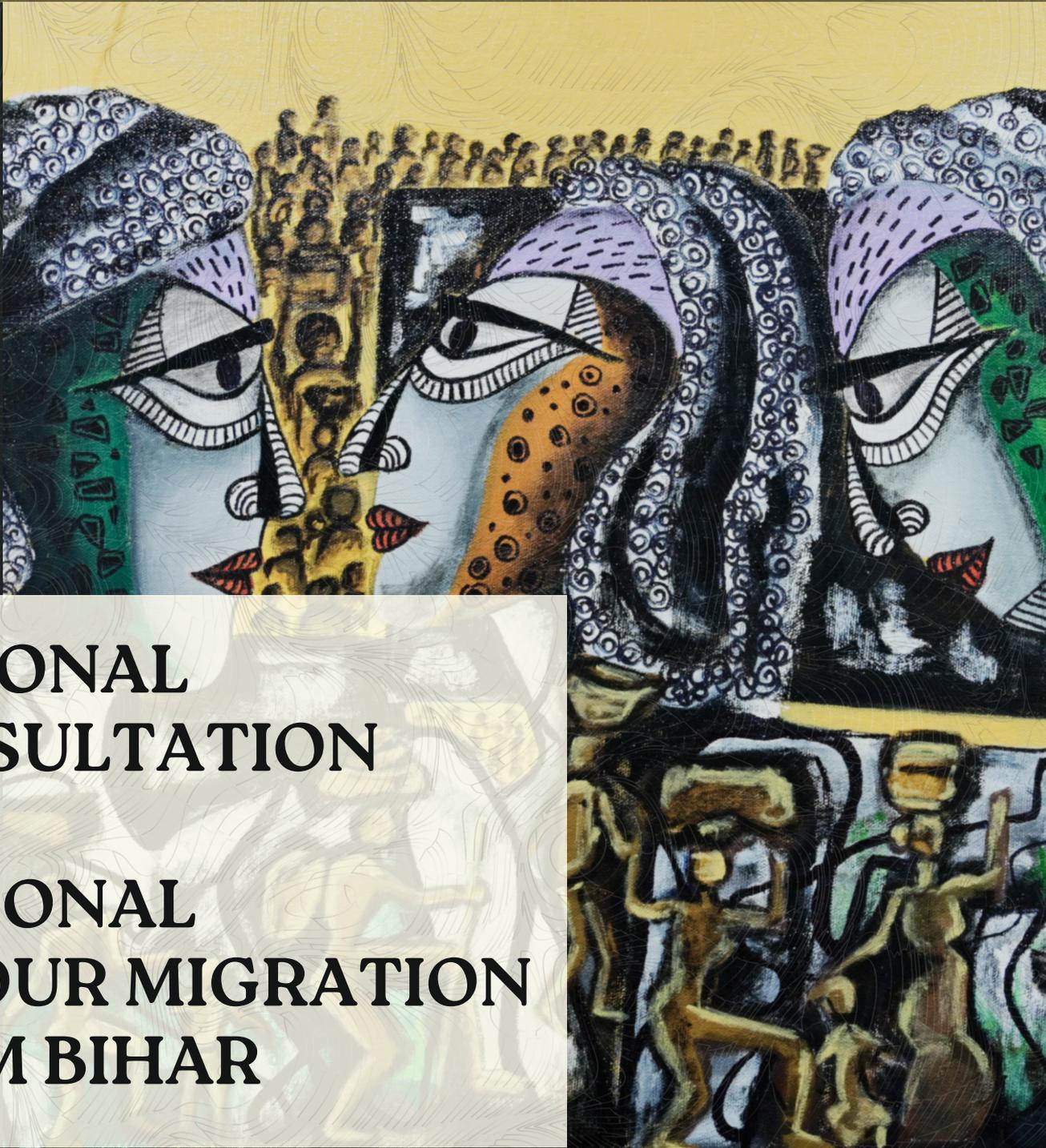


**CONSULTATION PROCEEDINGS**



**NATIONAL  
CONSULTATION  
ON  
SEASONAL  
LABOUR MIGRATION  
FROM BIHAR**

**11th-12th December, 2025 | Patna**

**CENTRE FOR LABOUR RESEARCH AND ACTION  
ROSA LUXEMBURG STIFTUNG-SOUTH ASIA**

# Acknowledgements

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We also thank all **panelists, contributors, and stakeholders** who participated so meaningfully, taking true ownership of this process. It was deeply encouraging to see representatives from government, trade unions, academia, civil society, and media come together in a shared recognition of the urgent need to collectively protect and advance the rights of migrant workers. The seriousness, clarity, and commitment brought to the table by diverse participants made this a rare and important collective exercise.

We are very grateful to the teams at **AN Sinha Institute of Social Studies, Bihar Lalit Kala Academy, College of Arts and Crafts Patna, Patna Book Fair, and Bhartiya Nritya Kala Mandir** — for their critical support in organizing the various activities conducted throughout the extended process. We are also grateful to our colleagues — **Bihari Vyas, Birendra Singh, Mina Jadav, Shaitan Regar, Pooja Meghwal, and Hitendra Rathod** — for helping with the coordination and execution of the event.

**Last, but most importantly, we thank the migrant workers from Bihar who shared their time, experiences, and demands with honesty and clarity.** Their lived realities inspired the thinking behind this consultation and grounded the conversations that took place over these two days.

While this consultation and report reflect a collective process, any errors or omissions remain the responsibility of the organizers.

**In Solidarity,**

**Sudhir Katiyar, Pranjali Tripathi, Pushkar Jha**

**Centre for Labour Research and Action**

**January 2026**

Consultation Proceedings

# National Consultation On Seasonal Labour Migration From Bihar

11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2025

Organized By

Centre for Labour Research and Action

With Support from Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung - South Asia



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# 1. Introduction and Context Setting

Seasonal migrants constitute some of the most vulnerable sections of India's informal working class, a reality starkly revealed during the COVID-19 exodus. One critical reason for this vulnerability lies in the absence of comprehensive data on seasonal migration. None of the large-scale government surveys - Census, National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO), or the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) - adequately capture seasonal migration patterns. This data gap became catastrophically evident during the post-lockdown exodus when the Central Government imposed restrictions without understanding their impact on millions of seasonal migrants. Unfortunately, despite the pandemic's lessons, figures capturing the actual scale of seasonal migration remain as elusive as ever.

Bihar stands as one of India's major migration source states, with an estimated 28 lakh workers returning during the first COVID-19 lockdown alone – a figure likely to be an underestimate. Bihar has been a hotbed of seasonal migration even before the LPG-led growth model transformed labour migration patterns across underdeveloped regions. The lack of verifiable data on this massive workforce means that their issues and concerns remain unaddressed in official policies. As the state takes cognizance of seasonal migration in the post-COVID period and designs interventions in housing, Public Distribution System (PDS), and labour protections, implementation will require strong databases that can be utilized by multiple agencies: municipal bodies to ensure housing and infrastructure services; railways and transport corporations to plan services for peak migration periods; education, health, ICDS, and PDS departments to provide portable entitlements; labour departments to ensure compliance; and civil society organizations to organize workers and facilitate access to legal and welfare services.

Recognizing this urgent need, the Centre for Labour Research and Action (CLRA) - a labour rights organization with extensive experience documenting and organizing seasonal migrant workers - has been working on a 'Seasonal Migration Atlas' that would systematically capture seasonal migration from specific geographies. CLRA has undertaken mapping of migration streams in Gujarat, documenting numbers and working conditions in industrial and agricultural clusters, analyzed nationwide COVID-19 migration data, and conducted regional mapping exercises in Western India's tribal belt. Jharkhand state recently completed a comprehensive state-wide migration study, while Kerala, as a destination state, had undertaken similar research earlier, demonstrating that such initiatives are both feasible and essential.

Against this backdrop, a National Consultation on Seasonal Labour Migration from Bihar was organized on 11th-12th December 2025 at Patna. Day 1 convened at A.N. Sinha Institute of Social Studies, Patna, while Day 2 took place at Bihar Lalit Kala Akademi, Patna. The consultation brought together academics and researchers, government officials, civil society organizations, trade unionists and workers' organizations, international organizations, and migrant workers and community representatives.

Over the two days, over a hundred stakeholders participated in focused, engaging discussions, with a live Bidesiya performance concluding the consultation. A parallel art & cultural exhibition on the theme of historical and contemporary migration from Bihar was inaugurated on 12<sup>th</sup> December at Bihar Lalit Kala Academy, drawing hundreds of visitors till its final showing at the Patna Book Fair on 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2025.

## **Objectives**

The consultation was conducted with three core objectives:

1. To deepen understanding of seasonal migration from Bihar - numbers, patterns, drivers, and the challenges faced by workers
2. To assess interventions carried out by state institutions and civil society organizations on seasonal migration, evaluate their impact, and identify future directions
3. To build state consciousness on seasonal migration, initiating momentum toward a state-wide migration census and stronger policy action

The consultation was structured across six thematic sessions examining migration's scale, patterns, and drivers; state and civil society interventions; child trafficking and labour migration vulnerabilities; pathways toward a Seasonal Migration Atlas; the implications of new Labour Codes for migrant workers; and the cultural dimensions of migration. This report documents the proceedings, key presentations, floor discussions, and the collective manifesto of demands that emerged from the two-day deliberations.

## 2. Summary of Proceedings

On 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> December, 2025, Centre for Labour Research and Action (CLRA), in collaboration with Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung-South Asia (RLS), convened a two-day national consultation in Patna, bringing together trade unions, government officials, academics, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to address the critical challenges facing seasonal migrant workers from Bihar — one of India's major labour-sending states with a long history of domestic and international migration. Over these two days, over a hundred stakeholders participated in focused discussions, with a live Bidesiya performance concluding the consultation.

### Day 1 – 11<sup>th</sup> December 2025 – A.N. Sinha Institute of Social Studies

**Session 1: ‘Understanding Migration from Bihar’** opened with keynote presentations establishing the scale, patterns, and drivers of Bihar's migration. Dr. Pushendra Kumar presented key findings from his background study conducted in collaboration with CLRA and RLS. Bihar's 2022-23 Caste Census revealed that 4.58 million people migrate for employment, with 71.7% crossing state boundaries. He challenged the impulse to "stop migration," arguing instead for structuring migration to benefit workers. Prof. Aviral Pandey examined migration through a human rights lens, revealing a U-shaped pattern with highest migration from flood-prone border districts, and highlighting the systematic violations of constitutional protections despite existing legal frameworks. Prof. Ram B Bhagat reframed migration as a question of mobility rights, tracing the evolution from slavery to free labour, and arguing that migration theory and policy must integrate "place" as a fundamental category. Floor discussions raised critical data gaps, implementation failures, and the overlap between seasonal labour migration and human trafficking.

**Session 2: ‘State and Civil Society Interventions’** examined existing work to protect the rights of migrant workers as well as ground realities. Dr. Ganesh K. Jha from Bihar's Labour Resources Department presented the state's institutional framework including the Bihar State Migrant Labour Accidental Scheme, the soon-to-be-launched Bihar Pravasi Kamgar App (mapping 6.5 lakh workers), and planned initiatives like foreign language training and an Overseas Placement Bureau. Shatrughan Das from ActionAid revealed the mechanisms of debt bondage trapping families for over 20 years in brick kilns, and the dangerous realities of rescue operations where social activists face criminal charges rather than state support. Shaitan Regar from Rajasthan Pradesh Int Bhatta Majdur Union described critical organizing efforts among Bihari brick kiln workers in Rajasthan, including successful mass strikes for wage increases, and highlighted how owners continued to maintain impunity, enabled by local administration. Johns Thomas from Progressive Workers Organization presented Kerala's experience as a destination state with progressive welfare boards, while emphasizing the gap between policy and "shoddy" implementation. Discussions highlighted work done by various grassroots organizations and the serious practical challenges they faced, definitional confusions in new Labour Codes, and the persistent lack of pre-departure training.

**Session 3: ‘Child Trafficking and Labour Migration’** examined children's vulnerabilities within seasonal labour migration, treating it explicitly as a child rights and protection issue. Adv. Sanju Singh from Nyay Network established that seasonal labour migration and trafficking are "two sides of the same coin," both involving movement through deception, force, or coercion. She shared key insights based on her extensive experience conducting rescue operations and supporting trafficking survivors, like how contractors deliberately target households with multiple children, and how social media enables faceless trafficking through cyber grooming. Dr. Aman Kumar from UNICEF Bihar presented concerning statistics on missing children and school drop-out rates in Bihar, significantly higher than national and international averages. He explained the functioning of Bihar's institutional infrastructure including 44 Anti-Human Trafficking Units and the Child Labour Tracking System, while noting the significant underutilization of existing funds which could be leveraged for prevention. Rakesh Kumar Singh from Bihar State Commission for Protection of Child Rights emphasized that Bihar has the highest child population in labour, and described systemic neglect with guardians and institutions failing to retain children in education. Dr. Hulesh Manjhee stressed the moral dimension, advocating for mass awareness campaigns and social boycott of exploiters. Rohit Singh from ADITHI presented distress migration data showing how advance payments create bondage, documentation gaps prevent protection, and bonded labour remains severely underreported because the government does not acknowledge its existence. Floor discussions raised critical Right to Education implementation failures and the need for systematic district-to-panchayat level data visibility. Chair Pramod Kumar Sharma emphasized that while the "3 Ps" framework (Prevention, Protection, Prosecution) existed, rehabilitation remained the critical gap. He recommended reviving Bihar's 2008 Astitva Guidelines, which had combined all components later debated in Parliament's Trafficking in Persons Bill.

**Session 4: ‘Towards a Collective Roadmap for a Seasonal Migration Atlas and State-Level Interventions’** brought all stakeholders together to chart pathways forward. Chair Prof. Himanshu (JNU) highlighted Jharkhand's state-wide migration survey and Kerala's "guest worker" welfare model as instructive examples, while noting the upcoming NSSO migration survey's revised definition of seasonal migration (now 15 days instead of one month) as a small advocacy victory. Sudhir Katiyar (CLRA) emphasized that seasonal migration is fundamentally a labour issue requiring mass organizing. He cited successful brick kiln and sugarcane worker strikes, arguing that without labour movement mobilization at scale, neither policy frameworks nor welfare schemes would achieve meaningful impact. Sourav Adhikari (PDAG) presented lessons from Jharkhand's 2023 migration survey, which combined quantitative household data with qualitative methods including focus group discussions and life history interviews across 10,674 households. Dr. Surya Bhushan (DMI) analyzed Bihar's 1.8 million COVID-19 returnee records, revealing that 80% re-migrated within three months due to structural economic constraints, with education portability emerging as a critical barrier. Dr. Vidyarthi Vikas (ANSISS) presented longitudinal village studies documenting distress migration driven by Bihar's jobless growth, manufacturing employment decline (30% between 2001-2020), irrigation failures, and landlessness. He challenged official growth narratives while advocating land reforms and MNREGA implem-

-entation. Dr. Ravi Kumar (SAU) emphasized migration's holistic impacts -remittances enabling education investments, women's empowerment patterns, and cultural transformations - while calling for interventions like mobile schools and migrant housing programs. Dr. Pushpendra Kumar stressed the anti-poor macro-environment characterized by 56% self-employment and informalization, arguing for universal EPF/ESI coverage and warning that April 2026 Labour Codes implementation would weaken protections further. Floor discussions foregrounded gender dimensions, with participants emphasizing women migrant workers' invisibility despite performing more work, carrying reproductive labour burdens, and facing specific vulnerabilities that remain epistemically absent from labour discourse.

## **Day 2 – 12<sup>th</sup> December 2025 – Bihar Lalit Kala Academy**

**Session 5: Panel Discussion on "Migrant Workers and the New Labour Codes"** examined how India's recent labour law consolidation impacts seasonal migrant workers. Moderated by educationist Dr. Anil Kumar Roy, the panelists interrogated the four new Labour Codes – Code on Wages (2019), Industrial Relations Code (2020), Social Security Code (2020), and Occupational Safety Code (2020) – notified on November 21, 2025, with implementation likely deferred to April 2026. Labour researcher Ashok Khandelwal argued that the Codes fundamentally shift power from Parliament to the Executive. While parent Acts acknowledge constitutional guarantees (Articles 14, 19(1)(c), 21, 23), crucial operational details – inspection powers, social security thresholds, layoff conditions – are delegated to executive rules changeable without parliamentary scrutiny. This represents democratic erosion of labour protections. Trade union leader Ghazanfar Nawab provided clause-by-clause analysis, noting that while the Codes promise a national floor wage and universal social security, the proposed Rs. 178 daily wage floor legitimizes exploitation, enforcement capacity has been curtailed with inspectors rebranded as "facilitators," and establishment thresholds (10-20 workers for EPF/ESI) exclude most migrants working in small sites. Fixed-term employment expansion denies retrenchment compensation to seasonal workers, deepening job insecurity. MLC Shashi Yadav grounded discussion in lived realities: within-state migration of women domestic workers remains unrecognized; families of migrant workers face acute insecurity; compensation for workplace deaths requires impossible documentation; and ASHA, Anganwadi, and Midday Meal workers are denied worker status entirely. Trade union leader Arun Mishra situated the Codes within liberalization's broader project, arguing they represent a class offensive recasting work as duty rather than rights. He called for wholesale rejection and sustained labour movement resistance, emphasizing that unions must now organize workers where they live, not just workplaces, and link origin-destination sites effectively.

**Session 6: Panel Discussion on "Culture and Migration"** deliberately contrasted with data-focused sessions to explore how migration enters Bihar's emotional world and cultural imagination. Moderated by cultural activist Jayprakash with panelists Anish Ankur (Kedardas Institute of Labour and Social Studies), Ashok Kumar Sinha (Addl. Director, Bihar Museum), and Vinay Kumar (Addl. Secretary, Bhavan Nirman Vibhag-cum-Director Bapu Tower), the dialogue moved between folk performance, visual art, and lived memory.

Anish Ankur excavated indentured migration's hidden history, showing how recruiters "tricked villagers latakā ke" rather than through informed choice. He analyzed folk songs like "Railiyā bairan piya ko liye jāy" (the train as enemy) and Bhikhari Thakur's plays "Bidesiya" and "Gabar Ghichor," which expose the moral wreckage migration creates, and how these narratives document what official histories barely acknowledge. Ashok Sinha explored how separation sits beneath surface imagery in Manjusha and Mithila art. Recounting his official visit to Mauritius, he described immigration ghats as sacred sites where descendants maintain ancestral memory, with the President touching a Mithila painter's feet to honour forebears. And language hybridizes – Bhojpuri has largely become Creole, illustrating how migrant cultures transform across generations. Vinay Kumar discussed how contemporary artists repeatedly paint village landscapes overlaid with urban clutter, holding both spaces simultaneously. He emphasized that gifted village actors and singers often see their practice destroyed when wage compulsion forces migration to construction sites, with no institutional support to sustain their art. Anti-Bihari cinema stereotypes compound this erasure. Remarks from the floor emphasized how for migrants, culture functions as resource for survival and resistance, and how art, performance, storytelling can make visible the contributions and struggles of migrant communities.

## **Way Forward**

The consultation concluded with participants collectively endorsing a draft manifesto of demands recognizing seasonal migration as a major livelihood source for Bihar's 63 lakh migrant workers (71.7% interstate, 25% intrastate, 3.4% international; likely an undercount). Rather than joining calls to prevent or reduce migration, the manifesto calls for protecting and expanding workers' rights while resisting labour disempowerment in the name of ease of business. Core demands include comprehensive data collection on migration in, within, and out of Bihar through specific enquiries into key destinations, linking source and destination areas to inform labour-friendly policy formulation. On formalization, participants demanded universal EPF and ESI coverage for the entire workforce including self-employed workers, wage regulation, and measures to narrow gaps between formal and informal employment ensuring decent work conditions. A strong grievance redressal mechanism must address wage theft, occupational safety violations, compensation denial, harassment, discrimination, forced labour, and casualization. Housing emerged as critical, with demands for inclusive living spaces encompassing water supply, sanitation, environmental hygiene, and integration of migrants into local health and housing services. The manifesto specifically called for ensuring seasonal migrant workers' inclusion in the Affordable Rental Housing Complex (ARHC) scheme, its original target group. Participants demanded regulation of labour contractors and promotion of Wage Labour Exchanges creating transparent direct interfaces between workers and employers. Finally, portability of entitlements under social security schemes and publicly provided services - particularly health and education - must be ensured, as has been started under the Public Distribution System. The participants committed to continued engagement through working groups, for sustained advocacy and organizing efforts around the demands that emerged during the consultation.

### 3. Day 1 Session Proceedings

11th December, 2025 | 9 AM to 6 PM

#### A. Session 1: Understanding Migration from Bihar: Extent, Patterns, and Drivers

The first session focused on the definition and incidence of seasonal migration from Bihar - its scale, patterns and causes - so that all participants shared a common, evidence-based understanding before moving to solutions and beyond.

**Chair:** Dr. Ravi Kumar, South Asian University

**Presenters:** Dr. Pushpendra Kumar, Former Chairperson, Centre for Development Practice and Research, Patna; Dr. Aviral Pandey, Patna University; Dr. Ram B Bhagat, Institute for Human Development

#### *Dr. Pushpendra Kumar - Keynote: The Scale and Stigma of Bihar's Migration*

Dr. Pushpendra Kumar opened with a keynote presentation establishing fundamental parameters for understanding Bihar's migration. He emphasized that the consultation aimed to translate understanding into actionable interventions rather than purely academic discussion. He had intentionally limited excessive data, believing only relevant figures should support concrete policy recommendations.

Dr. Kumar articulated that Bihar carries a significant stigma rooted in its 'negative net migration rate': when more people leave than enter, the state is classified as a 'sending state,' conventionally interpreted as a sign of backwardness. Bihar's negative net migration rate has created what he termed "*kalank*" (stigma). This stigma operates on multiple registers: Bihari migrants visible throughout the country appear predominantly as informal sector labourers and manual workers, reinforcing the stereotype that "Biharis run wherever they find work." Data confirms Bihari migrants' overwhelming concentration in unstable, informal-sector employment. Even long-term migrants remain within poor populations at destinations.



The popular perception of Bihar as economically backward and impoverished reinforces the perception that the state survives on remittances rather than generating internal productive capacity. This narrative of dependence intensifies periodically through media spectacles during Chhath Puja and Holi, when overcrowded trains and inhumane return conditions dominate news coverage. COVID-19 intensified visibility exponentially, as photographs of labourers walking hundreds of kilometers back home or packed into special trains circulated constantly. These recurring images of distress have become iconic representations, overshadowing discussions of Bihari labour's actual contribution to national development.

Dr. Kumar forcefully argued against the impulse to "stop migration," contending that this narrative was historically inaccurate and analytically flawed. Migration is a fundamental human process documented throughout history. More developed societies experience higher migration rates, not lower, with the critical difference being that skilled professionals' movement is celebrated rather than stigmatized. The same fundamental process, people moving for opportunities, triggers policy demands to "stop migration" when involving poor people from Bihar. Migration reveals the underlying problems of lack of local productive employment, inadequate agricultural infrastructure, and an informal economy unable to absorb available labour. Creating local employment matters, but this goal should not be framed through the false premise that migration itself can be or should be eliminated.

Dr. Kumar proposed that discussions should focus on structuring migration to benefit migrants, families, and Bihar's image as a source state. Fundamental questions should be: How many migrate? What migration types occur - circular, seasonal, long-term, permanent? How many migrate internally within Bihar versus across state boundaries? For what work, under what circumstances, and to which destinations? What conditions do migrants face, and what protections exist for them?

To address these questions, Dr. Kumar provided a detailed critique of available data sources, the two largest official sources being the decennial Census and National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO). Census data from 2011 was increasingly dated, while NSSO's last dedicated migration round from 2007-08 was even older. The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) from 2020-21 captured only a specific COVID-19 moment, limiting general utility. The India Human Development Survey (IHDS), a collaborative effort between Council for Applied Economic Research (CAER) and University of Maryland, provided sample-based data but only from 2010-11.

The most significant recent source was Bihar's Caste Census conducted in 2022-23, operating differently from the national Census. While the national Census counts people at physical location and asks only two migration questions, Bihar's caste census enumerated households and collected information about members working elsewhere. This methodology captured migrants who had left the state through household-level information.

The key finding was striking: 63 lakh 85 thousand (6.385 million) migrants from Bihar, individuals whose permanent residence is Bihar but living outside for employment, representing 4.88 percent of Bihar's population. Within this, internal migration within Bihar represented only 25 percent, while interstate migration accounted for 71.7 percent, and 3.4 percent involved international migration. Among those migrating specifically for employment and livelihood reasons, the number was approximately 45 lakh 78 thousand (4.578 million).

Destination state data revealed patterns contrary to popular assumptions. Jharkhand received the largest share reflecting historical mining sector patterns. Delhi-NCT ranked second, West Bengal third. Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Haryana, Gujarat, and Punjab followed in lower percentages. Many destination states were themselves economically backward, raising questions about actual working conditions available to Bihari migrants.

Caste-wise migration data contradicted common assumptions. General category populations showed 10 percent migration rates, while Scheduled Castes showed 3.9 percent, Scheduled Tribes 4.8 percent, OBCs 5.4 percent, and EBCs 5.2 percent. Better-resourced, "upper" caste populations were proportionally more mobile, possibly because they possessed networks, capital, and information, navigating migration successfully. The poorest sections, despite greater distress, might lack resources required for survival migration.

Dr. Kumar acknowledged significant Caste Census limitations. The government had not released unit-level data, preventing detailed socio-economic analysis. The census could not distinguish between seasonal, long-term, and permanent migrants, nor provide occupational classifications. However, data confirmed that approximately 84 percent of Bihar's migrants concentrated in specific states, making focused policy intervention feasible.

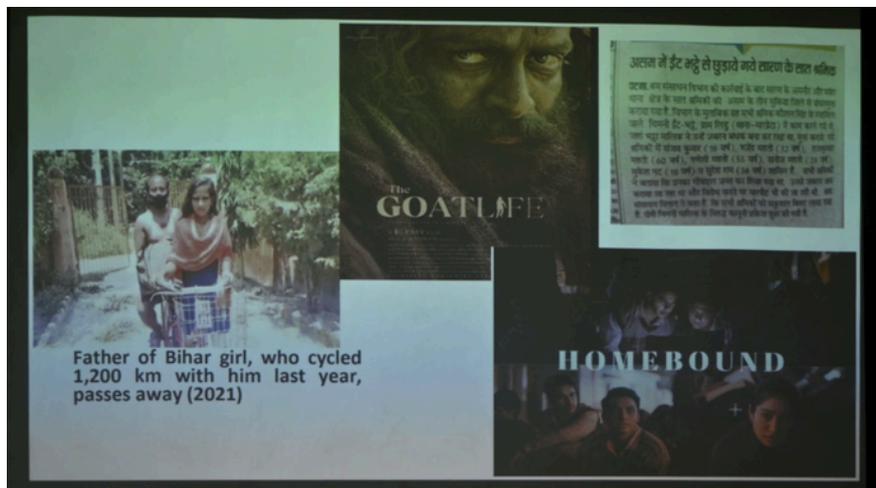
Dr. Kumar reframed migration as fundamentally a labour question. Approximately 4.5 million employment-related migrants meant migration policy could not be separate from labour policy. No large-scale representative study existed documenting state-wise informal sector composition, making it impossible to quantify Bihar's national informal workforce contribution. This data gap required urgent attention.

He then analyzed the Government of Bihar's post-COVID response. The state initiated registration through camp-based approaches, registering over 600,000 migrants through local employment officers' records by consultation time. However, Dr. Kumar criticized this as "very insufficient," noting migrant presence during camps was not guaranteed, making household-based registration problematic. The Bihar State Migrant Labour Accidental Scheme, the only dedicated migrant scheme since 2008, provided accidental death compensation (1 lakh rupees), permanent disability (75,000 rupees), temporary disability (37,000 rupees), rescue (2,500 rupees), and body repatriation support. While representing government commitment, Dr. Kumar noted it was neither recent nor comprehensive.

Beyond this scheme, Bihar relied on the National Workmen's Compensation Act (from 1922) and Bihar Skill Development Mission's certificate courses in Information Technology, Language Skills (German, Japanese, Spanish), and Soft Skills. Despite post-COVID skill mapping announcements, Dr. Kumar observed no visible coordination between intentions and implementation. Dr. Kumar concluded that recognizing the informal sector's massive economic contribution should lead to filling gaps between formal and informal worker welfare and rights. **This required universalizing social security - EPFO, EPF, ESI, to cover all workers, including self-employed, rather than restricting coverage to formal establishments.**

*Dr. Aviral Pandey - Distress vs. Aspiration; Rights and Vulnerabilities*

Prof. Aviral Pandey approached migration from a human rights perspective, moving beyond data to examine lived experiences and gaps between constitutional protections and ground realities. He grounded the discussion in contemporary representations of migrant worker suffering. The iconic image of Jyoti Paswan, a young Bihari woman bringing her father from Delhi by bicycle during the COVID-19 lockdown, visibilized the tragedy of forced migration, yet her story became newsworthy primarily because of the dramatic spectacle of her father's death, while deeper crises remained unexamined. Prof. Pandey cited recent films "Goat Life" and "Homebound" revisiting COVID-19 traumas as evidence. He saluted NGOs for consistent work highlighting migrant issues. His presentation aimed complementing data-driven approaches with qualitative dimensions often missing from policy discussions.



Prof. Pandey's core argument was that while the Indian Constitution and multiple labour laws ostensibly protect workers, these protections remained systematically violated in practice. Articles 14 (equality), 19(1)(c) (freedom of association), 21 (right to life with dignity), and 23 (prohibition of forced labour) provided constitutional protection. Directive Principles elaborated workers' rights to dignified employment and social security. Yet migrant workers faced systematic violations. They had no political representation at their destination and could not vote in local elections, preventing influence on labour standards. The Interstate Migrant Workmen Act, 1979, intended protectively, often transferred burdens to workers. Labour Inspectorates were severely understaffed, multiple languages created barriers, and denied welfare entitlements further compounded vulnerabilities.

Prof. Pandey presented preliminary research findings on Bihar's migration patterns revealing a "U-shaped pattern" across districts. High migration originated from poor, flood-prone, border districts including Araria, Kishanganj, Purnea, Katihar, and Kosi Belt. Developed urban centers like Patna, Muzaffarpur, Bhagalpur, Gaya, and Arrah showed low migration with better local opportunities. This spatial pattern strongly suggested migration was distress-driven, pushed by lack of local opportunities, rather than aspiration-driven where people are pulled toward attractive destinations.

Prof. Pandey emphasized gender dimensions often obscured in analysis. Male migration was predominantly employment-driven. Female migration was overwhelmingly marriage-driven, with women moving as family members through marriage rather than as independent economic actors. This pattern created critical gaps: women migrant workers often faced compounded vulnerabilities. They worked without explicit family approval, lacked information about rights and entitlements, and faced isolation in destination communities. Female migrants in the 15-19 age group showed particularly high migration rates, with child marriage and trafficking patterns overlapping substantially with seasonal migration.

Sectoral concentration revealed vulnerability: domestic work, textiles, brick kilns, transportation, and construction absorbed most Bihari migrants. Notably, brick kilns emerged as a major destination.

Prof. Pandey emphasized immediate policy needs. Flood protection in migration-prone districts was essential, yet water management and irrigation remained neglected. Rural industrial clusters near origin areas could provide local employment alternatives. Land reforms were crucial because most migrants were landless or marginal farmers. Skill development should be contextual and grounded in local opportunities rather than extractive. Bihar's urbanization should follow managed growth models. Crucially, entitlements, ration cards, education, should be portable across states, not tied to permanent residence. Interstate coordination on migrant worker welfare required institutionalizing information-sharing and joint planning between origin and destination states.

### *Dr. Ram B Bhagat - Migration, Mobility and Rights: A Place-Based Approach*

Prof. Ram B Bhagat began by asking what we mean by "migration" and "migrant." Understanding migration required grasping two interconnected concepts: mobility rights and migrant rights. Migrant rights, he argued, were specific expressions of broader mobility rights.

Prof. Bhagat traced the historical expansion of mobility rights through human civilization. Slavery represented complete denial of mobility. The British Empire abolished slavery in 1833. Indentured labour followed, still restricting mobility but less absolutely, and was abolished in 1921 following pressure from the Indian independence movement. The evolution from slavery to indentured labour to free labour represented expanding mobility rights across history. This was fundamentally about who could move and who remained confined.

He invoked Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's insight that migration, as a form of mobility, could undermine caste systems dependent on place-based hierarchy. When a person migrated from the village community where caste relationships were embedded, place-specific relations got disrupted. Gender illustrated this principle starkly, patriarchy operated through women's immobility: confined to homes, kitchens, unable to move freely. This entire architecture of oppression was fundamentally about restricting mobility.

Within the pre-modern caste system, different groups had different mobility. Priestly classes roamed conducting religious ceremonies. Trading communities conducted commerce. Warrior classes traveled and conquered. Labouring classes, "lower" castes, could not be mobile because they were tied to the land. Their immobility was structurally enforced.

What, then, is migration? Migration is a form of mobility involving residential change. The Income Tax Act, Representation of People Act, and labor laws and codes also incorporated residential change, which is tantamount to migration. However, the legal definitions of 'migrant worker' were exclusionary. The Interstate Migrant Workmen Act of 1979 required not just state crossing but also a minimum establishment size (five workers, now increased to ten). Small establishments employing migrants had no labour protections. Academics, by contrast, defined migration through residential change, where people were born versus where they currently resided, a more inclusive framework.



Theoretically, migration is a relationship between people and place. Home is not fixed at birthplace. Children born elsewhere had different homes than parents. Migration is inevitable, education prompted movement, marriage forced relocation, employment generated multiple migrations across lifespans. The Constitution recognized the right to move as a fundamental right. Yet this right has been complicated for migrants as migration is simultaneously a freedom-enhancing and bondage-creating act. Some migrants moved with resources and networks; others moved in desperation.

Internationally, mobility rights were profoundly unequal. Passports and visas, only a hundred years old, controlled mobility most severely for Africans and South Asians. Developed countries controlled their borders stringently while their own citizens moved freely. Conceivably, coming decades would not expand global mobility rights either.

Regarding Bihar, migration rate calculations required careful interpretation. Bihar's out-migration rate (out-migrants per 1000 population) has been actually lower than many developed states like Haryana, Goa, and Delhi. What distinguished Bihar is that not only out-migration rate is lower but also have low in-migration rates. Thus, the state has been a net out-migrating state in spite of lower out-migration rate compared to many developed states where out-migration rates are higher.

Seasonal migration involved circular movement maintaining origin as home. Illustrating this, hundreds of thousands traveled to Maharashtra's sugarcane cutting areas (October-March). Mill owners had established schools for migrant children earlier, but when the Right to Education Act was implemented, they closed these schools, declaring education is a state responsibility.

Prof. Bhagat identified epistemological gaps in migration theory. While academics invoked interdisciplinary approaches, knowledge production remained exclusionary. Migration theories are disconnected from political-economic theories. The fundamental problem: migration theory failed to integrate space and place as fundamental analytical categories. Even physics had integrated location through relativity, but social theory had not.

The problem is a methodological one. Generally social science addressed six questions: *What, Who, Why, How, When, and Where*. Contemporary analysis focused on five, while "Where" seems to be unimportant and absent. Contemporary obsession with identity, caste, religion, legal status, obscured the "where." This absence meant the dominance of people within specific places became invisible.

This epistemological gap translated into distorted public policies. Policies became person-focused or household-focused - distributing benefits to individuals or households while ignoring places. Swachh Bharat provided household toilets while villages lacked water supply and drainage system. When toilets went unused, officials blamed culture rather than addressing place-based infrastructure gaps.

For Bihar, Prof. Bhagat identified three imperatives. First, rename the Department of Labour to "Department of Non-Resident Affairs" following Kerala and Punjab models. Second, implement in-situ urbanization - providing urban amenities to rural areas, making staying viable. Cities historically resulted from rural-urban migration; Bihar could reverse this through place-based development. Third, strengthen local democracy through Panchayati Raj and decentralized planning. Without local democracy, planning cannot be people-centric; without planning, good governance is impossible.

In essence, mobility should be a choice rather than compulsion. When people have viable livelihoods in their origin areas, migration becomes a choice -"we want to stay, we stay; we prefer to migrate, we go." This is the right to move in true sense – a fundamental right bestowed by our Constitution. Forced migration driven by distress and desperation limits freedom and leads to bondage. True development enabled choosing whether to stay or migrate, based on choice rather than necessity.

## Session 1 Discussion Highlights

Pramod K Sharma (Centre DIRECT) presented ground-level migration tracking data from Gaya district using quarterly migration registers. He documented 46 child labour cases involving migrant households across 20 blocks of Gaya. Data showed 97 ward-level families (872 families total) migrating to destinations including Ballia, Mirzapur, Lucknow, Farrukhabad, Bareilly, and Aligarh with 610 males and 635 females. From border districts (Madhopur village, Medha Ganj), 144 persons migrated: 45 (January-March), 35 (April-June), 42 (July-September), and 26 (October-December).



Destinations were predominantly agricultural (98), factory (42), and hotel (4) work. Geographic concentration showed Punjab (90), Mumbai (22), Delhi (12), UP (1), and Pune (12). Most migrated alone (113), with friends (25), or relatives (6). Income ranged from Rs. 8,000-15,000 monthly. Return periods were 6 months (112), 8 months (23), with 9 family migrations and 135 individual migrations. A second ward in Belaganj (border area) showed 200 migrants with seasonal peaks in October-December (147 migrants). Here, 160 went to factories, 91 to Nepal, and incomes reached Rs. 12,000-15,000 for 151 workers. This ward-level data illustrated distress migration patterns driven by poverty with seasonal concentration.

Rakesh Kumar (Disability Rights Activist) raised a critical data gap concerning disabled workers. Disabled people migrated to call centers and work locations for 2-3 months but

their experiences and outcomes remained undocumented. He described Nalanda district's Naudriha village where approximately 16 migrant workers had gone blind. Government response blamed workers' voluntary movement rather than addressing exploitation. He emphasized that disabled workers remained completely invisible in migration data and policy despite significant numbers engaging in migration.



Vikas Gautam (Jan Sahas) highlighted critical implementation failures in migration registers mandated by government orders. Despite written notices requiring every panchayat to maintain migrant registers, even Block Development Officers (BDOs) in several districts lacked knowledge of implementation requirements. More critically, he described a case where a child from Jahanabad remained stuck in Delhi for three years after parents died. Despite rescue efforts, the family could not be located, the contractor withheld wages, and the police demanded bribes (Rs. 1,000 previously, demanding repayment for FIR filing). Multiple rescue operations from Delhi led the team to four additional children from the same location who returned to bonded labour. He requested civil society recognition as rescue teams with direct coordination mechanisms between origin and destination law enforcement.

Rohit Singh (ADITHI) raised critical data gaps, questioning whether the recent Socio-Economic and Caste Census data reflected actual migration, noting that many non-residents had settled permanently in other states but were still counted as migrants. More importantly, they emphasized that international migration from specific districts, particularly Katihar district, approached Kerala's levels but received no policy attention. He stressed that seasonal and trafficking data integration remained problematic: seasonal migration and trafficking overlapped but were tracked separately, requiring unified frameworks understanding post-migration and destination realities.

Chair Prof. Ravi Kumar synthesized the extensive discussion spanning data, epistemology, capital-labour relationships, and policy frameworks. He emphasized that while migration's inevitability should be acknowledged, this required understanding why migration became inevitable through capital-labour relations and structural inequality. He noted that the new Labour Codes represented capital's evolution in viewing and controlling labour since its 2008 crisis 2008.

Regarding Rakesh Kumar's question, Prof. Ravi noted that data on migrants with disabilities could theoretically be extracted from census records where disability is enumerated, but this

required explicit government effort. Census data existed but accessibility remained restricted. Regarding Vikas Gautam's comment on register implementation gap, Prof. Kumar acknowledged these were about ground-level implementation failures despite policy frameworks. Regarding international migration, he agreed it required greater analytical attention, particularly from districts like Katihar showing high international migration rates. He clarified that while displacement, trafficking, and forced migration were important, the consultation's focus remained labour migration, where drivers included not just poverty but also education - 1.2 million people passed secondary exams annually with no corresponding jobs, making migration aspiration-driven alongside distress-driven. The distinction mattered: aspirational migrants (now 65 percent of households in longitudinal studies) required different support than distressed migrants.

On definitional issues, Prof. Kumar emphasized the need for reconsideration. NSS categories like "less than one year" through "above 20 years" failed to capture seasonal migration's cyclical nature. Different surveys (Census, NSS) used different definitions, creating inconsistency. Seasonal migration particularly required redefinition to distinguish circular mobility from residential change. Academic training was essential for proper migration data interpretation, as untrained users made systematic analytical errors.

Finally, Prof. Kumar underscored that Bihar lacked any integrated migration policy despite long-standing assurances. Skill development schemes and accident grants existed, but no unified framework coordinated interventions. The 2015 central government 'Migrant Support Centers' framework remained largely unimplemented on ground, with unclear functionality across origin and destination locations. This absence of integrated policy architecture was the fundamental barrier preventing effective migrant protection.

## **B. Session 2: State and Civil Society Interventions to Secure the Rights of Migrant Workers from Bihar**

The second session focused on initiatives by state institutions and civil-society to address the issues of seasonal migrant workers, in order to identify practical strengths and gaps in existing schemes, laws, and organizing efforts.

**Chair:** Ajay Kumar, Trade Unionist

**Presenters:** Dr. G K Jha, Assistant Labour Commissioner, Department of Labour Resources, Government of Bihar; Shatrughan Das, ActionAid, Gaya, Bihar; Shaitan Regar, Rajasthan Pradesh Int Bhatta Majdur Union, Rajasthan; Johns Thomas, Progressive Workers Organization, Kerala

### ***Dr. G K Jha – Bihar Labour Department's Interventions for Migrant workers***

Dr. G K Jha, Assistant Labour Commissioner from the Department of Labour Resources, Government of Bihar, presented the state's institutional framework and policy initiatives for migrant worker support. He began by noting that renaming the department to include

"Migrant Workers Welfare" represented formal government commitment to address this constituency. The state had established a dedicated Migrant Cell in Patna with specialized positions including an Assistant Labour Commissioner dedicated to migrant issues, a Deputy Labour Commissioner, and a Labour Superintendent focused exclusively on migrant worker concerns.

The cornerstone of state intervention was the Bihar State Migrant Labour Accidental Scheme, which covered workers aged 18-65 in the unorganized sector. The scheme provided comprehensive accident-related compensation: accidental death compensation of Rs. 2 lakh, permanent disability benefits of Rs. 1 lakh, partial disability compensation of Rs. 50,000, rescue support of Rs. 2,500, and body repatriation assistance. The scheme operated fully online through the RTPS (Real-Time Public Services) portal, maintaining a 14-day application window, district-level verification procedures, and RTGS (Real-Time Gross Settlement) payment mechanisms for faster fund transfers. Dr. Jha acknowledged that while the government was considering increasing benefit amounts, current levels were recognized as insufficient for effective protection.



Dr. Jha announced the Bihar Pravasi Kamgar App (Migrant Worker Application), which had successfully mapped 6.5 lakh migrant workers with detailed information including names, skill sets, destination locations, and employment sectors. Public launch of this app was planned for the end of January 2026. The state operated a toll-free helpline numbered 1800-296-5656, functioning until 8 PM daily to address distress calls, wage disputes, child labour complaints, and inquiries about available schemes. The state had conducted multiple rescue operations, for example, coordinating the recent rescue of seven workers from Tinsukia in Assam and providing assistance to workers facing accidents or requiring overseas body repatriation support.

The state was establishing Industrial Training Institute (ITI)-based foreign language training programs in German and Japanese, recognizing that skill development in international languages could facilitate safer overseas migration. The government was also proposing an

'Overseas Placement Bureau' to function as a state recruiting agency, formalizing and regulating international migration pathways rather than leaving workers vulnerable to unscrupulous private agents. The new Labour Codes had expanded migrant worker definition through multiple entry points, whether workers were hired through contractors, employed directly, or joined establishments as self-employed individuals, with provisions now covering even establishments with a single worker.

In-state welfare provisions included Rs. 2 lakh accidental death compensation, Rs. 60,000 chronic disease benefits, and Rs. 10,000 education scholarships for migrant workers' children, all administered through the Labour Resources Department. These welfare provisions represented expanded protections beyond the accidental scheme, though Dr. Jha's presentation did not elaborate on accessibility or actual utilization rates of these schemes.

### *Shatrughan Das, ActionAid – Realities of Bonded Labour*

Shatrughan Das from ActionAid, Gaya, presented ground realities of bonded labour among Bihari migrants, revealing the mechanisms through which poor families became trapped in debt cycles. Landless and homeless families frequently borrowed Rs. 20-50,000 from kiln owners or contractors to cover immediate household expenses like weddings, illness, funeral rites for deceased family members. These loans, rather than being one-time transactions, became mechanisms for perpetual debt bondage. ActionAid had documented cases where families remained in bonded labour relationships for over 20 years, with further loans preventing any possibility of debt clearance. The lenders used various mechanisms like inflated interest rates, manipulation of accounts, and restricted mobility, to ensure that workers could never escape debt.

ActionAid had rescued bonded labourers in multiple locations including Aligarh, Mirzapur, Raiganj, and Siwan, but rescue operations were extremely dangerous. Owners and contractors often responded to rescue attempts with armed threats, attempting to prevent workers' departure. In the Hardoi case involving MLA-owned brick kilns, rescued workers faced ongoing threats from powerful owners. While the Domestic Major Sex Trafficking Surveillance Programme (DMSSP) enabled some rescues, rescued workers did not receive Release Certificates - official documentation of bonded status - which prevented them from accessing post-rescue rehabilitation schemes. This documentation gap deliberately blocked rehabilitation pathways.

Social activists conducting rescue work faced criminal charges. In Rajasthan, ActionAid had managed to rescue 4,065 Bihari child migrants and facilitate their return to Bihar, but the state's absorption capacity was minimal: government schools and Child Labour Tracking Systems (CLTS) registered only 100 children, while the remaining 3,965 re-migrated due to lack of local livelihood support for their families. Mr. Das emphasized the worsening pervasive atmosphere of intimidation toward social activists, with the latter themselves becoming targets of state action rather than partners in protection.

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### *Shaitan Regar, Rajasthan Pradesh Int Bhatta Majdur Union – Organizing Seasonal Migrant Brick Kiln Workers from Bihar in Rajasthan*

Shaitan Regar from Rajasthan Pradesh Int Bhatta Majdur Union (Rajasthan State Brick Kiln Workers Union) described the working conditions of Bihari migrants in Bhilwara's brick kilns. Workers – entire families, including children - from Bihar come seasonally to work in brick production, staying for eight-nine months during the production season. A strong nexus of contractors operated at source locations in Bihar, recruiting workers through advance payment mechanisms and false wage promises. Notably, the union had organized strikes demanding wage increments, and workers had achieved some success in securing wage increases through collective action. However, kiln owners maintained strong ties with local administration and police, using these connections to intimidate workers and prevent them from asserting their rights.

Labour law enforcement at brick kilns is virtually nonexistent. Despite laws protecting workers, owners violated provisions routinely without consequence. Complaints had been lodged against labour brokers (dalals), but police authorities took no action against them. The working conditions of brick kiln workers continued to remain grim, involving hazardous working conditions, wage deductions, and restricted freedom of movement. This description illustrated how, despite legal frameworks theoretically protecting workers, destination state administration failed to enforce protections, allowing systematic exploitation to continue with impunity.

### *Johns Thomas, Progressive Workers Organization, Kerala – Destination State Perspective*

Johns Thomas presented the perspective of Kerala as a receiving state for migrant workers, Kerala experienced both high out-migration to Gulf countries (particularly for skilled workers and international migration) and significant in-migration from northern Indian states seeking work. Recognizing the scale and vulnerability of migrant worker populations, Kerala had pioneered progressive policy: it was the first state to enact a Migrant Workers

Welfare Board in 2010 within the Building and Construction Workers Act framework. The state maintained additional welfare schemes for informal sector workers across various employment categories.

However, Johns observed that despite legislative frameworks, implementation of welfare schemes was "shoddy at best." Schemes existed on paper but failed in actual service delivery. Progressive Workers Organization found it necessary to conduct regular annual social audits of these schemes to assess their actual impact and identify implementation barriers. Such audits revealed significant gaps between policy intentions and ground-level reality. Despite these implementation challenges, Johns shared a positive example: a migrant girl from Bihar had been enrolled in the Roshani scheme, which provided education support for migrant workers' children. She had recently completed her studies with high grades and had published her story in Malayalam, demonstrating the transformative potential of effective welfare implementation. This example illustrated that when schemes were properly implemented with adequate resources and culturally sensitive service delivery, they could generate meaningful outcomes and empower migrant families.

Johns emphasized that remittance audits, examining income flows from overseas sources, should also be conducted regularly. Such audits could hold governments accountable for their spending commitments and ensure that promised welfare from remittance taxation actually reached intended beneficiaries. Without such accountability mechanisms, remittance-based welfare schemes remained largely symbolic.

## **Session 2 Discussion Highlights**

Senior trade unionist Ghazanfar Nawab raised a critical confusion about the new Labour Codes' treatment of migrants, noting that while codes claimed to expand coverage, structural thresholds still excluded most migrants. The key question was: if ESI registration occurs in small establishments, does the establishment become an "organized sector"? Dr. Jha clarified that establishment size threshold and migrant worker protection were distinct. While the organized sector is defined in codes only for establishments with 10+ workers, migrant worker benefits apply to all establishments regardless of size, even single-worker establishments qualify workers for migrant protections under Section 49. Mr. Nawab pressed further: if benefits are limited to interstate establishments (filtering by location), what practical protection reaches most migrants in small local worksites? This definitional gap between what the codes claimed and what structural thresholds actually delivered, remained unresolved.

A second query related to bonded labour prevention. Recognizing that bonded labour in brick kilns and agriculture remained endemic, he requested whether the government could conduct special campaigns and documentation drives (Aadhaar, ration cards) targeting workers heading to high-bondage sectors. Dr. Jha acknowledged that document creation was not the labour department's responsibility but fell to other departments, but committed the labour department's assistance in organizing camps facilitating access to these services. He

acknowledged the fundamental problem: bonded labourers often lacked basic documentation, creating barriers to rehabilitation post-rescue.

Another query was related to the Bihar Pravasi Kamgar App. Did the app draw on existing databases (child labour register, migration fund data, panchayat records, Caste Census, COVID-19 returnee registrations, Gulf country arrival data)? Dr. Jha explained the sources used: labour enforcement officers conducted camps in panchayats; existing panchayat registers were consulted; COVID-era registrations were included; e-Shram portal mappings were used. He acknowledged data collection was ongoing and the 6.5 lakh figure would certainly increase post-launch.

Another participant asked about pre-departure training for international migrants. No one responded directly, suggesting pre-departure training, despite being mentioned, had not been systematically implemented. Multiple participants raised the registration requirement problem: did migrants receive scheme benefits without registration? Dr. Jha clarified that migrant worker accident scheme benefits required registration, and unregistered workers had no access. Regarding national portals: state governments could not create national systems - this required central government action. States could only register workers through their own applications.

A participant asked the labour department whether it could coordinate with destination states on worker transportation arrangements and accommodation facilities. Dr. Jha noted that the central government occasionally arranged special trains for workers. Regarding journey allowance: the concept existed on paper but implementation was weak. Regarding accommodation: state coordination would require bilateral agreements, and no current mechanism existed. He suggested this was a matter for future policy decisions.

Multiple participants raised ground-level implementation failures. A Panchayati Raj representative noted that despite written orders mandating migrant registers in every panchayat, officers in several districts were unaware. Dr. Jha acknowledged registers were not universally available, which is why the online system was being developed.

Shri Ajay Kumar, while making the closing remarks from the Chair, revealed that while policy frameworks and schemes existed, implementation remained systematically weak. Corruption operated through officer-level collusion. Data was outdated and unreliable and inter-state coordination did not exist. Workers faced multiple barriers: documentation gaps, language barriers, lack of knowledge about entitlements, police corruption, and contractor and employer violence. The gap between policy intention and ground-level reality was vast and widening. No amount of registration could protect workers whose fundamental conditions - seasonal employment, wage theft, restricted mobility, living in exploitative environments, remained unchanged by formal recognition.

### C. Session 3: Child Trafficking and Labour Migration: Patterns, Risks, and Protection Mechanisms in Bihar

The third session aimed to foreground children within migration debates, treating seasonal migration explicitly as a child rights and protection issue and spelling out what systems are needed to keep children safe.

**Chair:** Pramod Kumar Sharma, Centre DIRECT

**Presenters:** Shri Rakesh Kumar Singh and Dr. Hulesh Manjhee, Members, Bihar State Commission for Protection of Child Rights; Dr. Aman Kumar, UNICEF; Adv. Sanju Singh, Nyay Network; Rohit Singh, ADITHI

#### *Adv. Sanju Singh, Nyay Network – Trafficking Patterns in Labour Migration*

Adv. Sanju Singh from Nyay Network began her presentation by defining child trafficking under the legal framework. Under Section 370 of the Criminal Amendment Act 2013, now codified as Section 143 in the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita, trafficking encompasses recruitment, transport, transfer, harbouring, and exploitation achieved through deception, force, or coercion. Forms of trafficking include bonded labour, commercial sexual exploitation, false marriage, forced begging, and forced labour to earn money or servitude. This legal definition was essential for understanding how trafficking operated across multiple forms.



Adv. Singh emphasized a critical insight: seasonal labour migration and forced migration were fundamentally two sides of the same coin. Both involved taking people to another location through deception, coercion, or coaxing. In any case of seasonal migration, determining whether it constituted trafficking required examining whether deception, force, or coercion had been used. This blurred boundary meant migration and trafficking could not be analyzed separately, since they were interconnected phenomena requiring integrated understanding.

Analyzing migration patterns in high-trafficking districts (Gaya, Nawada, Jahanabad, Nalanda), Sanju Singh explained contractor behavior. Contractors, whom she called traffickers, who previously focused on adult workers, now deliberately targeted households

with multiple children, recognizing that more children meant even cheaper labour. When families migrated seasonally for work, the children went with them. Children moved in sets, if a set completed work in Rajasthan's beedi factories, they moved to Bangalore's beedi factories. During productive months (October to May), parents worked while children circulated between worksites. Some children were accidentally rescued, abandoned by families, or lost contact for years, unable to return because they were moved between multiple sites and forgot their origins.

Social media played an increasingly critical role in trafficking. Adv. Singh challenged stereotypes about labourers lacking knowledge: today, even workers had Android phones and faced constant temptation through social media. Traffickers lured people with false promises like air travel, prestigious jobs, easy money etc. Faceless trafficking occurred through cyber grooming, with victims recruited through phones without ever meeting traffickers. Dropping out of school and identity loss were systematic consequences. Trafficked children created state-specific fake identification at destinations to legalize themselves, losing their original identities in the process.

Nyay Network had helped carry out around 200 rescue operations in Bihar across multiple trafficking forms: bonded labour, body/organ trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and forced labour. Their survivor network comprised 10-12,000 people, including 5,000 children. Of these, 3,000 were children trafficked or displaced with families into migration or distressed situations. Another 1,500-1,800 children had traveled alone as individuals through local traffickers, brokers, relatives, and agents. Adv. Sanju Singh acknowledged resource limitations prevented identifying all cases, but emphasized that if civil society, government, and commissions collaborated comprehensively, the scale would shock all stakeholders.

*Dr. Aman Kumar, State Consultant, UNICEF – Child Trafficking Data & Systems in Bihar*

Dr. Aman Kumar provided a systematic analysis of the status of child trafficking in Bihar and the state's institutional response. Bihar's demographic vulnerability was stark: children under 18 constituted 46 percent of the state's population, compared to 31 percent globally and 37 percent nationally. This concentration was growing, and by 2050, Bihar's child population would constitute an even larger share. Additionally, Bihar functioned as a source, destination, and transit state simultaneously. The porous nature of the Bihar-Nepal border enabled easy trafficking and migration, particularly of children.

Data on missing children revealed the scale of disappearance. In 2022, 76,608 children went missing nationally, with 37,937 remaining untraced. Cumulatively, 114,574 children had been reported missing in India through 2022, with only 74,107 recovered. As of 2022, 40,478 children remained missing. These figures represented documented cases; actual numbers were almost certainly higher.

School dropout was a gateway to trafficking and labour. According to UDISE data, in Bihar 25 of 100 children dropped out by class 8, 50 of 100 by class 10, and 75 of 100 by class 12.

Between 2020-24, approximately 65 lakh children dropped out nationally, with Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh showing highest rates. For child workers aged 5-14, census data from 2001-2011 showed Bihar among the highest, though comparisons across years required careful interpretation.

Trafficking hotspots in Bihar, as identified by NITI Aayog vulnerability assessments, included Gaya (most vulnerable), Sheikhpura, Nawada, Jamui, and border districts. Trends showed accelerating trafficking: 127 cases in 2018, 106 in 2019, 75 in 2020, 111 in 2021, 223 in 2022, and 260 in 2023. Crimes against children increased further in 2023, though separate trafficking disaggregation was pending.

Bihar's institutional response included 44 Anti-Human Trafficking Units: 38 in revenue districts, 2 in police structures, and 4 in railway departments. A state-level anti-human trafficking cell operated under the Social Welfare Directorate with state and district-level coordination committees under the Chief Secretary. Special courts conducted speedy trials, cases were filed online, and the Home Department mandated rapid processing. Special police officers (DCPUs) were nominated in all 38 districts, up from 22 in 2011-12. Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) existed in 38 districts, Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs) in 38 districts, and Childline operated in 22 districts. Government and NGO-run children's homes and short-stay homes existed across districts. Women Helpline 181 operated under the Women & Child Development Corporation (WCDC), providing immediate support.

The state's 2008 Anti-Trafficking Plan was being upgraded and moved toward cabinet approval, incorporating roles for all departments. A revised 2025 State Plan of Action, building on 2017 revision, incorporated multi-departmental roles with cabinet approval. Critically, Bihar's Child Labour Tracking System (CLTS), the only centralized system in India, tracked child labour movements, monitored rescues through WhatsApp, and generated district-wise data. Multi-department login credentials (DMs, CWCs, JJBs, Labour Department, Social Welfare) enabled real-time data sharing across departments. Data from rescues through October 2024-25 showed 97 children rescued in Patna, with district-wise variations. Different incentive schemes tracked, analyzed, and categorized best-performing and non-performing districts, enabling targeted direction from the Labour Department.

Regarding funds, the Nirbhaya Fund, created post-2012 with over Rs. 1,000 crore remained significantly unutilized nationally. The Supreme Court issued notices in 2016 questioning state utilization. Dr. Kumar emphasized this fund as an advocacy opportunity: civil society could mobilize unused resources for trafficking prevention.

The way forward required focusing on the "3 Ps": Prevention, Protection, and Prosecution through collaborative approaches. While migration could not be stopped, the 3 Ps framework, with sustained civil society and government collaboration, could substantially reduce trafficking.

*Shri Rakesh Kumar Singh, Member, Bihar State Commission for Protection of Child Rights – Field Experiences*

Rakesh Singh, Member, Bihar State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, grounded the discussion in field experience accumulated over eight years of commission work. He emphasized unequivocally that child trafficking and child labour were the "biggest crime," and traffickers were "anti-national" individuals destroying Bihar's and the nation's future. Bihar had the highest child population aged 5-14 in child labour, 40 percent, ranking third globally. Yet children were India's future; allowing their exploitation was civilization's failure.

National data showed alarm: every 8 minutes, one child was involved in trafficking (NCRB data). In 2023, 104,000 children went missing, with 49,000 remaining untraced. West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh reported over 10,000 cases respectively. The Nepal border districts - Araria, Kishanganj, Katihar, Purnia -were particularly vulnerable, with boys and girls disappearing and organ trafficking also documented in trafficking cases.

School realities revealed systemic neglect. In Banka district, a large school building housed only 10 students in class 10, yet the government maintained infrastructure worth tens of lakhs annually. When children asked where other students were, responses blamed fieldwork and labour, excuses masking failure to retain children in education. Government facilities existed - cycles, uniforms, incentive money - yet guardians, schools, and systems failed to ensure that children attended school. The Commission conducted site visits, issued notices, filed FIRs, and took actions against errant officers. Despite systemic constraints, the Commission had not given up. With political commitment, police support, and resource allocation, progress was possible.

*Dr. Hulesh Manjhee, Member, Bihar State Commission for Protection of Child Rights – Moral & Systemic Failures*

Dr. Hulesh Manjhee approached child trafficking from moral and systemic angles. Migration had dual dimensions: positive (Bihari workers built Delhi and Mumbai's economy) and problematic (workers faced violence, wage theft, exploitation). Yet the fundamental issue was moral: traffickers and exploitative employers "among us" drove trafficking.

Brick kiln owners exemplified this: they exploited entire families, formed gangs with trade route networks, and sold children into various forms of bondage. Dr. Manjhee advocated moral education from matriculation level onward, mass awareness campaigns, and social boycott of exploiters. Mass movements, foot marches, and public denunciation could transform "monstrous hearts" into human ones.

*Rohit Singh, ADITHI – Distress Migration & Bonded Labour Data*

Rohit Singh from ADITHI presented ground-level data on distress migration and bonded

labour, emphasizing interconnections with trafficking. Drivers of distress migration included limited local employment, agriculture dependence, climate disasters (floods, droughts), low and irregular wages, debt cycles, and seasonal demand in brick kilns, construction, and harvest.

Migration patterns showed entire families and groups migrating seasonally through agents and contractors. Advance payments forced migration, debts preceding migration became bondage mechanisms. Unsafe travel, inadequate food and accommodation, wage deductions, non-payment, and middlemen exploitation characterized migration experiences. Documentation gaps - lack of identity cards, bank accounts and written agreements - prevented labour protection.

Children dropped out during migration cycles, losing educational continuity. Women faced health and safety risks with minimal healthcare access. Wage cuts deepened poverty cycles. The scale of bonded labour remained understated. While 17,931 bonded labourers had been freed nationally and 1,159 in 2024-25, actual numbers were unknowable because the government did not acknowledge the existence of bonded labour.

### **Session 3 Floor Discussion Highlights**

Sister Saroj Lakra (Fakirana Sisters Society) raised a critical question about educational provisions for children of migrants, particularly those from marginalized communities. They asked whether special education facilities existed for children who had missed schooling due to migration or labour. They noted that government programs existed for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe children, and asked what could be done for migrant children and their educational reintegration, particularly for children who had studied only up to fifth or sixth grade but needed to reach matriculation.

Another participant questioned the adequacy of Right to Education (RTE) implementation in private schools. In response, Rakesh Singh from the Commission detailed their intervention: they had visited a prominent Patna private school claiming 6,000 admissions and found only 6 children admitted under RTE. The principal claimed RTE children "spoil school values." The Commission issued a notice demanding full documentation of RTE admissions from the school's inception. When the school apologized, the Commission rejected it, reaffirming that such apologies were insufficient without policy change.

A participant asked how the school-level data on dropouts, migrants, and vulnerable children could be documented systematically. They questioned whether district-wise, block-wise, and panchayat-wise data could be compiled and made visible through government portals and NCPCR coordination. The Commission emphasized that more data visibility would strengthen interventions: scattered, hidden problems needed to be brought to light through systematic documentation. They committed to documenting demands from the consultation and submitting them to the government for implementation.

Shri Pramod Kumar Sharma, as part of the closing remarks from the Chair emphasized that

trafficking and child labour prevention involved the "3 Ps": Prevention, Protection, and Prosecution. Civil society managed prevention work, the state handled protection, and advocates supported prosecution. However, all discussions "shot arrows in the dark", focusing only on rescue and repatriation while neglecting rehabilitation. The critical gap was that each department (Education, Labour, Social Welfare, Police) operated separate SOPs without integration. Notably, Bihar had first formulated the 2008 Astitva Guidelines that combined all the components that were later debated in Parliament's Trafficking in Persons Bill. The recommendation was that the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights and government should revive and enforce Astitva Guidelines, incorporating consultation recommendations into final policy frameworks.

#### **D. Session 4: Towards a Collective Roadmap for a Seasonal Migration Atlas and State–Level Interventions in Bihar**

The fourth session aimed to collective dialogue on building a, defining the Seasonal Migration Atlas, and charting next steps.

**Chair:** Prof. Himanshu, Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University

**Presenters:** Sudhir Katiyar, Centre for Labour Research and Action; Sourav Adhikari, Policy and Development Advisory Group (PDAG); Dr. Surya Bhushan, Development Management Institute (DMI); Dr. Vidyarthi Vikas, AN Sinha Institute of Social Studies; Dr. Ravi Kumar, South Asian University; Dr. Pushpendra Kumar

#### *Prof. Himanshu – Opening Remarks*

Prof. Himanshu opened the session by acknowledging that the consultation had generated rich discussions spanning from quantitative national data to epistemological questions about migration theory. He noted the need to now focus on building a collective roadmap and collaborative platforms to move forward on the Seasonal Migration Atlas initiative. He emphasized that the goal was not merely to document migration patterns but to translate research findings into actionable policy interventions and institutional change.

Kickstarting this discussion, he highlighted two important examples of state-level initiatives worth studying. Jharkhand, as an origin state, had undertaken a comprehensive state-wide migration survey over the past two to three years, combining data collection with proactive interventions. This approach demonstrated that migration research could go beyond academic exercises to support concrete welfare programs. Kerala, as a destination state, offered a contrasting model where it had reframed migrant workers as "guest workers" and developed a business model of welfare support that could be adapted in other contexts. Both examples provided valuable benchmarks for Bihar's approach.

On the immediate agenda, Prof. Himanshu shared that the NSSO was launching a new migration survey with updated concept notes and questionnaires. The official deadline for comments had passed on November 30, 2025, but organizations should still submit inputs

based on consultation discussions. Some recommendations from civil society had already been incorporated, for instance, the definition of seasonal migration had been revised from one month to 15 days, although proposals for a seven-day threshold had been rejected. A new module had been added to capture the problems that migrants face at their destination, addressing a previous gap in the survey design.

*Sudhir Katiyar, Centre for Labour Research and Action – Labour Organizing Imperative*

Sudhir Katiyar opened by reiterating a central thesis that had emerged throughout the consultation. The migrant labour issue is fundamentally a labour issue, not a separate category. He argued that migrant workers represent the most vulnerable segment within the broader informal and unorganized labour sector. This understanding was critical because it meant that the solutions to migrant workers' problems could not be isolated from broader labour struggles and the organized labour movement.

He emphasized that all major labour laws in history had emerged from sustained labour struggles and worker mobilization. The current period, however, witnessed a reversal where labour laws were being relaxed, inspection mechanisms weakened, and the distinction between organized and unorganized labour blurred to the disadvantage of workers. Providing concrete examples, he demonstrated that even among the most marginalized workers, organizing was possible and effective. He cited examples of brick kiln and sugarcane harvesting workers' strikes and that had succeeded in securing wage hikes. Mass labour strikes in the auto industry in Manesar, Gurgaon were another example of the impact of workers organizing in large numbers.

In the unique context of seasonal labour migration, Sudhir shared CLRA and partner organizations' efforts to organize workers in source areas. They had signed agreements with unions and farmer groups specifying that wages for migrant workers should increase. By stopping the outflow of workers from villages when demands were not met, they demonstrated that strategic leverage existed at the source itself. He concluded that without labour organizing at scale, neither better policies nor welfare programs would achieve their full potential. He went on to share core demands that had emerged from these grassroots organizing efforts, requesting that the assembly review and add to these demands, such that a concrete collective agenda could emerge from the day's discussions.

*Sourav Adhikari, Data Lead, Policy and Development Advisory Group – Lessons from Jharkhand Migration Survey 2023*

Sourav Adhikari presented key takeaways from the Jharkhand Migration Survey (JMS) 2023 for the stakeholders present; these could potentially inform the strategy and design of the Seasonal Migration Atlas of Bihar. The JMS was undertaken as part of Jharkhand Government's Safe and Responsible Migration Initiative (SRMI) in collaboration with civil society partners like PHIA Foundation and PDAG. In addition to conducting the JMS, the



SRMI aimed to protect migrant workers' rights through registration at both source and destination, a State Migrant Control Room (SMCR) for 24x7 grievance redressal, IEC campaigns and facilitation of access to social security and welfare benefits. The JMS was conducted across all 24 districts of Jharkhand, covering 10,674 households across 400 locations. Rather than relying solely on quantitative household surveys, Jharkhand's approach had been integrative, combining multiple research methods to capture both breadth and depth of migration phenomena.

The quantitative component involved household surveys gathering data on migration patterns, destinations, and socio-economic characteristics. The qualitative component included scoping studies to understand local context, focus group discussions in migration corridors to identify high-intensity migration routes, and life history interviews tracking individual and household migration trajectories across their life cycles. The research team also conducted key informant interviews with government officials and institutional actors to understand state perspectives and implementation capacity.

Sourav explained that the survey's objectives extended beyond simple enumeration. It sought to establish migrant estimates and socio-economic profiles disaggregated by caste and community, recognizing that tribal migrants, OBC migrants, and SC migrants faced distinct challenges. The survey examined whether migrants moved within Jharkhand, to other Indian states, or internationally, reflecting an understanding that different migration corridors had distinct characteristics. The research team investigated migration motives and drivers, as well as the means by which information about migration opportunities was transmitted (for example, through friends, institutional knowledge, or contractor networks). They also documented the sectors where migrants worked, with particular attention to how migration affected women's empowerment and economic agency.

The definition of 'migrants' used in the survey was carefully considered. Current migrants were defined as those who had been away for at least 30 days, even if they had recently returned home. Returned migrants were those who had no intention of migrating further in the foreseeable future. This approach avoided the problem of overcounting temporary or occasional movers, focusing instead on sustained out-migration patterns. Sourav noted that Jharkhand's partnership with Kerala through an MOU had enabled data-sharing protocols, and discussions with Dr. Irudaya Rajan -an expert in migration studies - ensured that Jharkhand's survey could benefit from Kerala's experience in migration research and policy.

### *Dr. Surya Bhushan, Development Management Institute – COVID-19 Returnee Data Analysis*

Dr. Surya Bhushan presented a succinct analysis of data on migrants who returned to Bihar during the nationwide COVID-19 lockdown and consequent mass reverse migration. His primary data source was Bihar Labour Department's 1.8 million returnee records from June 2020, which included information on skills, origins, and destinations. The state government had captured this data during the initial phases of the lockdown, offering a unique opportunity to understand the scale and composition of migrant worker populations in Bihar.

Given the diverse population and UNICEF's specific interest in vulnerable groups, Bhushan employed quota sampling, ensuring that 50 percent of respondents were women and that a separate analysis was conducted for the 14-18 age group. Beyond the government database, Bhushan's team successfully conducted telephonic surveys of 1,860 returnees (out of approximately 3,000 attempted contacts), using double randomization to ensure methodological rigour. The survey had been approved by an Institutional Review Board to ensure ethical integrity.

The survey findings revealed striking patterns about re-migration. Despite the rhetoric of "never going back" during the height of the pandemic, 80 percent of returnees had re-migrated within three months. Logistic regression analysis showed that long-term, high-asset migrants were unable to sustain themselves locally, suggesting that migration was driven by structural economic constraints rather than preference. A critical finding concerned child education. The returnees identified education portability as a major barrier - the lack of a unified system like APAAR ID meant that children struggled to continue schooling when families migrated intra-state, disrupting educational continuity for makhana (foxnut) farming families and others engaged in seasonal migration.

Dr. Bhushan's recommendations emphasized that skill mapping alone was insufficient for sustainable migration or local livelihood transitions. Returnees needed broader ecosystem support, including access to bank loans, which had been consistently refused to migrant families. Infrastructure for portability of ration entitlements and education access was essential. Without these systemic changes, individual skill training programs would prove insufficient to anchor workers to their origin communities.

*Dr. Vidyarthi Vikas, A N Sinha Institute of Social Studies – Origin-State Push Factors*

Dr. Vidyarthi Vikas presented findings from village studies conducted in 2015-17 and again in 2024, allowing for longitudinal comparison of migration patterns in Bihar's origin communities. His first case study was Darbhanga's Bahadurpur village, where nearly every household had sent at least one migrant after the post-paddy agricultural cycle. In the adjacent villages of Khajariya, Bighan, and Nausanananda, between three and four sons per household had migrated. The pattern was particularly acute among EBC, SC, and blind populations, indicating that vulnerability and marginalization were the primary drivers of migration.

Dr. Vikas identified the structural drivers of this distress migration. Bihar had long experienced jobless growth, with manufacturing employment declining by 30 percent between 2001 and 2020. This deindustrialization had eliminated local employment opportunities that might have retained workers in villages. Among those who remained, agriculture and landlessness defined the economic situation. Migrants typically came from landless families or those with holdings of approximately one acre, far below the threshold for subsistence farming. Agricultural productivity itself had declined due to irrigation failures whereby public tubewells had been systematically destroyed by landlords, preventing small farmers from accessing water for their fields.

Dr. Vikas presented a critical challenge to the official narrative of Bihar's economic growth. While the government's figures claimed double-digit growth rates, the state's per capita income remained among the lowest in India, and its share of national GDP had stagnated at around 3 percent. Data on micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) at block and district levels was not even available, suggesting that claims of growth rested on incomplete information or biased measurement. For a state to sustainably reduce migration, structural transformation was necessary, not just skill development, which often extracted workers from their communities without creating local alternatives.

Dr. Vikas went on to recommend a comprehensive approach to addressing migration drivers. Strengthening rural livelihoods required investment in irrigation infrastructure, agro-processing units, and non-farm enterprises. Education and health services needed expansion. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) and National Food Security Act (NFSA) required implementation with integrity, not just token launches. Land reforms, specifically the distribution of 10 decimals (4,356 sq. ft.) of land to each landless family, the enforcement of land ceilings, and the transfer of government land (*gair mazrua* and *bhudan* land) were essential structural interventions. Finally, the Interstate Migrant Workmen Act of 1979 needed revival and enforcement, particularly given how systematically it had been ignored during COVID-19.

*Dr. Ravi Kumar, South Asian University – Cultural & Holistic Perspective*

Dr. Ravi Kumar shifted the discussion toward understanding migration impacts holistically,

beyond labour market metrics. He emphasized that migration had both direct and indirect consequences that extended far beyond individual incomes. Direct impacts included remittances that households received, allowing investments in education, health, and housing. Indirect impacts were cultural and social - patterns of women's empowerment, educational aspirations, and social mobility that flowed from migration experiences.

Prof. Kumar highlighted Kerala as an instructive example. The state's trajectory of development had been shaped by migrant remittances flowing back from the Gulf countries. Workers' families had invested in education; women's participation in schooling and employment had increased; and the state's social fabric had been progressed toward greater gender equality. Bihar, with a significant population engaged in seasonal migration and growing international emigration, possessed similar potential. If migration revenues were systematized and directed toward collective welfare investments rather than individual consumption or trapped in unequal debt relations, migration could catalyze broader development.

Dr. Kumar raised a critical question about why COVID-19 returnees, despite their initial determination to remain in Bihar permanently, had re-migrated within months. The answer, he suggested, lay in the absence of both livelihood opportunities and the cultural environment that migrants valued. Many returnees, particularly women who had experienced relative freedom and agency at destination sites, preferred migration to remaining in rigidly patriarchal village settings. This pointed to a deeper issue that migration would not be reversed simply through local employment schemes. Community transformation toward greater openness, gender equality, and cultural dynamism was necessary to make staying in villages culturally and socially viable.

On welfare, Dr. Kumar invoked examples from Brazil and Kerala. Brazil had pioneered mobile schools that traveled with landless populations, ensuring that children's education continued despite geographical movement. Kerala had developed migrant worker housing programs that provided secure, dignified accommodation. He also raised the issue of anti-migrant discrimination and violent hate crimes in receiving states. In destination states, migrant workers often faced hostility from local working-class populations, particularly when language and regional identity differed. This fragmentation of the working class along linguistic and regional lines required systemic attention. Solutions could not be piecemeal; they required coordinated, holistic approaches involving both origin and destination state governments.

Addressing the plan for the Seasonal Migration Atlas, Dr. Ravi Kumar called for data collection that was qualitative as well as quantitative - understanding the psychological states of migrants, their housing conditions at the destination, and the extent to which education could remain portable across state boundaries.

### *Dr. Pushpendra Kumar – Macro-Environment Challenges*

Dr. Pushpendra Kumar emphasized the need to understand the structural macro-economic

context within which out-migration from Bihar occurred and within which solutions had to be crafted. He noted that the macro environment was fundamentally anti-poor and characterized by informalization. Self-employment had risen to 56 percent of the workforce, meaning that workers had no institutional relationship to claim benefits, rights, or protections. In Bihar specifically, the government claimed to have created one crore (10 million) jobs, but aggregate evidence suggested these were of poor quality, short-term, and inadequately remunerated. Migration impacts would remain limited as long as local employment remained informal and precarious.

Stressing the need for systemic labour market institutionalization, Dr. Pushpendra argued that the goal should be universal coverage of the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) and Employees' State Insurance (ESI) benefits to all workers, not just those in the formal sector. This would require recognizing these schemes as rights rather than employer-provided benefits. The government's emphasis on programmes like Ayushman Bharat (health insurance) were welcome, but insufficient. They created a facade of welfare while leaving the core challenges of income insecurity and livelihood precarity untouched.

Pension schemes for informal workers were grossly inadequate, providing only 3,000 rupees monthly after 42 years of contribution. This was neither a living wage nor a meaningful social security. Without comprehensive, universal institutionalization of labour protections, individual migration decisions and outcomes would remain vulnerable to market shocks and personal crises. Furthermore, instead of strengthening and expanding worker protections, the new Labour Codes being implemented in April 2026 were moving in the opposite direction - weakening inspection regimes, expanding fixed-term contracts, and narrowing the scope of existing legal protections. These macro-structural headwinds had to be acknowledged and addressed within any roadmap for migration improvements.

Dr. Pushpendra Kumar concluded that data, policy advocacy, and grassroots organizing had to operate simultaneously. The Seasonal Migration Atlas being discussed was valuable, but it would only translate into improvements if accompanied by legislative change, institutional transformation at both state and national levels, and sustained labour movement mobilization to secure and advance workers' rights.

#### **Session 4 Discussion Highlights**

A participant emphasized that the proposed manifesto lacked explicit demands on wage fixation mechanisms – that is, how wages are determined and enforced in labour markets. A recent study titled "400 Million Dreams" (Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, December 2024) based on railway, mobile, and bank transfer data suggests migration patterns are structurally changing. The upcoming 2027 census offers a critical opportunity to incorporate migration data. The census will be conducted in two phases: housing allocation from June-September 2026, followed by enumeration. Two specific housing frameworks require attention: employer-provided housing under labour law standards and social rental housing for urban areas. Digital platforms should also be leveraged for real-time migration data collection and welfare delivery.

Another participant questioned how a roadmap can favour migrant labour when the macro-environment is fundamentally pro-capital. In informal labour markets in urban centres like Patna, half of daily workers return home by noon without finding work. Wherever the government aligns with capital rather than labour, wage-fixation through market mechanisms inevitably depresses wages. Furthermore, local enterprises like tailoring shops and small grocers were closing down as e-commerce platforms displaced them. How can micro-enterprises for migrants be sustainable? The participant also highlighted the issue of regional wage differentials: migrant workers from Bihar typically survived on lower wages than local workers in destination states like Punjab, creating inevitable conflict between these groups that employers exploited.

Mina Jadav (Majdur Adhikar Manch) stressed that women migrating for work to sectors like brick kilns, construction, agriculture, remain invisible in policy and research. Studies show women perform significantly more work than men yet receive less recognition. Women face particular suffering because work intersects with reproductive labour and bodily vulnerability. A pregnant woman in construction or agricultural labour faces unimaginable conditions. Women also carry care burdens of water, sanitation and childcare. The participant emphasized that labour discourse remains epistemically masculine, with gender treated as an afterthought. Labour must be redefined to include women's unpaid reproductive work and specific vulnerabilities as migrant workers.

Another participant shared her observation that women employed in workplaces like construction sites carried the heaviest brick loads while wearing saris with children in their laps. Yet this reality disappears in labour statistics and policy frameworks. Throughout the consultation, she noted, gender was mentioned only as passing reference, not substantive analysis. This reflects deeper problems in knowledge production where the default subject is male. Women migrants face a double burden because they work while maintaining household responsibilities. A professional woman cannot work with her child in tow; yet migrant women are expected to do this. The roadmap must center women's lived realities, not treat gender as a secondary variable.

Dr. Himanshu acknowledged that when markets are informalized and supply exceeds demand, the strategic question becomes optimizing resources rather than awaiting market solutions. On gender, women's epistemological absence is legitimate criticism. Beyond women, the underage population (14-18 years) is substantial and largely unregulated, with skills exploited in unprotected occupations. This underage migrant population deserves specific policy attention.

The chair thanked all participants for enriching interdisciplinary discussion spanning data, policy, labour rights, gender, and structural economics. The first day of the consultation represented the beginning of the road towards a comprehensive Seasonal Migration Atlas of Bihar. The process will continue beyond this gathering through ongoing communication among participating stakeholders.

## 4. Day 2 Session Proceedings

12th December, 2025 | 10 AM to 5 PM

### A. Session 5: Panel Discussion on “Migrant Workers and the New Labour Codes”

The first panel discussion on the second day of the consultation aimed to critically interrogate the new labour codes through the lens of seasonal and circular labour migration, and examine how these legal changes may alter protections, bargaining power and social security.

**Moderator:** Dr. Anil Kumar Roy, Educationist

**Panelists:** Shri Ashok Khandelwal, Labour Researcher; Shri Ghazanfar Nawab, Trade Union Leader; MLC Shashi Yadav, Labour and Social Activist; Shri Arun Mishra, Trade Union Leader

#### *Ashok Khandelwal - Constitutional Dilution and Executive Overreach*

Shri Ashok Khandelwal opened by situating the four new Labour Codes - Code on Wages 2019, Industrial Relations Code 2020, Code on Social Security 2020, and Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code 2020 - within the Constitutional framework. Notified on November 21, 2025, these codes subsume 29 earlier labour laws but remain operationally incomplete. Rules are still being framed, and implementation is likely deferred to April 2026 or beyond, creating uncertainty about when protections will actually take effect.

Khandelwal's central argument concerned a fundamental shift of power from Parliament to the Executive. Earlier labour laws explicitly drew strength from constitutional guarantees — Articles 14, 19(1)(c), 21, 23, 246, and the Seventh Schedule - which protect equality, freedom of association, dignified life, and prohibition of forced labour. The new codes acknowledge these rights at the parent Act level but delegate crucial operational details - inspection powers, social security thresholds, conditions for layoffs - to rules framed by the executive. Regulations can be changed, suspended, or diluted through notifications without parliamentary scrutiny. This amounts to withdrawing parliamentary protection from workers' rights and placing them at executive discretion, a serious erosion of democratic safeguards.

Khandelwal emphasized that constitutional rights cannot be altered by executive order. Yet the new codes represent precisely this inversion: Parliament sets general principles, but the executive determines their scope through rules. Workers are thus left at the mercy of administrative discretion, with no legislative recourse once rules change. This represents a fundamental departure from the constitutional protection of labour rights that the framers intended.

## *Ghazanfar Nawab - Positive Language, Dangerous Architecture*

Shri Ghazanfar Nawab provided a detailed, clause-by-clause analysis of how the codes affect migrant workers, weighing stated positives against structural weaknesses. On the Code on Wages, he acknowledged two apparent positives: commitment to a national floor wage and restrictions on delayed wage payment and arbitrary deductions. However, the proposed floor of Rs. 178 per day is dangerously low - anchored in the poorest-paying regions rather than in Kerala, Delhi, or central government benchmarks. Such a floor legitimizes exploitation rather than raising standards.

Critically, Nawab highlighted the enforcement architecture's weakness. The traditional inspector is rebranded as a "facilitator," advising employers rather than conducting stringent inspections. Inspection capacity has already been curtailed across India. For migrant workers in the unorganized sector, a legal minimum wage without robust inspection is largely symbolic. Without enforcement, the wage floor becomes an aspirational promise rather than a binding obligation.

On the Industrial Relations Code, Nawab emphasized the expansion of fixed-term employment. Migrant and seasonal workers hired on short contracts have no right to retrenchment compensation when contracts end, even when the enterprise has continuous labour needs. This legalizes and deepens job insecurity precisely for workers most vulnerable to it. Additionally, the mandatory 14-day strike notice even for non-essential sectors tightens collective action capacity, restricting workers' most powerful tool for wage struggles.

In the Code on Social Security, Nawab drew attention to a critical contradiction: universalist rhetoric masks continued establishment thresholds of 10-20 workers for EPF and ESI schemes. Since most Bihari migrants work in small worksites through petty contractors, the majority remain outside these schemes. The gap between promises of portability and ground reality - low portal registration, complex procedures, contractor reluctance - leaves promises unfulfilled. Workers cannot access benefits across state boundaries where they migrate.

On Occupational Safety, while new language exists on housing, toilets, and safety standards for large construction projects, most Bihari migrants work on small sites where these provisions go unenforced. Without inspection and sanctions, protection remains aspirational. The Codes promise much but deliver little when implementation is weak.

## *MLC Shashi Yadav - Lived Realities: Women, Families, and Unrecognized Workers*

MLC Shashi Yadav grounded the discussion in lived experience. She highlighted that migration is not only interstate; extensive within-state migration of women - from rural districts to cities as domestic workers - shapes Bihar's urban economy, yet remains unrecognized in policy debates.

Critically, when male workers migrate outward, families left behind face acute insecurity. She

recounted a case from Madhubani where a three-year-old from a migrant family was killed; the family received minimal state attention. Such incidents underline the absence of protective frameworks for those remaining in villages while earning members migrate.

Yadav was sharp on compensation gaps. A young worker from Darbhanga who died in Telangana left a blind father and elderly mother struggling to secure compensation theoretically available. Bereaved families must produce impossible-to-obtain documents, leaving most with no relief at all. Even when Bihar schemes offer Rs. 4 lakh, migrants often qualify for only Rs. 2 lakh.

She broadened the lens to unorganised women workers - ASHA, Anganwadi, Midday Meal workers - are treated as "volunteers" rather than workers. The Codes fail to correct this structural denial. If Bihar's GDP grows through migrant labour, including unrecognized women workers, this contribution must be reflected in law. She called for a state-level migrant worker law with higher compensation, dedicated offices in destination states, and provisions for migrants' families and children.



### *Arun Mishra – Class Power and Trade Union Strategy*

Shri Arun Mishra situated the Codes within liberalization and financial capitalism's broader project. The Prime Minister's statement that "the government's job is not to do business" signals the state's withdrawal from guaranteeing social rights, instead creating favourable conditions for capital. The Labour Codes are the "second reform": after opening the economy, the state now strips away "cumbersome" protective laws.

The Codes recast work as workers' duty rather than a site of rights, erasing class interests and

conflict. This is class offensive by capital using law to deepen control in the 21st century. Trade union inputs were largely ignored during drafting.

Mishra insisted there is no middle ground: either workers accept this regime or organize to resist. The only realistic response is the working class rejecting the Codes wholesale and waging a sustained struggle for labour rights.

He reflected on the changing terrain of union work. Traditional methods (factory gates, concentrated workforces) are ineffective amid dispersed production, subcontracting, and an enormous unorganised sector. Unions must now reach workers where they live, not only workplaces; organize unorganised and migrant workers, now the bulk of the working class; and link origin and destination sites, supporting workers at both ends. He closed by invoking a butcher reassuring sheep that only "bad" sheep are slaughtered, a metaphor for normalizing exploitation while promising "good" workers safety. The key question: which side are we on - capital or labour?

### **Floor Interventions**

A participant described the prevalence of high mobility among the state's transgender community for survival, and asked the panel: what protections exist for transgender workers? The panelists acknowledged that no explicit safeguards or anti-discrimination provisions exist; targeted legal measures are urgently needed.

A child rights advocate highlighted contradiction: the Industrial Relations Code allows persons over 14 as union members, while child rights policy defines children as under 18 and Right to Education mandates schooling to 14. This effectively legitimizes children aged 14-18 as workers, demanding urgent harmonization of child rights laws.

Dr. Roy noted that the session moved from black-letter law to the everyday realities of migrants, women, and transgender workers. Any serious engagement with the Labour Codes must begin from lived experience, not official claims of "simplification."

## B. Session 6: Panel Discussion on “Culture and Migration”

The sixth session aimed to bring culture into the core of the discussion, showing that any serious response to migration must account for how it is experienced and expressed in popular culture – including through folk music, theatre, visual art and narrative.

**Moderator:** Shri Jayprakash, Cultural Activist

**Panelists:** Shri Anish Ankur, Cultural Activist; Shri Ashok Kumar Sinha, Addl. Director, Bihar Museum; Shri Vinay Kumar, Addl. Secretary, Bhavan Nirman Vibhag-cum-Director Bapu Tower

Session 6 focused on culture, art and migration, with the conversation deliberately structured as an open dialogue rather than formal presentations. Vinay Kumar, Ashok Kumar Sinha, Jayprakash and Anish Ankur moved repeatedly between folk songs, theatre, visual art, cinema and lived experience, trying to understand how migration, within and from Bihar enters the emotional world and cultural imagination. The moderator opened by explicitly noting the contrast with the first day of the consultation, where data and statistics dominated; this session, by design, enquired how migration appears in feelings, metaphors and stories.

Picking up that cue, Anish Ankur went first into the history of indentured migration from Bhojpur and Saran. He stressed that the official story of “voluntary economic migration” hides a long record of fraud and coercion. Drawing on Bhagat Ram’s autobiography and the intervention by Bal Gangadhar Tilak in the Imperial Legislative Assembly, he argued that recruiters tricked villagers with promises and deceit, and people were taken “*latakā ke*” rather than going by informed choice. In folk expressions, this appears with remarkable clarity: in the celebrated song “*Railiyā bairan piya ko liye jāy,*” the train is the enemy who carries away the beloved, and the lines move from fires in distant cities to the idea that neither ships nor trains nor masters are inherently enemies, but money is. For Anish, this moment in the song marks the shift from barter to cash as the centre of life, and it is money that drags people abroad. He mapped similar themes in Bhikhari Thakur’s plays such as “Bidesiya” and “Gabar Ghichor,” where the husband departs, the wife waits and eventually faces sexual vulnerability, social suspicion and a crisis when the man returns and questions the child’s paternity. The narrative he recalled, in which the wife’s lover insists “whose foolishness is it, yours or mine?” and compares the woman to a purse found and filled with money, exposes the moral and emotional wreckage that migration creates in households. In Anish’s view, official histories and economic analyses barely scratch this terrain, whereas Bhojpuri autobiographies, Dalit epics and women’s songs document it minutely.

From there the discussion moved to the visual field. Responding to a prompt about how migration appears in painting and folk art, Ashok Kumar Sinha said that migration means being cut off from one’s roots, traditions and culture, but migrants always carry a “potli” of memory with them. Whatever they establish in new places is built partly out of what they recall. He cited Manjusha art and the story of Bimala-Bisar, where the heroine journeys to Indra’s court and brings her husband back through ritual paintings on the riverbank, as a

narrative with migration at its core. In Mithila art, he noted, much of the output is on collective themes, gods, rituals, marriage, but many artists carry their village landscapes, wells, ghats and crises into those images. He described how largely non-literate women artists, like the well-known Bahua Devi, have responded not only to local events but also to global shocks. After the World Trade Center attacks, Bahua Devi, working in rural Bihar without television, created a painting in which a massive serpent wept over a burning earth, an image that he read as an intuitive response to a distant catastrophe using the same visual language of threat and cosmic imbalance that earlier generations used for local upheavals, including forced movement. In his view, whether in Mithila, Manjusha or other Bihari folk styles, migration and separation sit just below the surface as part of a broader repertoire of crisis, danger and return.

Ashok Sinha then shifted outward, recounting a visit by a Bihar cultural delegation to Mauritius. The first place they were taken was the immigration ghat where ships from Bhojpur and Saran first landed. There, he said, the material culture of the ancestors, cooking, dress, rituals, is carefully displayed, and current leaders still describe visiting Bihari artists as guests from “the land of our forebears.” He narrated how the President of Mauritius rose from his chair, refused to have artists called to him, and instead walked over to touch the feet of an elderly Mithila painter, saying that honouring an artist from Bihar was an honour to his own ancestors. He also recalled the deeply emotional scene of visiting his own ancestral village, looking for his grandfather’s well and staring at his name on the plaque. Bhojpuri in Mauritius has largely blended into a Creole language formed by French and Bhojpuri. While some village women could still sing old Bhojpuri songs, most people he encountered spoke Creole and described that as the common tongue, illustrating how migrant cultures hybridize over generations even as they continue to revere the homeland.

Vinay Kumar picked up this double-edged theme of loss and benefit in the context of contemporary fine art. He noted that global debates on migration are not only about suffering; the United States is unintelligible without migration, and at a planetary level, mobility has also meant cross-fertilization of techniques and ideas. At the same time, he argued that visual art has handled different migrations unevenly. Partition and displacement from what is now Bangladesh appear powerfully in the work of some Bengal-origin painters, who depicted refugees sleeping under open skies, clustered at stations, and reconstructing life in Kolkata. By contrast, he found relatively little in post-Partition Punjab’s paintings that grapples directly with that trauma, even though literature and theatre from Punjab have dealt with it strongly. Turning to Bihar, he emphasized that the centres of contemporary art, that is, Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Kochi, have drawn many Bihari artists out of the state, and that their work shows displacement very clearly. Artists from villages and small towns who settle in these metros repeatedly paint roads, drains, neighbourhood rituals, their mothers’ kitchens and village pathways, often overlaid with the visual clutter of the new city, as if holding both spaces in the same frame.

The speakers referred to Subodh Gupta’s installations with aluminium utensils, milk cans, tiffins, loaded scooters, black taxis and suitcases. Vinay and Ashok both argued that far from being random “objects,” these are recognizable migrant inventories: pots and pans bundled

for departure, carriers that move people from stations to work sites, and everyday items that signal not only Indian kitchens but specifically the poor and lower-middle class worlds from which many migrants depart. They also mentioned his self-portrait, “I am Bihari,” and his large-scale works with Rajdhani Express imagery. For them, Gupta’s life - leaving Khagaul, struggling in Delhi, becoming internationally celebrated while insistently invoking Bihar - is a clear example of how migration can expand opportunity while leaving the work permanently haunted by memory, separation and class identity.

At this point, the discussion looped back to folk performance and to culture as a survival resource rather than an artistic luxury. One of the panelists recounted what Mauritian elders had told them: after long days of plantation labour their ancestors survived psychologically by reciting the Ramayana, singing Holi and Kajri songs, and replaying village rituals at night. These were not simply religious texts or entertainment; they were tools for staying sane and together and sometimes for resisting domination. Vinay added that when culture is reduced to a decorative segment in policy, its function for migrants is misunderstood. For workers far from home, songs, stories, paintings and rituals are forms of self-defense, ways of asserting that “we are from somewhere” in the face of anonymity and contempt.

From here, the conversation sharpened around the present and around stigma. Responding to a question about Biharis being abused as labourers in cities but brought back in an organised fashion to vote, Jayprakash and Anish argued that anti-Bihari sentiment has deep structural roots. They located Bihar as a historic centre of challenges to hierarchical power: from the Buddha’s questioning of ritual orthodoxy in Magadh to 1857, peasant insurgencies and left movements. This history, they suggested, has produced a politically aware populace but an economically impoverished state, where capital has been reluctant to invest and where out-migration fills labour needs elsewhere. Cinema and television have reinforced this by repeatedly typifying the Bihari as servant, thief, buffoon or goonda; they recalled one director explicitly saying that he did not make films for Bihar or UP audiences. In such a context, they argued, the Bihari migrant is desired as cheap, compliant labour but despised as a citizen.



They linked this with cultural policy in the state itself. On occasions like Bihar Diwas, they observed, the government routinely spends huge sums to bring in Mumbai-based stars for one-night performances, while local artists who have kept folk, theatre and classical traditions alive are underpaid and poorly treated. This is not an innocent choice: high-fee shows provide scope for patronage, whereas serious, sustained support to local cultural workers would build a rooted, critical culture that might question power. From their standpoint, the neglect of local artists and the glorification of external performers replicate the same hierarchy that treats Bihari migrants as disposable.

Gender and generation surfaced again and again as central axes of impact. The panelists noted that most classical Bhojpuri folk songs of migration and separation - grinding-songs, Sohar, Vivaah and Chaita, are sung in women's voices. Women describe nights that lengthen like "black cobras" when husbands migrate, months of waiting through the agricultural calendar, and the constant anxiety of sending sons and husbands away. One speaker remarked that in today's weddings in Patna and other cities, younger urban women often do not know the songs; families bring in village women to perform them, or the songs disappear altogether, especially in upwardly mobile households where English is privileged and Bhojpuri is mocked. At the other end of the life cycle, elders are caught in conflicts between village and apartment life. As children settle in cities, they often pressure parents to sell ancestral land and move into flats; parents resist, and quarrels, abuse and even eviction of mothers and fathers are increasingly visible. These fractures, the panelists insisted, are part of the real, contemporary story of migration and cannot be dismissed as "side effects."

Vinay also raised the issue of disappearing artists. He recalled encountering gifted village actors and singers in Patna whose art had withered because they had to migrate for wages. In his words, they might have been excellent actors or musicians, but the compulsion to work as casual labourers destroyed their practice, and there was no institutional support to help them stay with art. This led him to question why the "system" - academies, cultural departments, television, cinema - has not seriously tried to document and sustain these forms before their bearers vanish into construction sites, hotels, or brick kilns. He contrasted this neglect with the way mainstream Hindi cinema, in its early decades, benefitted precisely from migrations of artists from different regions, whose local idioms enriched songs and acting; today, he suggested, the industry feels stylistically flattened, repeating the same acting and music formulas, in part because this older flow of diverse folk material into film has dried up.

The conversation also touched explicitly on caste within migrant and artistic communities. The panelists mentioned Dalit folk epics such as Reshma Chauharmal, Dina Bhadri and Sati Behula, and spoke of how performers of these narratives have faced caste violence and are now disappearing from village life under economic and social pressure. One anecdote described a Musahar actor playing Reshma, who drank heavily before performances and added gestures that made upper-caste organisers uncomfortable, saying he was "full of rage" and this was his way of acting it out. The panel linked this to the way some non-resident funders from dominant castes react when films or research centre Dalit perspectives on Mithila or Bhojpuri migration: support is sometimes withdrawn when hierarchies are questioned. They suggested that any honest cultural politics of migration must account for

these internal power relations, not assume a homogeneous Bihari subject.



Audience questions at the end pushed the panel further on two fronts: first, on whether state institutions are doing enough to make cultural spaces accessible to disabled artists and other marginalized practitioners, who often face a double exclusion through both migration-induced loss and physical or social barriers; and second, on whether it is possible to build programmes that keep at least some young artists rooted in Bihar rather than seeing serious art as impossible without moving to metros. Panelists acknowledged these gaps frankly, noting that while there are isolated initiatives, there is no coherent state-level strategy that links migration policy, labour rights and cultural policy.

The session closed with a broad consensus on a few core points. Migration from and within Bihar cannot be understood only through numbers, remittances and labour codes; it is also a vast archive of songs, plays, paintings, idioms and memories in which pain, humour, hope, anger and aspiration are all present. Official data rarely registers this emotional and cultural dimension, focusing instead on how many leave or return. Yet for migrants themselves, culture is both record and resource: it stores what has been lost and offers tools for enduring the present. If policy discussions on seasonal labour migration remain deaf to this dimension and keep culture as a decorative afterthought, they will miss a crucial part of how people actually live migration. For that reason, the panel suggested, any serious roadmap for addressing migration from Bihar has to work with artists, folk performers, writers and cultural organizers as central partners, not peripheral invitees.

## 5. Addressing the Needs of Seasonal Migrant Workers from Bihar - A Manifesto

*As Decided by Consultation Stakeholders on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2025*

Seasonal migration is a major source of livelihood for a large number of households in Bihar. One estimate shows that more than 63 lakh workers had migrated for livelihood out of which 71.7 percent constituted inter-state migrants, 25 percent intra state migrants and 3.4 percent outside the country. This is also likely an underestimate. The contribution of this large workforce to the economy cannot be overlooked. A large number of these workers work under very unsafe conditions. There is an urgent need to safeguard the interest of this large workforce.

This house, instead of joining the clamour for preventing or reducing migration, calls for formulating a set of core demands to protect and expand workers' rights and building strong advocacy around them, organizing workers – including migrant workers in the unorganized sector – and resisting the state's efforts to disempower labour in the name of ease of business, attracting investments, and creating a conducive climate for the growth of secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy. This house puts forth the following demands:

- There is an urgent need to collect data on migration in, within, and out of Bihar that can inform the formulation of a labour-friendly migration policy. This should involve specific enquiries into key migrant destinations to gain a comprehensive overview of migration, understand migrant household socioeconomic profiles, and link source and destination areas. Digital platforms should be leveraged for data collection on seasonal migration.
- As the majority of migrant workers work in the informal sector, there is an urgent need to move towards the formalization of the workforce, which is one of the objectives behind promulgation of the new Labour Codes. This involves regulation of wages, universalization of EPF and ESI for the entire workforce (including self-employed workers), and other measures to narrow the gap between formal and informal employment, ensuring decent work conditions. The fixation of a minimum wage in keeping with the accepted principles and moving towards a living wage is crucial for the welfare of migrant workers.
- Given all the evidence of rampant violations of labour rights in the informal sector, there is urgent need to set up a strong mechanism for grievance redressal to address issues such as wage theft, occupational safety, compensation, harassment, discrimination, forced labour, and forced casualization.
- Housing is a major need for seasonally migrant workers as evidenced by the large scale during the COVID lock down. There is need to take steps to ensure an inclusive living space that ensures a basic level of decent living, encompassing housing, water supply, sa-

-nitiation, environmental hygiene, and the integration of migrant workers into local services, such as health services and housing schemes. The guidelines framed for the Affordable Rental Housing Complex (ARHC) scheme should ensure inclusion of seasonal migrant workers, who were the key target group while framing the scheme. Rules related to the provision of housing by employers should be strengthened in the new labour law regime.

- A large number of workers are recruited through labour contractors who remain completely unregulated. There is need to promote Wage Labour Exchanges that can serve as transparent wage labour market creating a direct interface between workers and employers.
- Seasonally migrant workers lose access to their basic entitlements like health and education. There is need to ensure portability of entitlements under social security schemes and publicly provided services as has been done in the Public Distribution System.
- Women workers migrate along with men in many migration streams, like brick kilns and agriculture. However, their labour, both paid and unpaid, largely remains invisible. Labour laws must be redefined to include women's unpaid reproductive work and address the specific vulnerabilities of migrant women workers.

## Appendix

### List of Consultation Stakeholders Present on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2025

SN	Name	Affiliation	Location
1	Aditya	Jan Jagran Sansthan	Patna
2	Ajay Kumar	AITUC Bihar	Patna
3	Ajay Kumar	AKKS	Patna
4	Akshay Kumar	Loktantra Raksha Abhiyan	Patna
5	Anil Kumar	Joint Action Networking	Nalanda
6	Anil Kumar Roy	RTE Forum Bihar	Patna
7	Anish Ankur	Progressive Writers' Association; All India Peace & Solidarity Organization	Patna
8	Ankita Bhushan	Centre DIRECT	Patna
9	Arun Kumar Mishra	CITU Bihar	Patna
10	Arvind Raj	Independent	Patna
11	Arvind Raj	Social Activist	Patna
12	Ashok Khandelwal	Independent Researcher	Delhi / Jaipur
13	Aviral Pandey	Patna University	Patna
14	Bharat Kaushik	Social Activist	Patna
15	Bhim PS Raj	Independent	Patna
16	Bihari Sharan Vyas	Centre for Labour Research and Action	Udaipur
17	Birendra Singh	Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung South Asia	Delhi
18	Chandra Bhushan	Abhiman Abhiyan	Patna
19	Dr. Aman Kumar	UNICEF	Patna
20	Dr. Hulesh Manjhee	State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Bihar	Patna
21	Dr. Rizwanur Rahman	Tatvasi Samaj Nyas	Purnia
22	Dr. Vidyarthi Vikas	AN Sinha Institute of Social Studies	Patna
23	Gajendra Sharma	Progressive Writers' Association	Arwal
24	Ganesh Kumar Jha	Labour Resources Department, Government of Bihar	Patna
25	Ghazanfar Nawab	AITUC Bihar	Patna
26	Gyan Kumar	AN Sinha Institute of Social Studies	Patna
27	Himanshu	Jawaharlal National University	Delhi
28	Hitendra Rathod	Majdur Adhikar Manch	Ahmedabad
29	Jayprakash	Abhiyaan	Patna
30	Johns Thomas	Progressive Workers Organization	Kerala
31	Kshitij Raja	Indian Institute of Foreign Trade	Delhi
32	M. Chatterjee	Revue Art Collective	Delhi
33	Manoj Kumar	International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas - ICARDA	Patna
34	Md. Kalam Ansari	Fakirana Sisters' Society	Bettiah
35	Mina Jadav	Majdur Adhikar Manch	Ahmedabad
36	Mohd. Manjur Mansur	Independent; Worker	Bhagalpur

37	Mokhtarul Haque	Bachpan Bachao Andolan – BBA Bihar	Patna
38	Nawlesh Kumar Singh	Campaign Against Child Labour – CACL Bihar	Patna
39	Pankaj Shwetabh	ActionAid	Patna
40	Pinki Kumari	Munger University, Pink's Welfare Trust	Munger
41	PK Sharma	Centre DIRECT	Patna
42	Pooja Meghwal	Centre for Labour Research and Action	Bhilwara
43	Pradeep Kumar	Sarva Seva Sansthan	Patna
44	Pranjali Tripathi	Centre for Labour Research and Action	Delhi
45	Pushkar Jha	Centre for Labour Research and Action	Patna
46	Pushpendra Kumar	Tata Institute of Social Sciences	Patna
47	Ragini Kumar	Institute for Developmental Education and Action	East Champanan
48	Raj Kumar Shahi	Kedar Das Institute of Labour and Social Studies	Patna
49	Raja Reeshav Roy	Lawyer	Patna
50	Rajeev Kamal	AN Sinha Institute of Social Studies	Patna
51	Rajesh Kumar	Independent	Patna
52	Rajiv Kumar	Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung South Asia	Delhi
53	Rakesh Kumar	Bihar Vikalang Adhikar Manch	Patna
54	Rakesh Kumar Singh	State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Bihar	Patna
55	Ram B. Bhagat	International Institute for Population Sciences	Mumbai
56	Rama Paul	Delhi University	Delhi
57	Ravi Kumar	South Asian University	Delhi
58	Ravi Ranjan Kumar	Jeevan Jyoti Educational and Welfare Society	Patna
59	Rohit Singh	ADITHI	Siwan
60	S. Ranjan	Patna University	Patna
61	Sajan Kumar	Manav Vikas Sansthan Khairi	Madhubani
62	Sambhar Gupta	Nyay Network Bihar	Patna
63	Sanjay Kumar	Patna University	Patna
64	Sanju Singh	Nyay Network Bihar	Patna
65	Satyendra Kumar	Social Activist	Patna
66	Shahid Rafi	AKKS	Patna
67	Shaitan Regar	Rajasthan Pradesh Int Bhatta Majdur Union	Bhilwara
68	Shashi Yadav	MLC, Bihar Legislative Council; All India Scheme Workers' Federation	Patna
69	Shatrughan Das	ActionAid	Gaya
70	Sonali Kumar	Independent	Patna
71	Sourav Adhikari	Policy & Development Advisory Group	Delhi
72	Sr. Saroj Lakra	Fakirana Sisters' Society	Bettiah
73	Sreejata Roy	Revue Art Collective	Delhi
74	Sudhir Kumar Katiyar	Centre for Labour Research and Action	Udaipur

75	Sunil Kumar	State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Bihar	Patna
76	Sunil Kumar Sharma	Nirman Kamgar Federation	Patna
77	Tarakant Rishi	Patna High Court; Nyay Network Bihar	Patna
78	Vikas Kumar Gautam	Jan Sahas	Gaya
79	Vishwajeet Kumar	AITUC Bihar	Patna
80	YK Gautam	Jan Jagran Sansthan	Patna
81	Yusha	Independent Journalist	Patna



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**(CLRA)** works to protect and promote the rights of migrant workers in India's vast informal economy. Having worked with some of the most marginalized communities in the country for close to two decades, CLRA remains committed towards realizing a future where every worker is recognized, valued, and able to lead a life of dignity, equity, and justice. To achieve this vision, CLRA has over time evolved an effective paradigm that rests on four pillars: building worker power, undertaking action research that informs its policy advocacy, providing comprehensive support services at both source and destination, and collaborating with a wide range of stakeholders and allies.

**Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung (RLS)** is a

Germany-based foundation working in South Asia and other parts of the world on the subjects of critical social analysis and civic education. It promotes a sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic social order, and aims to present members of society and decision-makers with alternative approaches to such an order. Research organizations, groups working for social emancipation, and social activists are supported in their initiatives to develop models that have the potential to deliver social and economic justice.

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