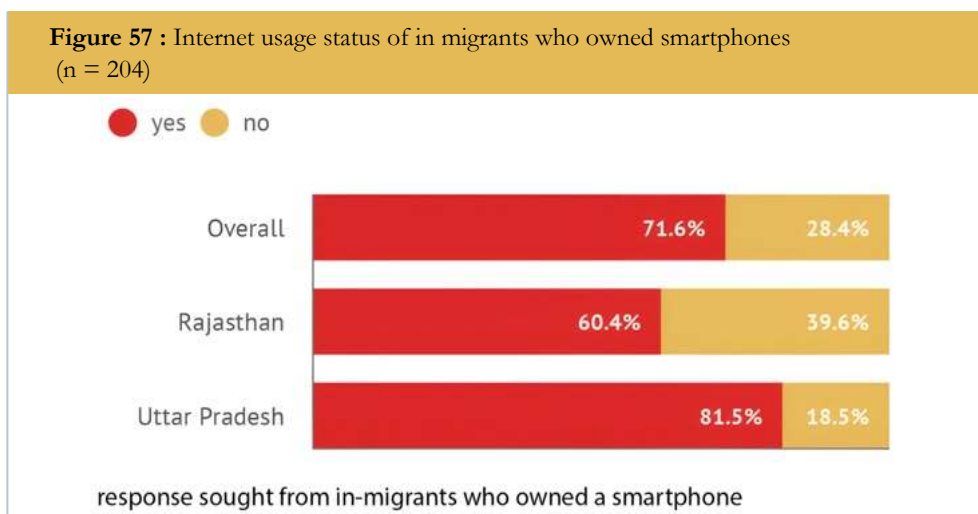
Figure 55 : Internet usage status of migrant households owning smartphones
(n = 274)



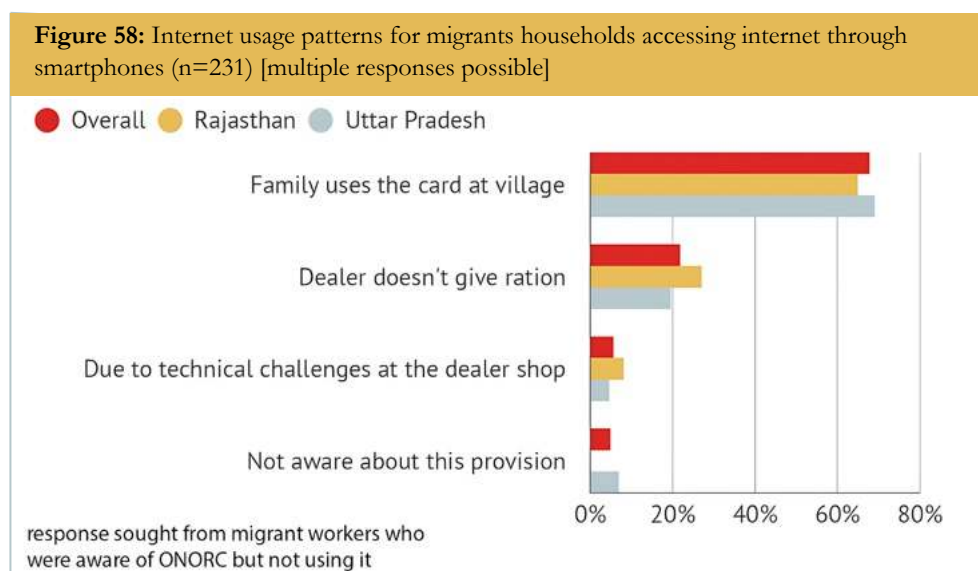
response sought from migrant households who owned a smartphone

Figure 56: Smartphone ownership status of in-migrants
(n = 352)



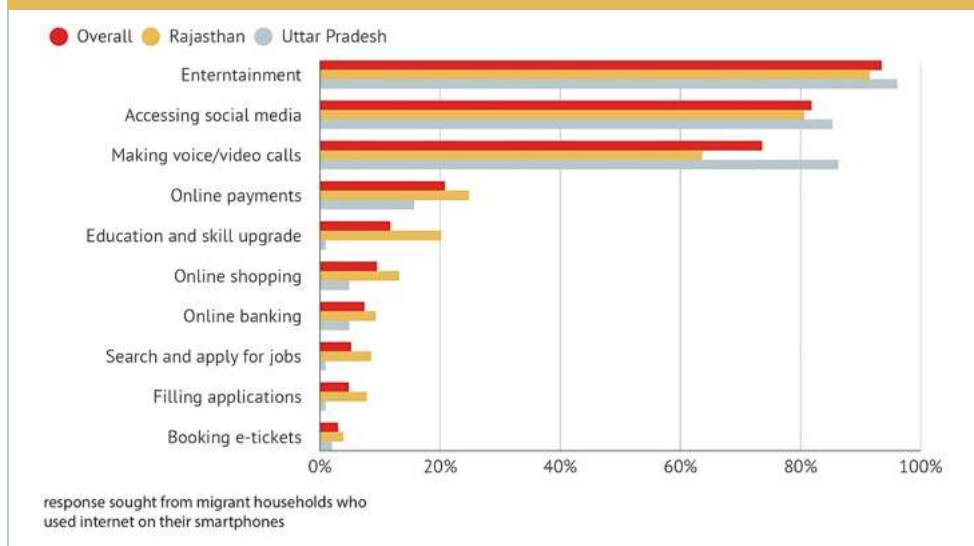


Even within the populations that had access to the internet, their internet usage patterns suggest a lack of digital literacy and skills. 93.5% of migrant households reported using the internet for entertainment purposes, followed by 81.8% for accessing social media, and 73.6% for making voice/video calls, completing the top 3. The usage numbers show a drastic fall in adoption beyond these categories. 20.8% used it for online payments through UPI, 11.8% for upgrading skills and learning, 9.5% for online shopping, 7.3% for online banking, 5.2% for job search and applications, 4.8% for filling up applications (including applying for social security schemes and programmes), and 3% for purchasing bus and train tickets.



The numbers are also similar when looking at in-migrant individuals. 93.1% of them use the internet for entertainment, followed by 83.5% for accessing social media and 81.5% for making voice/video calls, completing the top 3. Similar to out-migrant households, the adoption of the internet for other purposes was found to be abysmally low. 32.9% use it for online payments through UPI, 18.5% for online shopping, 15.7% for online banking, and 10.3% for skill acquisition and learning. The bottom 3 are completed by filling up online applications, purchasing bus and train tickets, and job search and applications at 8.9%, 8.9%, and 7.5%, respectively.

Figure 59: Internet usage patterns of in migrants who accessed internet through smartphones (n=146) [multiple responses possible]



The usage patterns suggest that while internet penetration and access have reached higher levels, digital skills required to utilise the internet to adapt to this new age are still lacking. Thus, this is one of the major hindrances that migrant workers face while registering and is a roadblock in the uptake of social security schemes

Access to financial services

Migrant workers interviewed in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh primarily used their bank accounts and the banking system for withdrawing and depositing cash, taking loans (31.8%) and sending remittances (46.1%). The advent of CSCs (Common Service Centres) and Aadhar-assisted money transfer has made sending remittances easier, albeit with some associated costs. There was also an upward trend of migrants sending remittances through digital payments, particularly the UPI (22.9%).

Almost two-fifth of migrant households receiving remittances also reported saving the same in bank accounts (38.2%). However, as the income of the migrants hardly rose above the subsistence level, they were not keen on using the banking system for investing in longer-term savings instruments like fixed deposits. Out-migrants from specific groups also noted facing difficulties in accessing loan facilities from government banks as they could not produce anything as a guarantee. Moreover, as noted by communities such as Meghwals had been blacklisted by banks, which can be read as reinforcement of caste-based perceptions.

A labour contractor from the community Masuda told us,

“The bank has black-listed us. They will not give us loans. They say we do not repay. Until you have some connections with the bank managers you won’t get a loan.”

Such systemic barriers pushed them to opt for loans from microfinance with higher interest rates or from informal sources like that of relatives, neighbours and moneylenders or intermediaries.

Role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

A major and considerable role has been taken by local CSOs in the study areas across both Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. In Rajasthan it was observed that in areas where Gramin evam Samajik Vikas Sanasthan (GSVS) had a better reach the access to schemes by migrants from the state was significantly better.

Thus, a woman from Pali, an intervention district for GSVS for improving access to social security for out-migrants, mentioned -

| *“We have an ESI card, Shramik card. Moreover, we also got the money due under PM Kisan.”*

GSVS through its ASKs had mainly helped out-migrant households apply for and avail benefits under the provisions of the BOCW Act, the pension schemes, the Palanhaar Scheme, the Chiranjeevi insurance schemes and under the provisions of the Policy for the silicosis affected. They also worked towards registering them under the e-Shram database, connecting them to financial services and provisions and schemes for workers in the unorganised sector.

The Centre-in Charge of GSVS Migrant Resource Centre in Rajasthan mentioned having prepared a list of common reasons why applications were rejected after careful follow-ups with the government department which greatly helped them in training other facilitators who helped migrant workers access government schemes. However, the individuals trained by the organisation acting as self-employed facilitators within their respective villages started facing challenges, once the initial system of ASKs was dissolved to establish a more centralised Migrant Resource Centre.

According to this new model, these persons trained by GSVS were to function as resource persons who would help the people at source locations navigate the application processes for various schemes for a small fee. The people were, however, only ready to pay the full-service fees when the benefits were received. The delays in receiving benefits had eroded the people's faith in these resource persons and the system on the one hand and on the other hand non-receipt of payment for their services had demotivated the resource persons from continuing.

With in-migrants, however, the CSOs could achieve only limited success despite their best efforts. As already mentioned, there were hardly any schemes, barring ONORC for inter-state migrants coming into Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Given the limited legally mandated social security provisions for in-migrants, especially inter-state, the role of partner organisations in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan was largely restricted to advocacy and liaising.

The high incidence of accidents in the stone-crushing industries had led GSVS in Rajasthan to appoint technical experts to understand where technical gaps in the machineries used in stone mining and crushing operations were. They subsequently located eight to ten hazardous or accident-prone spots within the production process. The organisation then advocated with the factory owners for bringing in changes in the machinery that could be done by investing a small amount of capital yet played a crucial role in reducing such accidents. They also arbitrated in cases of non-payment of wages, organised labour-camps.

GSVS also worked on bridging the gap between the health department and workers and advocated for organising regular health camps in the locations migrant workers came to work. In Rajasthan, in-migrants received RCH

services and treatment at government hospitals and in this matter, liaising efforts by GSVS was crucial. They also advocated with the Department of Women and Child Development of the state government so that respective PHCs take up the responsibility of vaccinating pregnant mothers from migrant households and migrant children who were present within their respective administrative area. They also tried to provide vitamins and dry ration to pregnant mothers and infant children and sanitary napkins to migrant women workers. Notably, since these measures were not enforceable and were dependent on the largesse of the district and state administration, the availability of such facilities to the migrant workers remained dependent on surplus left after having catered to the local population. GSVS also opened three Balwadis adjacent to the stone crushing units of Beawar to act as both day-care centres as well as primary level schools for migrant children. Yet the facilities in the Balwadis remained sub-optimal given the fund crunch. Children belonging to multiple standards were taught in the same class by a single teacher. Maintaining hygiene was also an issue at such centres.

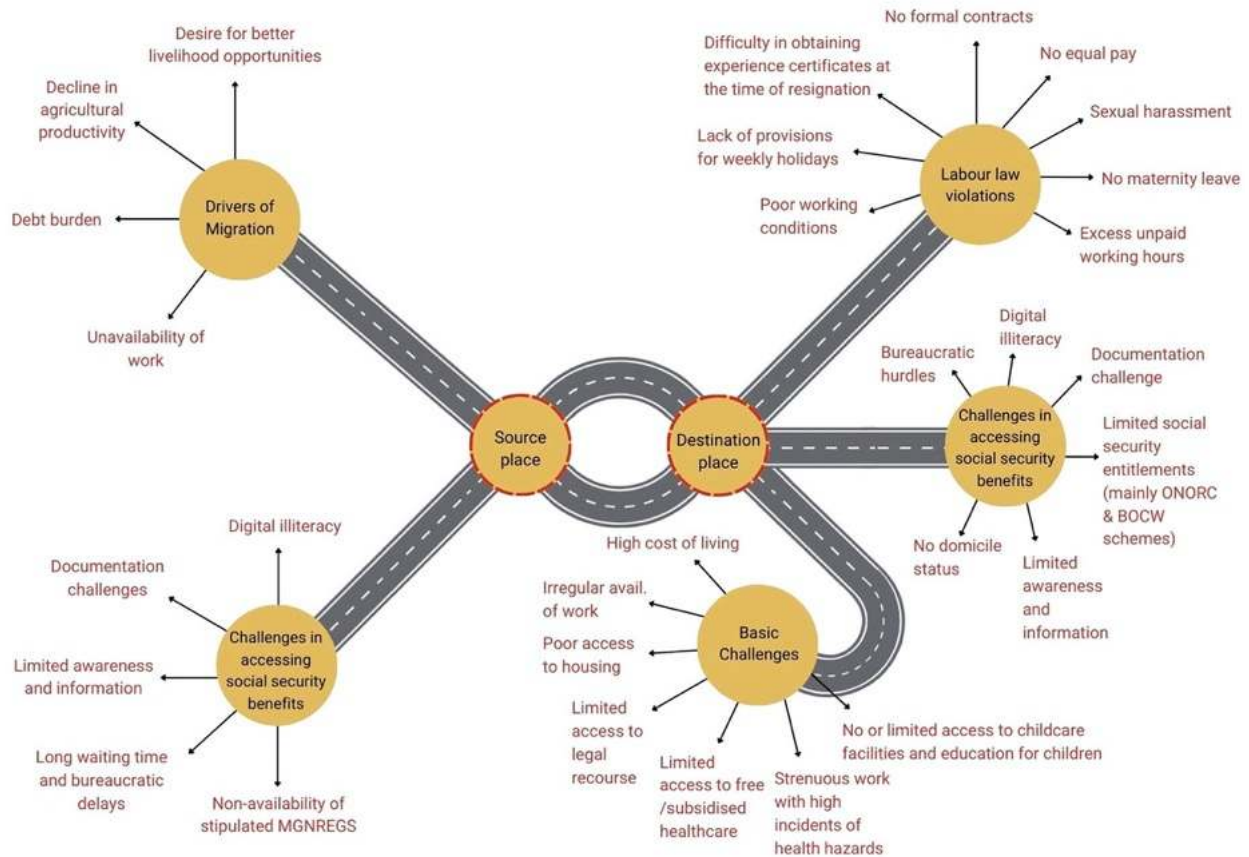
The Balwadi centre that received funding through its collaboration with Mobile Creches however displayed remarkable standards of providing childcare. Another problem with Balwadis was that while migrant workers worked largely on twelve hour shifts the centres ran for six to eight hours reducing its efficacy for women as well as making it difficult for parents to drop children to and pick children up from such centres, in between work shifts.

The DLSA paralegals available at ASKs certainly assisted the migrants in navigating the complexities of the time-consuming legal system. With their assistance, disputes regarding non-payment or less payment of wages between employer and migrant workers, which was one of the most pressing issues, got settled outside the court largely. Such quick settlements benefitted the migrants as their state of being on the move and away from source location made it burdensome and economically non feasible to proceed with long drawn legal battles. Largely, however, GSVS had been cautious in demanding labour rights for migrant workers and fighting the violation of such rights and had concerned themselves with extending social security benefits to migrant workers. This was adopted as a strategy to not antagonise factory-owners and enter the factory spaces.

In Uttar Pradesh as well no provisions existed for migrants coming from other states. The CSOs had only been able to arrange for residential and mess facilities for in-migrants but the number of units being catered to at any given point of time remained extremely limited compared to the actual inflow of migrants. Vigyan Foundation also worked towards spreading awareness about labour help lines, and helped migrant workers access the police bureaucracy in cases of non-payment of wages, and other violations. They were also running help desks at shelters to help migrants register under BOCW boards. They also ran information desks to help migrants with the relevant information regarding all applicable government schemes.

Overall, it was witness across both states that broadly migrants were often averse to or rejected the process of seeking benefits or redressal because the processes of availing them were complicated and not transparent for them, even if the migrants had the information, they did not have the time to follow-up the long-drawn processes which invariably led to loss of working days and thus steady wage income for them. They often had insufficient documentary proofs or inadequate knowledge about documentation processes. These hurdles coupled with systematic biases against certain communities, the delay in disbursement of benefits reduced the trust of migrants on welfare systems considerably and they often abstained from availing their social security entitlements.

Challenges faced by migrant workers - Source and destination





Chapter 6

LABOUR CODES AND PROVISIONS FOR
MIGRANT WORKERS

A comprehensive transformation of labour laws in India has been witnessed through the recent enactment in 2020 of the Code on Wages, Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions, Code on Social Security, and Code on Industrial Relations. This overhaul aims to redefine the landscape of workers' rights and protections, with a specific focus on the challenges faced by migrant workers.

In the Code on Wages, the consolidation of regulations concerning payment of wages, minimum wages, payment of bonus, and equal remuneration is observed. Legal coverage has been extended to all employees, providing protection to an additional 76.4 million wage earners. However, gaps in inclusivity are evident, as vulnerable groups like domestic workers, home-based workers, and those in the gig economy remain beyond its purview.

A pioneering move is the introduction of a statutory floor wage, preventing state governments from setting their own minimum wages. The criteria for setting this floor wage and minimum wages require more nuanced guidance and evidence-informed criteria, and aligning with the ILO's Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970, could enhance their effectiveness. Moreover, explicit rules for law enforcement leveraging technology, awareness-raising mechanisms, and implementing inspection schemes for enhanced compliance are warranted.

The Code on Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions signifies a milestone in consolidating acts related to health, safety, and working conditions. The definition of "interstate migrant workers" has been revised to encompass those migrating independently. This expansion, crucial in the context of evolving migration patterns, improves the scope for social security. Provisions for the portability of entitlements under the PDS and BOCW, along with the recommendation for a toll-free grievance redressal mechanism, reflect a proactive approach. However, challenges persist, such as clarifying the operationalisation of migrant worker registration and delineating responsibilities among governments. The increased threshold for applicability, leaving out numerous migrant workers employed in micro units, warrants attention. The responsibilities of principal employers concerning migrant workers' rights also need explicit clarification, ensuring accountability and effective implementation.⁶⁵

The Code on Social Security replaces nine laws, recognizing gig and platform workers as distinct categories. While it mandates the establishment of funds for unorganized sector workers, including migrants, the absence of social security benefit portability poses a limitation. A universal "social security floor" could have significantly benefited migrant workers engaged in micro units.

Finally, the Code on Industrial Relations raises thresholds for various provisions, potentially excluding migrant workers in smaller establishments from their ambit. The impact of these changes, especially in the context of high migrant worker unemployment, is yet to unfold. The criteria for trade union registration may inadvertently side-line a significant number of informal sector workers, hindering their meaningful participation in collective bargaining processes. India's recent labour law reforms exhibit both promise and challenges for migrant workers. While strides have been made in extending legal coverage and introducing innovative mechanisms, addressing gaps in inclusivity, refining criteria, and ensuring effective enforcement are imperative steps towards fostering a more equitable and protective environment for this vital workforce.

In 2023, Rajasthan also became the first state in India to pass the Rajasthan Platform-Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Act.⁶⁶ This act is aimed at extending social security benefits to gig workers and address the lack of protection and benefits for gig workers, who were previously classified as "partners" rather than employees in companies like Ola, Uber, Swiggy, Zomato, and Amazon. Earlier, the Code on Social Security, 2020 mandated social security funds for gig workers, including life, disability, health benefits, and more. The primary objective of this Act, as stated, is to extend social security and welfare benefits to gig workers operating in the state. During the study, it was observed that provisions listed in the Inter-State

[65] https://labour.gov.in/sites/default/files/ar_2022_23_english.pdf

[66] https://aioe.in/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Gig_Workers_Bill_2023_1690274461.pdf

Migrant Workmen Act, 1979 were hardly followed in any industry where migrants worked. Violation of rights emerged as a significant concern for the ragpicker community, manifested in their treatment by both state authorities and local communities. Despite their substantial contribution to the city's sanitation, they are marginalised and often treated with suspicion or outright hostility. The potential questioning of their nationality, especially given the fear surrounding the D-voter category in Assam, exemplifies the legal and social violations they face. Such treatment not only undermines their rights as workers but also as individuals deserving of respect and dignity.

In Beawar, Rajasthan, majority of stone-crushing units were unregistered. Migrants were provided accommodation within these units to increase productivity and maintain continuity of work by running both day and night shifts. These premises, where stone dust never settled, were unsuitable for human beings to live in and were in direct contravention of the Factories Act (1948). Further, section 66(1)(b) of the Factories Act, 1948, states that no woman shall be required or allowed to work in any factory except between the hours of 6:00 AM and 7:00 PM, yet in these stone-crushing units, women work night shifts. Most importantly, these workers working in hazardous stone dust were not provided with any protective gear.

Worksite exploitation is a critical issue for many workers in informal sectors, particularly migrant labourers across various industries like construction, domestic work, and rag-picking. Economic desperation, lack of formal employment opportunities, and regulatory gaps lead to situations where individuals are exploited for their labour. It covers various forms of exploitation, such as wage theft, forced labour, and the manipulation of migrant workers. Migrant workers' reliance on contractors for employment and accommodation opens avenues for exploitation. These contractors, often from similar backgrounds, play a pivotal role in their migration and work life, yet the dynamics can lead to exploitative practices, including unfair wages, poor living conditions, and a lack of access to basic amenities. Workers generally migrated after taking an advance or peshki of INR 10,000 in the well-digging sector. Thus, they were required to work for at least four months until the advance was repaid. Such systems of employment restricted their mobility and made their situation like bonded labouring arrangements. Our conversations with the ex-Labour Inspector of Beawar in Rajasthan, who now served as a paralegal aid worker for the migrants, revealed certain deep-seated issues in relation to how migrant workers approach legal remedies, and such observations bear relevance not only for the stone-crushing sector but other sectors as well. He mentioned that -



It is very difficult to sensitise migrant workers about labour-law violations. Often, they do not have adequate knowledge...But, even if they do, they are not in a position to fight back...They, thus, do not complain in cases where the working hours are beyond the mandated ones...or about housing conditions...When they largely complain, it's about non-payment of wages...but such cases tend to drag on...requires documentary proof of work that is difficult to furnish given most of the units where they work are unregistered (illegal)...migrant workers might have started working in some other place while the case is being tried in the court...appearing before the court means loss of man-days... so they often agree to out-of-court settlements based on false promises of employers which are most often not realised... We, therefore, mostly try for arbitration rather than filing a case... sexual violations of migrant women almost always are not reported... we are also not equipped to help, and it is very difficult to lodge such complaints...women led trade-unions are there...but migrant women workers do not go to them...there is also the idea of shame and stigma in such cases that prevent women from reporting

Our conversations with the GSVS project personnel from Beawar revealed yet another dimension of the lack of enforceability of labour laws. These observations were later reinforced by the Labour Inspector, who is also in charge of Beawar as well. They observed that most of the stone-crushing units in Beawar were unregistered, which meant these did not have an official existence on government record and became a geography for labour law violation. As per government protocol, a team of three members, comprising officials from the Labour Department, Factory and Boilers Department and the Department of Environment, are required for inspection purposes. However, the unregistered factories were never selected for such inspections.

Chapter 7

WELFARE OF MIGRANT WORKERS – BEST PRACTICES ACROSS INDIA



The evolving landscape of internal migration in the post pandemic scenario within India necessitates a robust framework that addresses the socio-economic welfare of migrant workers. Several best practices across states could be assessed and adopted locally based on the existing gaps, key policy decisions, state-based models, evidence, and learning frameworks, and proposed pathways.

Some of the key state government based best practices that have been acknowledged over the last few years by NITI Aayog and Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India are as follows

Table 8: Best Practices Adopted by State Governments for Migrant Workers' Welfare

State	Best practices by state governments for welfare of migrant workers
Jharkhand	• Safe and Responsible Migration Initiative (SRMI) (2021) aimed to develop institutional policy and frameworks to increase social security and welfare coverage to over 500,000 migrant workers. • Enabling systemic registration of migrant workers and, monitoring and analysis of their database to implement policies at both source and destination regions. • Creating awareness through IEC campaigns and other innovative methods on what constitute safe and responsible migration practices. • Interstate coordination frameworks for rescue, relief and compliance for issues related to migrant workers in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Ladakh (2020)
Odisha	• Panchayat level social mapping of all migrant workers from Odisha • 60 Seasonal hostels catering to 3000 children opened at migration prone villages to prevent child migration and child labour, and to keep them in the fold of education. • Setting up of an institutional mechanism through an MoU between the Govt of Odisha and Govt of Andhra Pradesh to develop a coordination framework. (2007) • Convergence with the Superintendent of Police for 14 migration prone districts with a working plan for preventing illegal recruitment of migrant workers. (2019)
Maharashtra	• Maha MTS - A MIS tracking system has been developed to track the movement of intra-state migrant workers, especially women with unique identification numbers to ensure the portability of ICDS services at the destination regions, especially the districts in the neighbouring states. (2021)

Kerala	• The Kerala Migrant Workers Welfare Scheme (KMWWWS) was launched in 2010 to provide social protection policies for guest workers. The scheme offers financial aid for medical expenses, education of workers' children, and retirement benefits. It also provides compensation for injuries, aid for deceased workers' families, and repatriation assistance, including medical expenses up to Rs25,000 for chronic diseases and Rs10,000 for death, with an accident death benefit of Rs 50,000. (2019) • Launched 'Atithi' portal to register inter-state migrant workers. (2023) • Launched 'Aalay' portal for migrant workers for availing rental accommodations at nominal rate. (2023) • Launched 'Awaz' insurance scheme for migrant workers – a first of its kind scheme for inter-state migrant workers in the age group of 18 to 60 focusing on providing treatment benefits, accident coverage, death compensation and financial assistance. (2023) • Launched worker facilitation centres in 14 districts to provide information on schemes, information related on jobs, and redress grievances
Delhi	• An Aadhar linked database on migrant workers is currently under development. • Launching migrant facilitation centres at spots where in-migrants primarily arrive. (2022) • Strengthening of the BOCW portal for better disbursement of BOCW welfare board benefits to construction sector works which employ the biggest share of migrant workers in Delhi. (2022)

Table 9: Initiatives by Civil Society Organisations and Social Enterprises

Organisation	Area	Type	Initiative
Aajeevika Bureau	Rajasthan Gujarat Maharashtra	Financial services	Aims at providing financial services to migrant workers including savings instruments, digital wage payments, affordable loans, term life insurance, contributory pensions, and remitting services. Part of a larger ecosystem of services and support mechanisms provided by Aajeevika to migrant communities in these states.

Migrants Resilience Collaborative (MRC)	Madhya Pradesh Delhi NCR Uttar Pradesh	Social security	Grassroots led multi-stakeholder collaborative of non-profit, philanthropic, and private sector actors focused on ensuring safety, security, and mobility for vulnerable migrant families across India. MRC will support 10 million migrants and their families in 100 districts and cities over the next 5 years to: 1. Deliver social security entitlements. 2. Provide access to responsible recruitment. 3. Strengthen tracking, worker protection, welfare and redressal. MRC also runs a toll-free helpline to support migrant workers. Migrant workers and their families can call on this discipline free of cost, in case of disputes, emergencies, as well as to gain information about social security benefits.
Jan Sahas	Pan India	Social security	Jan Sahas has been working intensively with over 1 million migrant communities to ensure their social protection and safe migration. Jan Sahas's PR-3 model ensures reduction in prevalence of forced labour conditions by ensuring prevention (raising awareness within the communities and ensuring access to social security schemes), response (technology-based tracking of migrant workers and immediate case-based assistance), rehabilitation (connecting to welfare measures) and systems reform (working with government departments and private bodies for large scale policy and practice reforms)

Centre for microFinance (CmF)	Rajasthan Uttar Pradesh Odisha	Social security	Migrant Resource Centres previous Apna Seva Kendra's (ASKs) serves as a one-stop shop, delivering labour-friendly services that address migrant vulnerabilities. These services include providing linkages to government entitlements and schemes, legal assistance in wage and worksite issues and accident-related cases, along with employment opportunities and banking services.
Chalo Network	Madhya Pradesh Delhi NCR	Financial services	Deploying Banking Correspondent (BC) agents across all the major migration corridors at both source and destination for delivery of suitable financial solutions to low-income migrant households.
Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development (CMID)	Kerala	Health	CMID's 'Bandhu Clinic' implemented in collaboration with the National Health Mission in Ernakulam, Kerala is a mobile health van initiative that provides medical screenings and check-ups to migrants at their site of work.
Labour Net	Pan India	Skilling, Education	Recognition of existing skills and education facilities for construction workers who had dropped out of the formal system under the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) is a new scheme of the Government of India.

Bandhu Tech	Gujarat	Housing	Providing potential migrants with competing offers of bundled employment and housing, for similar wage differentials, the Bandhu platform minimises risks for the workers while still leaving the final choice to him or her. Bandhu also provides a platform of opportunities to workers, employers, landlords and middlemen through a digital marketplace, driven by big data and AI.
Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI)	Pan India	Social security	They provide facilities such as creches for children of workers, sanitation facilities, and undertake initiatives of BOCW registration in order to ensure workers have government provided services like life & disability cover, housing support, etc.
Yuva	Maharashtra	Social security, skilling	Skilling workers and educating them about their rights, registration of workers under the BOCW Act, and managing a labour helpline for workers who have been cheated.
Mumbai Mobile Creches	Mumbai	Education, Social Security	Providing day care facilities for children of construction workers at construction sites, training teachers to go on field to teach children, providing mobiles vans to reach small sites and community outreach to reach more families through interventions.



Chapter 8

ROLE OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND
ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

COVID-19 exposed not just the plight of migrant workers but also highlighted the contribution of the migrant workforce to the development of the country. The pandemic has also presented all stakeholders with an opportunity to bring about a substantial and lasting shift in their conditions. Further the study findings as discussed in the previous chapter clearly point to a multi-stakeholder led approach towards institutionalising streamlined policy design and implementation modalities for the welfare of the migrant workers.

Key Recommendation 1 - Increased focus on policy relevant evidence generation on labour migration

Current gaps	How can the gaps be addressed	Key Stakeholders
Presently no existence of any nationally recognised uniform policy definition of internal migration and of a labour migrant. Current NSSO and Census Estimates on migration is unable to distinguish between permanent, semi-permanent, and temporary migrants. Consequently, estimating temporary, seasonal, and circulatory migrants remains challenging Lack of granular data and state level estimates on internal labour migration, including major migration corridors, the sectors of engagement for migrant workers, and the accessibility of migrant households to various social protection schemes.	Standardisation of definitions of migrants and internal migration, across both Census and NSSO, enabling better comparability and analysis. This will help better capturing temporary, seasonal, and circular migration which majorly constitutes internal labour migration.⁶⁷ State governments ought to undertake periodic evidence generation and estimation exercises to estimate migration rates, migration corridors and sectors of employment. Crucial lessons could be learnt from state migration surveys held in Kerala, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, and Odisha, Like PLFS, NFHS, NSSO, Annual Survey of Industries, strong policy focus should be given on periodic and systemic labour migration estimation and surveys, covering both inter-state and intra-state migration.	Advocacy with Min of Labour and Employment, Govt of India to anchor an Expert Working Group to suggest an uniform national definition of migration and internal migrants, especially labour migration. Establish dialogue and advocacy with Central government to strengthen systems and methodologies of migration data collection. Philanthropies / Social Impact Investors should finance research collaborations on migration evidence generation through multi stakeholder collaborations with state governments. State Governments should anchor such evidence exercises with clear policy commitment to apply such evidence for policymaking for labour migrants.

[67] <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1814543>

Key Recommendation 2 - Design, development, and establishment of migrant worker's social registry

Current gaps	How can the gaps be addressed	Key Stakeholders
No single unified state level or national level dynamic database of migrants workers registered under ISMW Act and absence of labour migrants data sharing mechanisms and frameworks between destination and source states. Multiple observations and recommendations have been made by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour (Ninth,⁶⁸ Sixteenth⁶⁹ and Thirty-fourth⁷⁰ reports in particular) on the need of <i>development of a credible real-time database for inter-state migrant workers and development of integrated mechanisms to deliver social security benefits</i> in destination locations. The Supreme Court across several judgements since Covid-19 pandemic has stressed on the <i>lack of data on migration and absence of any migrant workers' registration database in both source and destination regions</i>⁷¹ as key reasons for lack of effective policy making to mitigate the precarity of the migrant workers.	Establishing a National level Migrant Workers Social Registry serving as a single-window dynamic Migrant Worker Registration System and Dashboard with an integrated grievance redressal system. Union Govt ought to undertake a high-level review involving state governments, policy organisations, CSOs/NGOs, and internal labour migration experts to identify and address issues related to migrant worker categorisation and updation of employment locations within the current E-shram portal. To address issues of migrant workers like change in phone number and location updates, the Union Government should consider introducing incentivisation linked registration and periodic updation, to encourage migrant workers to voluntarily report changes during each migration cycle on the E-Shram portal.	Philanthropies, multilaterals, CSOs and migrant focused organisations should take up advocacy with Central government and state Governments to press for a high-level review of E-shram portal. The central government along with the state governments should ensure a time-bound completion of verification of existing categorisation of e-shram registered workers data into migrants and non – migrants. Philanthropic organisations should provide financial and technical support to State governments and the Union Government in collaboration with committed civil society organisations to help design and develop migrant workers social registry platforms.

[68] https://eparlib.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/794369/1/17_Labour_9.pdf

[69] https://eparlib.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/799787/1/17_Labour_16.pdf

[70] https://eparlib.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/932004/1/17_Labour_Textiles_and_Skill_Development_34.pdf

[71] <https://thewire.in/law/supreme-court-migrant-workers-activists>

E-shram portal by Ministry of Labour – Govt of India, yet to directly categorise migrant workers as a separate category during workers ‘registration. Migrant workers specifically have information asymmetry issues on accessing social welfare schemes through the E-shram portal,⁷² rendering it as a mere database of workers without any immediate utility or welfare provisioning.	The Union Government and state governments should work jointly to design awareness programmes for workers to avail various social security benefits linked to the E-Shram registration to mitigate exclusion of eligible workers from accessing their entitlements in case of distress or mishap.	Targeted awareness programmes should be designed nationally and held across states especially in high out migration corridors at Panchayat level for migrant workers on benefits of registration on E-Shram and linked access to social welfare benefits.
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Key Recommendation 3 - Strengthening access to social welfare schemes for internal labour migrants

Current gaps	How can the gaps be addressed	Key Stakeholders
Multiple studies including this study have shown that migrant workers face everyday challenges related to accessibility of social entitlements, and grievance redressal mechanisms on wage disputes, documentation issues and non-receipt of social security benefits.	To address registration, grievance redressal, and awareness gaps for migrant workers, source states with high outbound migration⁷³ should establish a centralised Migrant Workers Help Line/ control Room, and accessible registration / counselling centres (Migrant Workers Facilitation Centres) in high out migration blocks/ districts and key transit points. In order to ensure easy accessibility for migrant workers the operational timings for such centres should be flexible.⁷⁴	Sharing of effective policy case studies with Ministry of Labour and strong advocacy by both state governments, philanthropies, migrant workers focused organisation to issue specific, actionable, and statutory policy guidelines related to welfare of labour migrants and responsibilities of state governments to implement such measures.

[72] <https://thewire.in/labour/is-the-e-shram-portal-really-providing-benefits-to-workers-or-merely-creating-a-national-database>

[73] The Labour Department, government of Jharkhand has been operating a dedicated support helpline for its workers since the COVID -19 induced lockdown, which acts as a single nodal platform for migrant workers (inter- state and international) and have addressed over a thousand cases and helped in counselling, settling employee disputes and recovery of workers' wages. Other major source states should follow suit to address migrant workers' grievances across states. Regular training for helpline staff on migrant and labour rights ensures addressing of cases.

[74] In April 2023, West Bengal established a Migrant Workers' Welfare Board and a dedicated portal for migrant worker registration and grievance redressal. To assist its large migrant workforce, kiosks were set up at Howrah and Sealdah railway stations. The State government also informs workers registered on the portal about job availability within the state.

Migrant Workers Resource /Facilitation Centres operated by NGOs/CSOs in destination regions have attempted to address this, but they lack operational scalability and sustainability. Lack of awareness, challenges related to local language and cultural barriers, identity and domicile related paperwork and operational bottlenecks create difficulties for migrant workers to leverage support from local government functionaries, leading to their exclusion from accessing essential services and benefits under various social protection schemes. Multiple studies including the current one illustrates challenges faced by migrant workers in accessing portability in PDS through the ONORC in key destination regions, inspite of better streamlined processes and government directives.	To improve accessibility, fixed as well as Mobile Migrant Facilitation cum Resource Units in PPP mode (<i>CSR financing by local economic industry units, regulated by local Labour Department and run by CSOs/ NGOs</i>) could be introduced to reach migrants at labour chowks/addas, labour colonies/camps, work clusters and construction sites in destination states with high migrant workers inflow. Both the permanent and mobile MFCs in source and destination sites can act as entry point registration hubs for workers on the Migrant Workers Data Hub Platform/Portal, E-Shram and other applicable social security schemes.⁷⁵ Establishment of robust inter-state coordination and data sharing mechanisms (MoUs, joint working committees, bi-annual field visits, setting up of an inter-state council for welfare of migrant workers on the lines of GST council) on migrant workers and corridor specific mobility is crucial to harmonize workers registration, standardize documentation requirements, and ensure coverage of migrant workers in portable and state specific social welfare schemes.	Consortium of social impact organisations, CSR donors, Industry and Employer Bodies should collectively design and develop a sustainable model for establishing and operating Migrant Facilitation centres with Labour departments of concerned state governments. Indian philanthropies should look at financing technical assistance and systems based support to State Governments to enable capacity building of the labour bureaucracy and partner organisations responsible for operating such Migrant Workers Facilitation Centres. These can offer legal aid, settle wage disputes, and can also serve as a primary grievance redressal mechanism, especially with volunteers from same migrant worker communities to bridge language and cultural barriers Impact Investors, social philanthropies and multi-laterals should focus on financing multiyear policy initiatives with interested and committed state governments on designing inter-state migrant workers welfare mechanism between group of states, or districts in established corridors, should be prioritised.
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[75] Government of Kerala runs facilitation centres (Shramik Bandhu Seva Kendra) across all the 14 districts in the state to support inter-state migrant workers by providing information in multiple languages about wages and rights, and state's social security schemes for migrant workers, help generate awareness and linkages of workers to various social security schemes, health insurance schemes and any other information related to their work. These centres are setup at major bus stands or near worker colonies within the district. (Refer Annexure – 2)

Key Recommendation 4 - Strengthening Housing, Healthcare and Childcare Support for Labour Migrant and their Families

Current gaps	How can the gaps be addressed	Key Stakeholders
Significant lack of affordable cheap rental housing for Labour migrants in India, forcing them to live in informal settlements or overcrowded accommodations with poor living and sanitation conditions.⁷⁶ In spite of Ayushman Yojana's mandate of providing cashless health coverage upto 5 lakhs, labour migrants encounter structural barriers in accessing healthcare facilities, especially diagnostic services. They are often at risk of communicable diseases like tuberculosis and sexually transmitted infections, as well as occupational hazards from construction works, such as fractures, silicosis and skin allergies.⁷⁷	Identifying key market gaps and operational bottlenecks for successful execution of the Affordable Rental Housing Complex (ARHC) scheme, designed for migrant workers in cities. To overcome gaps related to affordable housing with proper sanitation facilities, the central and state governments can adopt several models including bi-lateral state to state cost sharing based rental housing, workers hostels, dormitory-style accommodations, or cooperative housing societies in collaboration with employer associations and industry bodies to provide cost-effective housing options for migrants.⁷⁸	Strong advocacy with Central and state Governments for orderly and timely implementation of the ARHC scheme and its provisioning to eligible migrant workers in key destination regions. Philanthropies, labour rights forums and social impact organizations need to raise strong collective demand related to effective portability of health, education and nutrition programmes, especially for migrant workers and their children. For healthcare access, governments should encourage private businesses to fund mobile healthcare units through CSR initiatives. The Bandhu clinic model in Kerala, catering to migrant workers, serves as a successful example to emulate.⁷⁹

[76] This study found that on average, four individuals shared a single room, with only 42 percent having accommodations with a concrete roof. Access to poor sanitation facilities is also reflected by the fact that almost 60 percent of the migrant workers resort to open defecation or rely on community or pay-and-use toilets.

[77] https://nhrc.nic.in/sites/default/files/Approved_Health%20and%20social%20security%20ISMW_KDS-NHRC.pdf

[78] In 2019, the Kerala government launched the Apna Ghar scheme to provide safe and affordable hostel accommodations for migrant workers. The first phase, completed with a capacity for 620 residents, includes a flat complex. Subsequent phases aim to develop similar facilities in Kochi, Kozhikode, and Thiruvananthapuram, addressing the housing needs of migrant workers in Kerala.

[79] <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/bandhu-clinic-reaches-out-to-guest-workers-at-homes-and-worksites/articleshow/102738524.cms>

Migrant families struggle to find affordable and reliable childcare in destination regions in and around work sites, often leaving children unsupervised or relying on makeshift arrangements like entrusting them to relatives or neighbours. Lack of portability of early childhood care and education policies and for migrant households result in long terms gaps in accessing to anganwadi/ICDS services and creches, early childhood education, and educational services and support for children of migrant households. Insufficient childcare hampers child development, limiting access to education, nutrition, and healthcare, thereby perpetuating cycle of poverty and fostering social exclusion.	To bridge healthcare gaps for labour migrants, health insurance schemes and mobile health clinics run collaboratively by government and non - governmental partners can provide essential services and health education in workers settlements or around concentrated economic cluster sites in destination states.⁸⁰ The single most important step in ensuring access to proper healthcare services for migrant workers is to ensure that government healthcare schemes are made portable across state boundaries.⁸¹ Similarly for long distance labour migrants, employers/ industry bodies should ensure provisioning of work site creches / schooling centres in partnership with CSOs/NGOS. These should provide parental support programmes, guidance and resources to migrant parents on childcare practices, early childhood development, and accessing education and healthcare services for their children.	The central government's 'National Creche Scheme for the Children of Working Mothers' provides pan-India coverage, with state governments as implementing agencies. States with high in-bound migration should review the existing status of the scheme and ensure creches are established near construction sites or industrial areas. Large scale community kitchens and affordable meal programmes run by few state governments need to be better studied and replicated by employer association / industry units through CSR financing and also by relevant state governments under cess collected under the Building and Other Construction Workers (BoCW) board.
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[80] In 2017, the state of Kerala launched the Aawaz scheme for migrant workers, offering cashless medical treatment across 300 empanelled hospitals. The scheme is operational across all districts with enrolment offered round the clock. The task of enrolment is made simpler with any of the identity cards recognised by Central/State Government such as Aadhar, Passport, Election ID, or Driving License being acceptable as evidence of identity. As of now, more than five lakh migrant workers are enrolled under this scheme.

[81] The Government of West Bengal has extended the state's health insurance scheme for migrant workers to cover expenses incurred in cases of out-of-state hospitalisation.

A deepdive into social welfare schemes

Scheme Name: Public Distribution System (PDS)		Both Central and State Government
• Year of launch: 1997 (Launch of Targeted PDS) • Act/ Policy: Integrated under National Food Security Act, 2013 • Nodal Department/ Ministry: Department of Food and Public Distribution, Government of India • Coverage (as per latest available data): 19.35 Crore Ration Cards and 77.12 Crore Beneficiaries (as on 4th May 2024) • Geography (States/ UTs where operational): All states and union territories of India. • Implementation: The Central and state governments share responsibilities in order to provide food grains to the identified beneficiaries		
Eligibility criteria (Rajasthan) • Below Poverty Line (BPL) ration card – This type of ration card is issued to economically weaker households that fall below the poverty line • Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) ration card – It is issued to the poorest of households identified by the Municipal Corporation and village assembly based on deprivation criteria as per SECC 2011 • Above Poverty Line (APL) ration card – This type of ration card is issued to households with annual income above Rs. 10,000 Documents required • Aadhar • Domicile certificate • Proof of address • Bank passbook • Income certificate • Caste certificate (if applicable)		Eligibility criteria (Uttar Pradesh) • Below Poverty Line (BPL) ration card – This type of ration card is issued to economically weaker households, with annual income below Rs. 10,000 • Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) ration card – The AAY cards are issued to the citizens of Uttar Pradesh who are very poor and fulfil certain deprivation criteria as per SECC 2011 • Above Poverty Line (APL) ration card – This type of ration card is issued to households with annual income above Rs. 10,000. Documents required • Aadhar • Proof of identification • Proof of address • Age proof • Income certificate • Caste certificate (if applicable)
Challenges/ Bottlenecks Process Related: • Discrepancies in card types and benefits between different regions. • Some states relied on outdated or existing data, leading to inaccuracies in beneficiary identification and resulting in exclusion • Mismatches and failures in biometric authentication impede beneficiary access to entitlements		

People Related:

- Involvement of middlemen in corrupt practices undermines the integrity of the distribution system

Funding/ Budget Related:

- In the Interim Union Budget for 2024, the subsidy expenditure for food, fertiliser, and fuel in India is projected to drop to its lowest level in five years, totaling Rs. 3,81,175 crore.

Systemic Challenges:

- Variability in state-level implementation and monitoring
- Significant losses occur in storage and transportation, and diversion of food grains to the open market due to corrupt practices
- Targeting mechanisms based on SECC 2011 in the PDS lead to large exclusion and inclusion errors

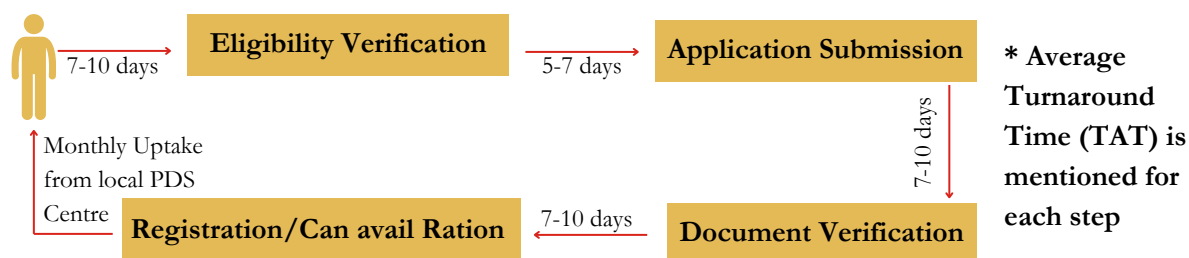
Possible Interventions

- Develop targeted distribution strategies for vulnerable populations, including mobile delivery systems and tailored access points
- Refine the mechanisms for identifying beneficiaries to minimise exclusion and inclusion errors
- Use of digitised ration cards, GPS tracking of deliveries, SMS-based monitoring to prevent duplication and improve authentication
- Conducting regular audits and evaluations to identify gaps and inefficiencies in the distribution system

Best Practice Model

- Chhattisgarh implemented significant reforms in its PDS, including the decentralization of procurement to local self-help groups (SHGs) and cooperatives
- The state introduced a universal PDS system, ensuring that all households have access to subsidized food grains, irrespective of their income status
- Leveraging technology, Chhattisgarh implemented biometric authentication and GPS tracking systems to enhance transparency and accountability in the distribution process

Existing Process



Barriers:

- Some applicants face challenges in providing valid proof of identity and residence, especially if they lack formal documentation or reside in informal settlements
- Issues like downtime of electronic Point of Sale (ePOS) device, failure of biometric authentication and complex processes for eligibility verification
- Instances of corruption and involvement of middlemen in the PDS distribution chain leads to exclusion of eligible beneficiaries

How to reduce turnaround time:

- Integrate databases across government departments to facilitate seamless verification of eligibility criteria, such as income levels and residence status
- Empower local authorities to verify and approve applications at the grassroots level, reducing bureaucratic delays and speeding up the processing of applications
- Launch awareness campaigns to educate eligible beneficiaries about the registration process, eligibility criteria, and entitlements under the PDS
- Implement real-time monitoring systems to track the progress of applications and identify bottlenecks in the registration process

Scheme Name: Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Welfare Scheme

State Specific

- **Year of launch:** Established through the BOCW (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996
- **Act/ Policy:** BOCW Act, 1996
- **Nodal Department/ Ministry:** State-specific BOCW Welfare Boards
- **Coverage (as per latest available data):** 57.8 lakh workers registered as Building Construction workers under the E-Shram portal (As on 9th May 2024)
- **Geography (States/ UTs where operational):** All states and UTs
- **Implementation:** State/UT BoCW Welfare Board

Eligibility criteria (Rajasthan)

- A worker who has attained legal age, i.e. 18 years but not completed 60 years of age
- Has been involved with the construction work for not less than 90 days during the past 12 months qualifies for the registration.

Documents required

- Proof of age
- Proof of address
- Aadhar Card
- Bank Account
- Family Details
- Employer's certificate confirming that person concerned has served 90 working days as a construction work
- Nomination Form
- Mobile number

Eligibility criteria (Uttar Pradesh)

- Every building worker who has completed eighteen years of age, but has not completed sixty years of age
- A worker who has been engaged in any building or other construction work for not less than ninety days during the preceding twelve months and who is not registered as a beneficiary in any other Welfare Fund.

Documents required

- Self-attested copy of Aadhaar card
- Self-attested copy of passbook
- Proof from the employer or contractor that the applicant is a construction worker

Challenges/ Bottlenecks

Process Related:

- Discrepancies in card types and benefits between different regions.
- Some states relied on outdated or existing data, leading to inaccuracies in beneficiary identification and resulting in exclusion
- Mismatches and failures in biometric authentication impede beneficiary access to entitlements

People Related:

- Involvement of middlemen in corrupt practices undermines the integrity of the distribution system

Funding/ Budget Related:

- In the Interim Union Budget for 2024, the subsidy expenditure for food, fertiliser, and fuel in India is projected to drop to its lowest level in five years, totaling Rs. 3,81,175 crore

Systemic Challenges:

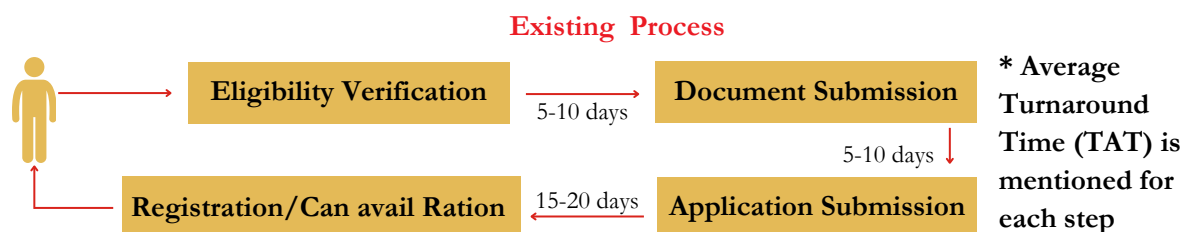
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Possible Interventions

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Best Practice Model

- Chhattisgarh implemented significant reforms in its PDS, including the decentralization of procurement to local self-help groups (SHGs) and cooperatives
- The state introduced a universal PDS system, ensuring that all households have access to subsidized food grains, irrespective of their income status
- Leveraging technology, Chhattisgarh implemented biometric authentication and GPS tracking systems to enhance transparency and accountability in the distribution process.



Barriers:

- Lack of information around the registration process as well as the availability of entitlements under the scheme
- Workers face difficulties in navigating the complex procedures around registration, especially if they lack access to information or assistance.
- Bureaucratic inertia prevents workers from easily accessing the scheme (verification delay)
- Needed to provide official documentation from the workplace in order to avail the scheme benefit, which is often denied by the company/person/contractor.

How to reduce turnaround time:

- Self-declaration could help in streamline the process of accessing scheme benefits by eliminating the need for official documentation to prove 90 days of employment, thereby facilitating easier access and reducing the time it takes to receive benefits
- Utilise multiple channels for communication, including community meetings, mobile vans, posters, and social media platforms, to reach a wider audience of construction workers
- Deploy mobile registration and service delivery units to construction sites and areas with a high concentration of construction workers. Mobile units can facilitate on-the-spot registration and provide assistance in availing benefits without the need for workers to travel to government offices

Scheme Name: e-Shram

Central Specific

- **Year of launch:** 2021
- **Act/ Policy:** Not applicable (database initiative)
- **Nodal Department/ Ministry:** Ministry of Labour and Employment
- **Coverage (as per latest available data):** 29,57,40,278 eShram Cards Issued (As on 9th May 2024)
- **Geography (States/ UTs where operational):** Pan India
- **Implementation:** Ministry of Labour and Employment

Eligibility criteria

- Any unorganised worker or any person working in the unorganised sector.
- Workers should be aged between 16-59 years.
- Workers should have a valid mobile number linked with the Aadhar card.
- They should not be a member of the EPFO/ESIC or the NPS

Documents required

- Aadhar Card
- Mobile number linked with Aadhar card
- Bank account

Challenges/ Bottlenecks

Process Related:

- Lack of clarity how to access the benefit of the scheme under e-shram
- Difficulties in registration due to specifications related to sector of work, destination
- Often families have one working contact number. Seeding one number with one person makes it difficult for others to register themselves

People Related:

- Only about 55.8% awareness among migrant workers; 66.4% of those aware are registered (as per the study commissioned by CmF)

Funding/ Budget Related:

- Not directly applicable but involves resource allocation for continued operation and impact

Systemic Challenges:

- Integrating the e-Shram database with existing government databases and systems poses technical challenges. Ensuring seamless interoperability is essential for maximising the utility of the initiative
- The portal does not categorise migrant workers and non-migrant workers

Others:

- Many workers do not have Aadhaar linked to a current phone number, hindering OTP-based verification.

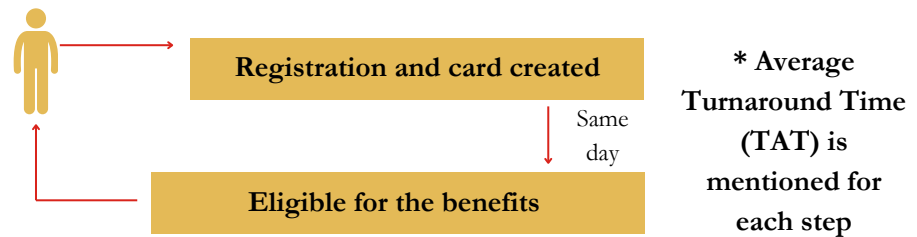
Possible Interventions

- Enhance outreach and support mechanisms to assist workers in registering and understanding the benefits of registration.
- Conduct periodic audits and data validation exercises to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the e-Shram database
- Strengthen coordination among government agencies, departments and the Ministry to ensure effective implementation of the initiative.

Best Practice Model

- N.A.

Existing Process



Barriers:

- Lack of information around the registration process as well as the availability of entitlements under the scheme
- Workers face difficulties in navigating the complex procedures around registration, especially if they lack access to information or assistance.
- Bureaucratic inertia prevents workers from easily accessing the scheme (verification delay)
- Needed to provide official documentation from the workplace in order to avail the scheme benefit, which is often denied by the company/person/contractor.

Scheme Name: Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY)		Both Central and State Governments
• Year of launch: 2018 • Act/ Policy: National Health Policy 2017 • Nodal Department/ Ministry: National Health Authority • Coverage (as per latest available data): 34,32,34,926 Ayushman Cards • Geography (States/ UTs where operational): All states and union territories • Implementation: State government		
Eligibility criteria (Rajasthan) • Individuals need to be permanent residents of Rajasthan • Individuals classified under Below Poverty Line (BPL) • Jan Aadhaar card holders, National Food Security Act card holders. • Agriculture contractors • Contractual employees from all departments Documents required • Aadhaar card • Proof of residence • Ration card • Below Poverty Line (BPL) certificate/Income certificate • Bank statement	Eligibility criteria (Uttar Pradesh) • The households included are based on the deprivation and occupational criteria of the Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011 (SECC 2011) for rural and urban areas respectively • A list of eligible families is then shared with the respective state government as well as ANMs/BMO/BDOs of relevant area • No capping on family size and age of members, to ensure that all family members specifically girl child and senior citizens get coverage • Any family with an active RSBY card as of 28 February 2018 is covered under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan mantra Jan Arogya Yojana Documents required • Aadhaar card • Proof of residence • Ration card • Below Poverty Line (BPL) certificate/Income certificate • Bank statement	
Challenges/ Bottlenecks Process Related: • Lack of monetary incentive to concerned authority (Common service center) • Eligible beneficiaries unable to register because of data discrepancies People Related: • Low awareness and understanding of the benefits especially amongst marginalised section of the society • Entitled beneficiaries are not able to utilise the scheme due to lack of support in private hospitals • Fraudulent practices by doctors and hospitals by show extra processes that need to be paid out of pocket		

Funding/ Budget Related:

- Timely disbursement of funds to hospitals in certain cases due to previous instances of fraudulent claims or misuse of the scheme
- Due to non-disbursement of previous claims hospitals refuse to admit new patients or force them to pay out of their pocket.

Systemic Challenges:

- Variability in state-level implementation and monitoring.
- Many empanelled hospitals refuse to treat beneficiaries under the scheme

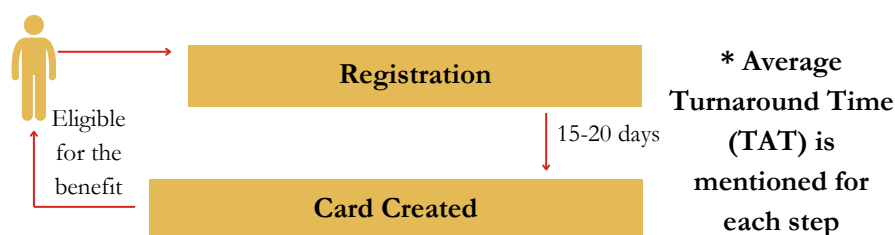
Possible Interventions

- Simplify the enrollment process and increase transparency regarding eligibility and benefits
- Enhance public awareness campaigns to improve understanding and uptake
- Fix the data discrepancies or technical glitch so that everyone who is eligible can register and get benefit of the scheme
- Conducting regular audits and evaluations to identify bottlenecks in the process and implementing corrective measures

Best Practice Model

- Uttar Pradesh has set up separate registration counter and separate ward for PM-JAY beneficiaries to encourage preferential treatment in government hospitals
- The state has also set up a dedicated call centre which has been established to provide beneficiaries with scheme-related information and solve queries regarding scheme entitlement
- A specialised committee has been constituted to provide guidance and opinion on various aspects of PM-JAY including medical advice during claim adjudication, expert medical opinion for anti-fraud activities and special requests for unspecified packages

Existing Process



Barriers:

- Lack of information at the beneficiary level regarding the scheme
- Issues with hospital empanelment and claims processing

How to reduce turnaround time

- Expediting the claims process and improving the efficiency of hospital empanelment and payment processes to ensure timely delivery of services to beneficiaries

Scheme Name: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)	Both Central and State Governments
• Year of launch: 2005 • Act/ Policy: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 • Nodal Department/ Ministry: Ministry of Rural Development • Coverage (as per latest available data): 12.93 cr. active workers, 1.65 cr. household benefited in 2024-25 • Geography (States/ UTs where operational): Operational across all states and union territories in India • Implementation: State government	
Eligibility criteria • Adult members of any household in rural areas • Workers should be aged between 18-59 years • Workers willing to do unskilled manual work Documents required • The registered adult holding a Job Card should seek employment through a written application on plain paper addressed to the Programme Officer mentioning the number of days of employment sought. • Within 15 days of submitting the application or from the day the work is demanded, employment will be provided to the applicant	
Challenges/ Bottlenecks Process Related: • Delays in the allocation of work, administrative bottlenecks, and bureaucratic red tape hinders the smooth implementation of projects • Lack of proper monitoring and supervision at various levels of implementation leads to corruption and poor quality of work People Related: • Wage rates under MGNREGS are often not competitive within the prevailing market, reducing the attractiveness of the program for potential workers and forcing them to migrate • In FY 2023-24, the average number of days worked was below 50, the lowest in past 5 years Funding/ Budget Related: • The allocation of funds for MGNREGS has displayed a pattern of irregularity over time. Most of the initial allotment tends to run out six or eight months into the Financial Year (FY) • Over four years, audits have uncovered Rs 935 crore in misappropriated funds under MGNREGA, with only 1.34% recovered Systemic Challenges: • Variations in how the program is implemented in different states and even different districts within the same state leading to unequal access to benefits	

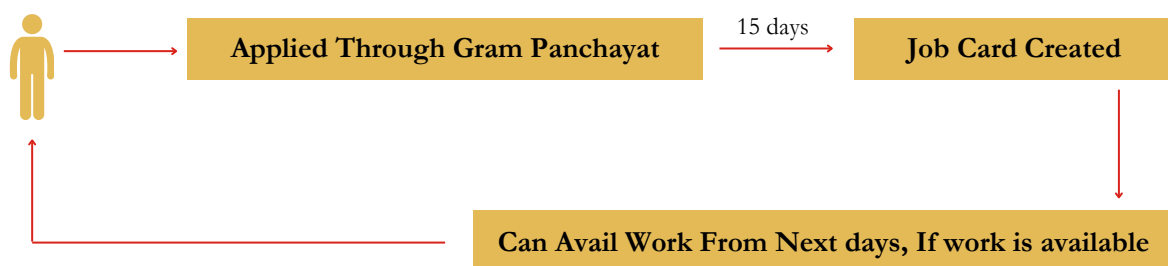
Possible Interventions

- Standardise procedures across states to ensure uniformity in the distribution and usage of MGNREGS benefits
- Enhance awareness programs specifically in regions with low card distribution and employment rates
- Implement digital solutions to streamline the application and work reporting processes
- Ensure timely release of funds to states and local bodies to prevent disruptions in project implementation and wage payments
- Review MGNREGS guidelines to address emerging challenges and align with evolving socio-economic realities.

Best Practice Model

- Andhra Pradesh geo-tagged MGNREGS assets and conducted social audits to enhance transparency and accountability in the implementation of the scheme
- Geo-tagging involved digitally tagging the location and details of MGNREGS assets
- Social audits were conducted by independent third-party agencies to verify the implementation of projects, and ensure compliance with guidelines, and address grievances raised by beneficiaries.
- It helped in preventing leakages, reducing corruption, and improving the quality of MGNREGS works in Andhra Pradesh.

Existing Process



Barriers:

- Lack of information at the beneficiary level regarding the scheme
- Issues with hospital empanelment and claims processing

*** Average Turnaround Time (TAT) is mentioned for each step**

How to reduce turnaround time:

- Establish clear timelines and accountability mechanisms for processing registration applications, allocating work, and disbursing wage payments
- Establish robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the turnaround time for registration and benefit availing under MGNREGS.

Scheme Name: One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC)

Both Central and
State Governments

- **Year of launch:** 2018
- **Act/ Policy:** National Food Security Act, 2013
- **Nodal Department/ Ministry:** Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution
- **Coverage (as per latest available data):** 1,56,718 ration card, 7,10,792 beneficiary
- **Geography (States/ UTs where operational):** Implemented across all 36 States and Union Territories
- **Implementation:** Pan-India: Allows portability of ration cards across states. Uttar Pradesh: Implemented in May 2020; lower uptake compared to Rajasthan. Rajasthan: Started in October 2019; very low uptake.

Eligibility criteria

- The scheme is eligible to all ration cardholders or beneficiaries covered under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013 with seeded Aadhaar Card
- Aadhaar should be linked to mobile number

Documents required

- Ration card
- Aadhaar card

Challenges/ Bottlenecks

Process Related:

- Maintaining accurate and updated beneficiary data across states is crucial but challenging due to varying data management practices
- Migrants find it difficult to register themselves at destination regions to avail ONORC.
- PDS shops do not have adequate information and access to stocks to cater to a dynamic volume of clients i.e., migrant labourers.

People Related:

- Lack of awareness amongst beneficiaries regarding the scheme
- Marginalised women are particularly affected by the difficulties in getting and updating ration cards

Funding/ Budget Related:

- Ensuring consistent funding to maintain and expand ePoS systems nationwide

Systemic Challenges:

- Bureaucratic hurdles or political indifference hampers inter-state portability
- Challenges in Aadhaar seeding of ration cards and updating ration card details, which are prerequisites for using ONORC

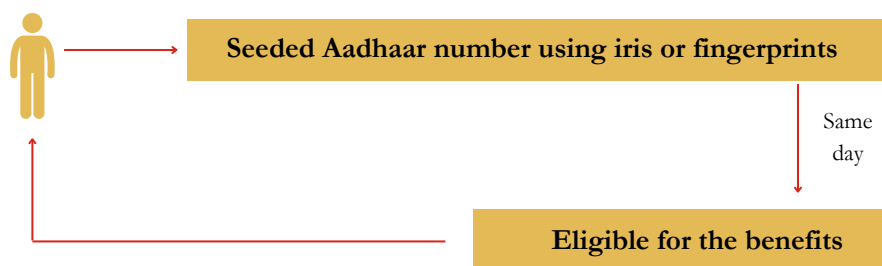
Possible Interventions

- Organising comprehensive awareness camps at periodic intervals to educate beneficiaries about the scheme, its benefits and the process to avail it
- Implement robust data synchronisation mechanisms to maintain accurate and up-to-date beneficiary information across states
- Strengthen monitoring mechanisms to detect and prevent fraud and leakage in the PDS, including the use of technology-enabled tools such as GPS tracking of food grain distribution
- Upgrade technology at Fair Price Shops (FPS) to ensure better connectivity and functionality of ePOS machine

Best Practice Model

- Telangana has been a pioneer in leveraging technology to implement the ONORC scheme effectively. The state's Civil Supplies Department developed a comprehensive IT platform called 'Integrated Management of Public Distribution System (IM-PDS)' to facilitate real-time monitoring and management of the PDS
- The IM-PDS system integrates beneficiary data from different states, enabling seamless portability of ration cards. It also incorporates features like biometric authentication and SMS alerts to ensure transparency and accountability in food grain distribution

Existing Process



Barriers:

- Many eligible beneficiaries, particularly labour migrants are not aware of the ONORC scheme and its benefits. This lack of awareness can prevent them from enrolling and accessing the benefits they are entitled to
- Frequent technology failures, particularly with biometric authentication and poor internet connectivity, hinder successful transactions
- Under PDS, each state is allocated a specific quota but major destination states may experience difficulties in providing foodgrains to eligible beneficiaries under ONORC

How to reduce turnaround time

- Streamline the process for updating and seeding Aadhaar details in ration cards by organising special camps and using mobile registration units
- Reduce the bureaucratic hurdles in updating ration card details, especially for marginalised and vulnerable groups.
- Implement robust exception handling procedures to manage transaction failures effectively, possibly using offline solutions when online authentication fails

CONCLUSION



Internal migration in India, especially rural to urban, will continue to grow significantly in the foreseeable future. States in the northern and eastern parts of the country, characterised by significant structural inequalities, income disparities, climate burdens, and social complexities, compounded by low productivity in agriculture, a burgeoning demographic dividend, and high aspirations of youth, will witness a high incidence of migration for higher education, jobs, and wage employment. While migration holds the promise of economic growth, it also presents significant challenges, particularly for vulnerable communities who majorly undertake seasonal and short-term migration. These communities often end up facing various obstacles in accessing social security and securing decent employment opportunities, exacerbating their socio-economic vulnerabilities.

In this context, it is imperative for philanthropies, multilaterals, and policymakers to understand the multi-layered aspects of migration, its drivers, and the means and ways in which migrants, who mostly belong to vulnerable community groups such as scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, the landless, women, and children, could be socially secured, with their welfare entitlements guaranteed, and decent and safe working conditions and employment provided.

Insights from several reports, government working groups, parliamentary committee reports and research studies over the last decade have shed light on the intricate challenges faced by migrant workers in accessing social security schemes.

This study brought forth significant challenges in access to social welfare schemes for migrant workers in *districts of Rajsamand and Beawar in Rajasthan and Bhabraich and Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh*, drawing upon conversations, interviews, and household-level surveys. Despite the existence of various well-intentioned welfare programs aimed at improving the livelihoods and social security of migrants at source as well as in destination sites, numerous gaps and challenges persist, hindering their effective utilisation. These challenges range from bureaucratic hurdles and lack of awareness to social and structural barriers. Addressing these gaps is imperative to ensuring the inclusivity and efficacy of welfare schemes, as well as to uphold the rights and dignity of migrant workers. Policy interventions must prioritise streamlining administrative procedures, locally contextual implementation strategies focusing on outreach and awareness campaigns and promoting socio-culturally sensitive approaches to facilitate equitable access to welfare benefits.

Collaborative efforts involving government agencies, civil society organisations, and community stakeholders are crucial to developing and implementing comprehensive strategies that address the multifaceted needs of migrants. Furthermore, it is essential to recognise the inherent vulnerability of migrant populations, particularly in the context of socio-economic uncertainties and mobility. Comprehensive social protection mechanisms should be established to provide a safety net for migrants, encompassing not only access to welfare schemes but also provisions for healthcare, education, and livelihood support. Here, the role of philanthropies and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) based interventions hold paramount importance in funding strong evidence-driven programmes and project delivery and monitoring mechanisms that can aid the government delivery framework.⁸²

In 2020, ILO emphasised upon the need for comprehensive social protection mechanisms to safeguard the rights and dignity of migrant workers, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁸³

In this context, social security and safety nets emerge as crucial components of ensuring the well-being of migrant workers. These mechanisms serve as vital safeguards, providing protection during periods of transition and uncertainty. Beyond access to welfare schemes, a comprehensive social protection framework

[82] https://www.ihdindia.org/working-papers/2020/IHD-CES_WP_02_2020.pdf

[83] https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new-delhi/documents/publication/wcms_763352.pdf

encompassing healthcare, education, and livelihood support is essential. Policymakers must prioritise policy reforms aimed at streamlining administrative procedures to enhance the accessibility of welfare schemes. Moreover, contextual implementation strategies, informed by local needs and socio-cultural sensitivities, are crucial to ensure equitable access to social security benefits across diverse migrant populations.

Addressing these existing gaps in social security for migrants requires collaborative actions across multiple stakeholders.

Community engagement emerges as a key strategy in addressing the challenges faced by migrant workers. Collaborative efforts involving government agencies, civil society organisations, and community stakeholders can facilitate the development and implementation of comprehensive strategies tailored to the unique needs of migrant populations. Community-based initiatives, including outreach and awareness campaigns, serve to empower migrants and enhance their utilisation of welfare schemes.

Capacity building among stakeholders is another critical aspect of addressing gaps in social security for migrants. By investing in training programs focused on migrant rights, social security entitlements, and grievance redressal mechanisms, frontline workers and local authorities can improve the delivery of welfare services and ensure the effective implementation of policies.

Data-driven approaches play a crucial role in informing targeted interventions and policy decisions. Surveys, research studies, and monitoring mechanisms help identify gaps in access to welfare schemes and track the impact of interventions over time. By leveraging data and evidence, stakeholders can adopt a more strategic and impactful approach to addressing the welfare needs of migrant populations. Cross-sectoral collaboration is essential for maximising resources and expertise in addressing the challenges faced by migrant workers. Partnerships between government agencies, private sector entities, academic institutions, and international organisations can facilitate the development of innovative solutions and the scaling up of successful interventions.

Four years have passed since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and with strong macroeconomic conditions, it is important that policymakers, practitioners, and society at large come together with a shared commitment to ensure gaps in access to social welfare schemes for migrant workers are bridged. Prioritising social security and safety nets, implementing policy reforms, strengthening community engagement, and fostering cross-sectoral collaboration, will help in creating a more inclusive and equitable society.

As we navigate the post-pandemic recovery phase, it is imperative that we uphold our commitment to ensure the rights and dignity of migrant workers are protected, and their welfare needs are met. This study, we hope, will be able to drive some possible interventions.

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ANNEXURE 1

Safe and Responsible Migration Centres in Kerala and Ladakh

Under the Safe and Responsible Migration Initiative (SRMI) anchored by Government of Jharkhand (GoJ), three SRMCs were established in the three source districts of Jharkhand namely Dumka, Gumla and West Singhbhum and at two source regions of Kerala and Ladakh. The SRMCs in Kerala and Ladakh were envisaged to function as a Labour consulate, providing facilitation and support to migrant workers from the state working in these states/UT.

Both Kerala and Ladakh are major destinations for the migrant workers of Jharkhand. Workers are engaged by the Border Road Organisation (BRO) road and bridge construction companies or other civilian construction works in Ladakh. Ladakh sees an influx of around 25,000-30,000 migrant workers every year in the summer season from the Santhal Pargana division of Jharkhand.

a) Union Territory of Ladakh

The talks to establish an SRMC in Ladakh were initiated during the visit to the union territory by the delegation of the Government of Jharkhand led by the Secretary, Department of Labour, Employment, Training and Skill Development, Government of Jharkhand in October 2021. With the support of the Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh, the SRMC Ladakh at Leh started its operation in August 2022.

Location – Opposite Sonam Hospital, near the Civil Secretariat of Ladakh, Leh

Functions

- Facilitating the registration of migrant workers on the Shramadhan portal of Jharkhand (<https://shramadhan.jharkhand.gov.in/home>)
- Coordinating with the officials of the Department of Labour and Employment, Administration of UT Ladakh on the welfare of migrant workers.
- Update the office of the Secretary, Labour and Employment Department, UT Ladakh on the monthly progress of the SRMI.
- Assist the office of the Assistant Labour Commissioners of Leh and Kargil in maintaining the database of the labour agencies, labour contractors and migrant workers engaged by the BRO.
- Register the complaints and grievances of the migrant workers and inform the State Migrant Control Room of Jharkhand of the cases.
- Undertake field visits to the work sites of BRO to create awareness among the migrant workers about their rights and benefits available to them.
- Link migrant workers from Jharkhand with the schemes of the Government of Jharkhand as per their eligibility.
- Handle emergencies like death cases, missing cases, and wage payment-related issues.
- Assist the UT Ladakh administration in the implementation of the ISMW Act, 1979.

Highlights

- A delegation of GoJ visited Ladakh in Oct 2021. The delegation visited the construction sites of the BRO and interacted with the migrant workers from Jharkhand. The delegation also met with the officials of the BRO and UT Ladakh.
- SRMC started its operation in August 2022. Starting with undertaking IEC campaign for awareness generation amongst workers from Jharkhand was undertaken in September 2022.
- The Technical Support Unit of SRMI was appointed as Nodal Officers from Jharkhand to address the issues of the migrant workers working in Ladakh.
- SRMC Ladakh compiled a robust database of more than 22,000 workers and 25 labour agencies engaged in various construction projects of BRO. The database was submitted to the UT Ladakh. This database was put together based on the workers who
- A separate database of 350 middlemen, also known as 'Mates' was compiled by the SRMC Ladakh and SRMC Dumka. Police verification of such mates was carried out by the district administration of Dumka as per inputs from SRMC Dumka.
- SRMC Ladakh started its second leg of IEC in April 2023.
- A delegation of GoJ visited Ladakh in August 2023. The delegation officially audited the worksites of BRO in Zaskar Valley and Nubra Valley in the presence of the officials of UT Ladakh. After verifying the living and working conditions of the migrant workers, the delegation met with the Secretary, Department of Labour and Employment, UT Ladakh, and senior officials of BRO on the various issues regarding the welfare of the migrant workers from Jharkhand.

b) Kerala

A delegation of GoJ visited Kerala in May 2022. The delegation met with the Principal Secretary, Department of Labour and Skills, Government of Kerala and initiated the discussion around setting up of an SRMC in Kerala. The SRMC Kerala started its operation in June 2022.

Location – Perambavoor, Kerala.

Functions

- Register migrant workers on the Shramadhan portal of Jharkhand.
- Register migrant construction workers on the BoCW portal of Kerala (https://lcas.lc.kerala.gov.in/office/registration/onlinegistration_online_pay.php?actid=29)
- Register the grievances of migrant workers and escalate them to the State Migrant Control Room of Jharkhand. Help the control room in the redressal of the grievances.
- Help migrant workers in accessing the welfare schemes of the Government of Kerala and the Government of Jharkhand available to migrant workers.
- Act as the cornerstone in ensuring the migration corridor between Jharkhand and Kerala is safe for the migrant workers by establishing an interstate coordination mechanism. Work with the Government of Kerala in enforcement of the provisions of the ISMW Act, 1979.
- Support the State Migrant Control Room in issues like repatriation of mortal remains of migrant workers to Jharkhand in case of accident or work site casualty, wage payment.
- Create awareness among migrant workers on the benefits of various initiatives of the Government via registration cum awareness drives in coordination with the Department of Labour and Skills, Kerala.
- Provide services through supportive initiatives of CSOs/NGOs like Bandhu Clinic (<https://cmid.org.in/work-in-kerala/>)

ANNEXURE 2

Schemes implemented by Government of Kerala for Migrant (Guest) Workers

Factors like higher wage rates, better working and living conditions, and better job opportunities, especially in the unskilled job sector coupled with state-sponsored schemes of free Insurance cum medical facilities make Kerala a preferred destination for migrant workers. The Interstate Migrant Workers in Kerala are referred to as Guest Workers by the state government. The state has more than 5 Lakh guest Workers registered with the Labour and Skills Department. Kerala has multiple schemes for Migrant workers arriving in the state however only a small percentage of migrant workers make use of these benefits or are aware of them.

1. AAWAZ (Free Health Insurance Scheme)

Kerala is the first state in India to implement a free health insurance scheme for migrant workers belonging to the age group of 18 to 60 years.

- A comprehensive database of migrant workers was created, and enrolled members are eligible for medical insurance and registration cards are issued to them.
- Free inpatient treatment up to Rs. 25000 is available in empanelled private hospitals.
- Accident death insurance of Rs.2 Lakh.
- Accident disability insurance of Rs.1 Lakh

An amount of Rs. 1.25 crores have been allocated in the financial year 2024-25 for the scheme.

2. Kerala Inter-State Migrant Workers Welfare Scheme

Kerala is the first State in India to implement a Social Security Scheme for Interstate migrant workers. Migrant workers can register themselves as member of the Kerala Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board. So, the schemes of BoCW Kerala can be availed by migrant workers too.

- The BoCW schemes provide treatment benefits, accident coverage, death benefits and financial assistance to the migrant workers.
- The nominee of the migrant worker will get Rs. 25000 if the worker expires in Kerala.
- In case of fatality which occurs at the work site, the nominee of the migrant worker will get Rs.2 Lakh.
- A migrant worker is eligible for Rs.25,000 as financial assistance from the board for partial disability.
- Maternity benefit of Rs.15,000.
- Educational grants for higher studies for children.
- Rs.25,000 for medical expenses.
- Rs.50,000 as a retirement benefit for a migrant worker who leaves after 3 years of continuous service.

The scheme shares its implementation modus operandi with the BoCW schemes. The penetration is low in the sense that the registration of workers and cess collection against that registration is high but the migrant workers availing the benefits after registration is low. Also, the registration follows a membership model, a migrant worker must renew the membership every year after paying a cess amount. Renewal of membership is low.

For IEC and awareness generation amongst migrant workers an amount of Rs. 25 lakhs have been allocated in financial year 2024-25.

3. Aalay Scheme

Aalay is a project to provide accommodation for workers in collaboration with local self-government bodies. Homeowners willing to rent houses to workers must register with the Labour Department. The objective is that migrant workers would pay low rent amounts for safe and hygienic accommodation.

- This scheme provides clean and safe accommodations to migrant workers at a nominal rent.
- An online portal has been developed for Guest workers to avail rental accommodations.
- This portal enables the house owners to provide details with pictures of the proposed residence to be let out to the migrant workers. The migrant workers can choose their residence from the available data provided in the portal.

4. Apna Ghar scheme

This Project Provides clean and safe hostel facilities to migrant workers at an affordable rate.

- Bhavanam Foundation, which is a state government-owned public sector non-profit company, is shouldering the project.
- A 620-bed facility under Apna Ghar is functioning at Kanchikode in Palakkad District.
- Another Apna Ghar is at Kinaloor in Kozhikode district, with a facility of 520 beds.
- Similar projects will be undertaken in the districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam and others.
- The hostel is available at affordable rates between Rs 750 and Rs 1000 per month and the occupants are expected to cook for themselves.

5. Changathi

This scheme was introduced by Kerala Literacy Mission to teach the migrant workers both Hindi and Malayalam within 4 months. A handbook named “Hamari Malayalam” is also published under this scheme.

- The programme was launched at Perumbavoor in Ernakulam district, Which has the largest concentration of migrant workers in the state. A survey was conducted in 27 wards of Perumbavoor, and 400 beneficiaries were identified for the education programme in the initial phase.
- The Literacy Mission Authority conducts five hours of class per week as part of the programme. study centres comprising five to 10 clusters have been constituted for the purpose. Each cluster has around 15 to 20 participants. Each study centre has an instructor, who is proficient in both Hindi and Malayalam. The services of educationally qualified migrant workers and students of the Literacy Missions Higher Secondary Equivalency course be utilised for the purpose.
- The study Centres are arranged at schools, libraries, workplaces and even at the shelters of migrant workers.
- ‘Hamari Malayalam’ (Our Malayalam) has 25 chapters dealing with various topics ranging from hygiene, health and technology to the rights of workers and ethical values. The chapters are in the format of dialogues, set in various backdrops like a bank, school, market and so on.

6. Revolving Fund

Mortal remains of the migrant workers who passed away in Kerala are sent to their native places under the supervision of the concerned Labour Officers.

- A revolving fund of Rs 50000 for transportation of mortal remains of migrant workers was introduced in 2018.

- The responsibility for the transportation of dead bodies is with empanelled private players.
- Implemented in a reimbursement mode for those migrant workers only who don't have any dependents or relatives present in Kerala at the time of death.

7. Migrant Facilitation Centres

Facilitation Centres are working in all 14 districts of Kerala under the supervision of the Labour and Skills Department, to facilitate migrant workers by providing Information in multi-languages about Wage Systems, Social Security Schemes, Insurance Schemes and any other information related to their jobs.

- Registration of migrant workers, issuing labour cards, and grievance redressal are the primary functions of the MFCs.
- Bilingual officials are assigned to these centres to answer the queries and doubts raised by the migrant workers.
- Call centre services are available in various languages including Assamese, Oriya, Bengali and Hindi.

The following have been planned in the approved budget of financial year 2024-25 but no allocation has been made in the budgetary estimates (B.E.).

1. e-Shram portal validation
2. Athidhi mobile registration app for guest workers
3. Guest friendly residence in Kerala (Aalay and Apna Ghar)

