



Centre for Labour Research
and Action (CLRA)



Rosa Luxemburg
Stiftung

Footloose in Farms

By Anushka Rose and Vijeta



A study on the tribal migrant agricultural workers in Gujarat

2020

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Date: December 2020

Anushka and Vijeta

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F O R E W O R D

As the farmers' agitation against three new farm laws is entering into its third month and gaining momentum, the agrarian issue has come to the fore on national discourse. On one hand, the 70th round of NSSO survey suggested that the average agricultural land ownership has declined. The data further indicated that effective landlessness has increased significantly to 66%. So is the marginal and small landholding. On the other hand, as the agitation has raised alarm under the garb of free-market the corporate sector intends to grab whatever meagre landholding the peasantry may own. And vast populace of dispossessed peasants who have lost their major means of livelihood have to seek an alternative livelihood. The phenomenon of 'distress migration' is an outcome of this precariousness of peasantry.

Distress migration from rural areas i.e., compelled migration for livelihood for survival is an all-India phenomenon. But exact all India estimate of the migrant population, either from official datasets or research-based information, is difficult to get. It ranges from 10 million to 120 million per year. Several studies have captured rural to urban migration, but rural to rural stream has not been widely studied. In the case of Gujarat Prof. Jan Breman and few other studies did take note of the latter kind of migration, especially with reference to South Gujarat region.

The present action-research has covered rural to rural migration stream in cases of other remaining parts of Gujarat, i.e., north and central Gujarat and Saurashtra. Borrowing the term from Breman, the 'footloose' agricultural migrant labourers are of two kinds: one is those who migrate for a short duration to carry specific work and second, who migrate for long term to engage in wage share-cropping, called 'bhagiyas'. Does migration ameliorate their lives? Do they come out of vulnerabilities? Like other studies on distress migration, the present study too indicates that at destination places status of their precarity remain unaffected and even worsen.

Centre for Labour Research and Action is an action group striving for social transformation by adopting a scientific approach while addressing issues affecting various groups struggling to survive by eking out a livelihood in different unorganized sector activities. Previously they carried out similar research on brick-kiln workers, Sugarcane harvesters and construction workers while striving to organize them. This action-research on tribal migrant agricultural labourers would certainly serve their noble purpose of organizing the group effectively.

23rd December, 2020

Prof. Kiran Desai,
Director,
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This book seeks to comprehend and form a grounded understanding of the extent of tribal migrant agricultural wage labour prevalent across the state of Gujarat. Factors such as inadequate landholdings, climatic change and shrinking opportunities of alternative livelihood(s) in the source – together have rendered a large number of small and marginal farmers footloose that are induced to find work in farms across Gujarat as contractual agricultural labourers. This entails that thousands of workers, in every agricultural season migrate to North Gujarat, Central Gujarat and Saurashtra–Kutch – to work as wage labourers for various agricultural seasons. While some of these footloose workers work as casual agricultural workers who migrate to perform short-term tasks during peak periods such as sowing, rice transplantation, and harvesting, the other group can be classified as those who undertake long-term migration and engage in a practice known as wage sharecropping or *bhag-kheti* – that is particular to the state of Gujarat. Bhag-kheti comes close to the practice of sharecropping, wherein the landowner and the tiller share the cost of inputs in the cultivation. However, the practice of bhag-kheti requires the workers to contribute labour, while the landowner provides all other inputs such as seeds, irrigation, fertilizers, and pesticides in exchange for a fraction of the harvest. The practice also promotes labour migration – both from within the state and also from the tribal belt in the adjacent districts of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan to various parts of central and northern Gujarat across agricultural seasons. In spite of being a widely prevalent practice and the magnitude of families involved, there exists scant documentation of this practice and the impact it has on the lives of the people involved in it.

This study attempts to document migrant agricultural labour in general and delve into the nuances of the practice of *bhagiya* – also known as bhag-kheti majdur – is an individual who engages in bhag-kheti or wage sharecropping contract with the landowner in particular, across the state of Gujarat.

Framed within the methodology of action research, the study seeks to form an understanding of the extent and the incidence of migrant agricultural labour in Gujarat, form a preliminary understanding of the incidence of wage sharecropping in different regions of Gujarat, identify the migration streams and corridors, coupled with comprehending the contractual arrangement as practiced for bhagiya and conduct a close study of the conditions of work arrangements and resultant wages. These objectives were imperative to form a grounded understanding about the impact of the phenomenon of migration of agricultural labour and their households, along with violation of human and labour rights. The understanding thus produced would then critically inform into formulating and creating a support network that would correspond to the needs and the concerns of the agricultural workers.

With these objectives in mind, the Centre for Labour Research and Action (CLRA) collaborated with eight grassroots organizations to document and map data pertaining to the agricultural workers

across 12 blocks in eight districts across the three states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Throughout the period of this study – from July to December 2020, CLRA worked closely with the partners to delineate and collate data pertaining to the tribal migrant agricultural workers across the fields that partners have had decades of rich experience of working in.

The study details the migration corridors of the workers, the demography of the workers, the factors that push labourers to migrate into agricultural work, the work arrangements, perception of work and violence. The findings of the study demonstrate that the migrant workers found themselves isolated and alienated from their own communities who are scattered across the destination of migration. Furthermore, they did not find solidarity with the class of fellow labourers from marginalized communities due to the xenophobic narratives peddled and forwarded by the landowning class in the destination. The inherent inequity embedded within the social dynamics in the destination of migration compounded with the political and local clout on the side of the landowning class tilted the power in the favour of the landowners. This often left the workers with no agency to hold the *khedut* (farmer or landowner) accountable in decisions pertaining to cultivation and settlement of accounts. The findings further indicated that respondents were found to be working for wages less than the minimum wages as stipulated by the state. Due to the clout enjoyed by the landowners, the workers often found themselves at the receiving end of various excesses – ranging from pressure to work for longer durations under harsh conditions, end up as victims to caste-based slurs and abuse – and in certain cases even sexual harassment and abuse. The migrant workers reported living in deplorable conditions with no access to any kind of state-sponsored services or basic amenities.

The study is shaped to lead to formulation of an action targeted to address the vulnerabilities and concerns of the workers. The contours of the collective action are to be founded on the socio-political matrix existing in the source and destination and the concerns of the workers. Collective action is required to be taken that is formulated with the grassroots partners and shaped by the findings that emerged throughout the study to improve the collective strength of the workers and improve their negotiation and bargaining power to ensure the rights and entitlements of the migrant tribal agricultural workers and their families and strive for their right to a life of dignity.

FOOTLOOSE IN FARMS



Chapter 1

An overview



In Gujarat's agricultural sector a large proportion of total workforce is comprised of migrant agricultural wage labour. Seasonal migrant labours in the agricultural sector (both short-term and long-term) mostly belong to the tribal areas of Western India. Migration is an increasingly important aspect of rural livelihoods and a defensive coping mechanism for those facing extreme economic vulnerability in the tribal areas of Western India. Increasing pressure on a fragile resource base has indeed contributed to widespread failure to meet the subsistence needs among many tribal households. Migration is a response arising from a complex set of social relations, including relations of debt and dependency. The situation entails that thousands of workers, in every agricultural season migrate to the northern and the Saurashtra-Kutch region of Gujarat – to work as wage labourers for various agricultural seasons. This pool of workers can be further divided into those workers who migrate to perform short-term tasks during peak periods such as sowing, rice transplantation, harvesting and those who undertake a practice known as *bhag-kheti*. These are one of the contractual arrangements in land and labour markets. The practice of *bhag-kheti* that is encountered among large landholders, requires the workers to undertake and contribute to all costs pertaining to labour, while all other inputs would be provided by the landowner.

Over the past few decades, the practice of *bhag-kheti* has emerged as a major mode of agricultural labour engagement in the rural parts of the state. The landowner or *khedut* operates on a sizeable landholding by hiring agricultural labourers. The practice involves an agreement (usually verbal) between two parties, the landowner and the wage sharecropper (the *bhagiya*) – wherein the latter agrees to cultivate the said piece of land for two to three agricultural seasons in a year for a fraction or *bhag* of the output. The *bhagiya* would be responsible for carrying out all the labouring activities on the farm throughout the agreed period while the landowner would provide all other inputs – from seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, farm machinery services and irrigation facility. On the one hand, for certain agricultural activities for which labour requirement is at its peak – for instance at the time of sowing, weeding or harvesting, the cost of hiring additional labourers is to

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be borne entirely by the bhagiya. On the other hand, the share or bhag of the output can vary from one-sixth to one-fourth of the produce, depending on the region and the crop sown. During the peak agricultural season, casual workers migrate to various parts of the state for a period of 30 to as many 90 days. In the months of March to April, November to December and June to July the demand for casual workers arises for groundnut harvesting, cotton picking, wheat harvesting, threshing, and the like.

The migrant agricultural workers (both long-term and short-term) come from the tribal belt spanning across the borders of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra. Over the decades, migration corridors and clusters at the source and destination have come to be defined. Workers from one source cluster move to a particular destination cluster for seeking agricultural work.

Migration therefore offers the workers an opportunity to negotiate with the socioeconomic conditions that renders them vulnerable, yet the life in destination is also found to be filled with precarity. The practice of bhag-kheti entails for the family of bhagiya a time that is filled with instances of conflicts and disputes pertaining to wages, deplorable work and living conditions, denied access to social entitlements at workplace. Repeated interactions with the workers undertaking agricultural migration revealed that a state of deprivation existed due to the lack of bargaining and negotiating power and the absence of collective strength among the workers. Thus, a need emerged to formulate an action that could work to improve the situation and condition of the workers and their families. However, an action cannot be framed without any nuanced knowledge of the phenomenon of agricultural migration, the conditions and factors that facilitates migration, the labouring and living conditions of the workers in destination of work and source along with other subtleties pertaining to the households that migrate.

Thus, the research is designed around the objectives listed below:

- To understand the extent and incidence of migrant agricultural labour in Gujarat
- To understand the contractual arrangement as practiced for bhagiya
- To form a preliminary understanding of the incidence of wage sharecropping in different regions of Gujarat
- To identify the migration streams and corridors
- To study the conditions of work, contractual arrangements and resultant wages
- To understand the impact of this practice on migrant families and of the violation of their human and labour rights

The study delineates the findings according to the objectives of the study in the following five chapters. The second chapter discusses the survey of literature that became foundational in the designing of the study. It discusses the conceptual understanding and survey of government reports as well as the other researches related to agriculture workers. The third chapter discusses the methodological framework of the research study. The fourth one estimates the extent of migration, source and destination areas of agriculture labours. This chapter discusses the migration corridors of bhagiya and casual agricultural labours. The first section in the fifth chapter discusses the migration histories and demography of villages and the second section discusses the demographic details of the respondent households. The sixth chapter discusses the findings from the detailed household survey. This chapter discusses nuanced characteristics of the casual agriculture labour and *bhagiya*. The study ends with concluding remarks and the discussion on the action – the support network for the migrant tribal agricultural workers that emerged out of the study





Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Agricultural workforce is a crucial contributor to the India's economic growth, accounting for 52 percent of India's total labour force (Census, 2011). Census (2011) reported that the India's agricultural sector employed 263.1 million workers of which 118.8 million were identified as cultivators and 144.3 million were casual labourers who worked on others' farms. The report continued to estimate that 30 percent of the total rural workers comprised of agricultural wage earners or agricultural labour. The category 'agricultural labour' as per the Census was defined as 'someone who worked on another's land for wages in money or kind or share and thus could be categorized as an agricultural labourer, whereby they had no risk in the cultivation, but merely worked on another land for wages' (Metadata, Census of India 2011:16). This category first came into purview by the First Agriculture Labour Enquiry Committee 1950-55 as, 'the workers who are engaged

in raising crops on payment of wages.' According to National Commission on Labour: 'an agricultural labourer was the one who was technically unskilled and unorganized and had little (in terms of resource) for its livelihood, other than labour power. Agricultural workers could further be divided as landless agricultural labourers and very small cultivators whose primary source of earnings due to their small and sub-marginal holdings was wage employment' (Kulamani, 2007). Extending this reasoning, one realizes that lack of resource, particularly lack of land ownership leading to landlessness has been one of the very important factors of migration. Kothari (2002) substantiates the above argument by stating that livelihood strategies are found to be diverse and multiple yet migration remained a central component for many poor communities particularly in countries such as ours.

The category 'agricultural labourers' in-



cludes both, the workers who worked in the same locality and the ones who migrated seasonally across the nation. Our interest for the purpose of this study lies in the second category – wherein the workers migrated either in the short-term (during peak seasons) or for a longer term (at times for an entire year) – returning to their source only for a brief period of time. Temporary migration, often used interchangeably with circular, seasonal, short-term and spontaneous migration, has been widely studied and been a subject of academic and research discourse. Bilsborrows (1984) discusses short-term migration as a phenomenon or sort of mobility where the economic activity of a person is moved but not the usual residence (Sapkota, 2018). Breman (1996) defined the migrant agricultural workers as ‘footloose labourers’ and defined migrants as the magnitude of army of labour leaving their place of residence, but firmly prevented from settling down elsewhere; and thereby also defied any formal concept of work. He contested the idea of seasonal migrants because of the uneven rhythm of working life timeline and termed it circular migrants as it perpetually, though erratically kept adrift (Breman, 2020).

Thus, labour migration often emerges as a forced livelihood response, originating from a complex set of social relations along with ecological crisis and subsistence failure. Mosse et al. in their 2012 study discuss that while some migrant households are able to employ their sur-

plus income to alleviate their economic conditions, there were many households who find themselves in a matrix of social relations that keep them entrapped in debt and dependency relations. Such a response that is driven by distress critiques the notion that migration has improved livelihood security wherein it had perpetuated continuous debt and dependency – that perpetuates migration as a strategy of survival (Mosse et al., 2002: 60). Over decades, there have been many contestable debates regarding the actual scale and magnitude of labour outmigration. In discussions centred on migration as a phenomenon across the country – National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) and the Census of India are the official sources that are relied upon to draw such estimates. Their methods have often attracted criticisms for being inadequate to comprehensively map the extent of seasonal or circular migration in general and agricultural rural migration in particular. As per the Census 2011, India had 454 million migrants, which is 38 percent of the population on the basis of birth criteria. In 2011, intra-state movement accounted for almost 88 percent of all internal migration (396 million) while 12 percent (54 million) was inter-state migration. While discussing the stream of migration, the Census document delineated the data on the basis of origin and destination and defined four categories of the phenomenon – rural to rural, rural to urban, urban to urban and urban to rural. If one was to refer to the place of last resi-



dence, migration from rural parts of India to other rural areas was around 210 million, which formed 54 percent of internal migration. The 2016 Economic Survey of India, however, had estimated 100 million inter-state and intra-state circular migrants. As per the Census, there were 70 million migrant workers in 2011 and the Economic Survey (2016–2017) estimated 60 million inter-state labour migrants between 2001–2011 (Iyer, 2020). However, academics and the practitioners in the development sector who have been working with the migrant populations over decades criticised these estimates and warned that the data was underestimating the migrant labour movement. When one attempts to understand the extent and magnitude of rural migration particularly in the western part of India, Mosse et al. state that barring Breman (1996) there has been scant research on migration as a phenomenon (2002). This especially becomes a critical gap in a scenario where seasonal labour migration has emerged as an increasingly critical characteristic of rural livelihoods in tribal areas of Western India. Such migration, the authors state, can no longer be viewed merely as an adjunct to an essentially agrarian way of life, but has to be seen as integral to the coping, survival and livelihood strategies of tribal farming families (ibid). Rural to urban migration is often viewed as a consequence of environmental crisis in which migrants as ‘ecological refugees’ (Gadgil and Guha 1995) are forcibly displaced by processes of deforestation, soil ero-

sion, water scarcity, land fragmentation, declining agricultural productivity and population increase. While increasing pressure on a fragile resource base has indeed contributed to widespread failure to meet subsistence needs among tribal households, Mosse et al. (2002) in their study show that the forces leading to migration had as much to do with the social relations of dependency and indebtedness which subsistence failure entails, as with ecological decline. The problem was not so much one of declining production, as of systems of usurious money lending, labour contracting and exploitation. The social experience and consequences of migration were far from uniform, but shaped by class and gender. For a minority of Bhil households, migration offers positive opportunities for saving, investment and meeting contingencies. For the poorer majority, migration is a defensive coping strategy covering existing debts and extreme economic vulnerability. In combining unequal and individualised income accrual with the need for joint livelihood strategies, migration thus has a major impact on intra-household relations. A majority of the migrants from the Bhil community arrive to various regions of Gujarat to find work across the state’s hinterlands.

The Indian state of Gujarat emerged as the third largest source of inter-state migrants, as around 2.3 million from across India had migrated to Gujarat by 2011. The NSSO in the 64th round (2007–2008), estimated the short-term migrants, in which Gujarat has the highest percentage of migrants in total population, estimated migrants as 3.38 percent of total population (Thapa et al., 2015), with Census estimating that 6.5 million were agricultural workers (Census, 2011). Community-based organizations and non-governmental organizations that have been working with the migrant workers in Gujarat for decades often report that the state received tribal migrants from areas within the state as well as from the districts of the neighbouring states. The contiguous western Indian districts of Jhabua (Western Madhya Pradesh), Banswara (South Rajasthan) and Panchmahals (East Gujarat), which has the highest number of tribal population (especially the Bhil tribe) saw a large number of workers migrating from these areas. A study by Behavioural Science Centre (BSC) conducted in 1995–1996 attempted to estimate the extent of seasonal labour migration in these regions. It reported that 65 percent of

households and 48 percent of the adult population were involved in seasonal migration. It also reported female migration of 42 percent, which has characteristics of family migration, which means females are migrating along with their family to maximize the productivity of their labour power (Mosse et al., 2002).

In an attempt to understand the magnitude of the rural-to-rural migration in the agricultural sector the present study is thus focussed on the seasonal agricultural labour in Gujarat, in the form of short-term and long-term agricultural migration. A review of literature informs that there is scant documentation available concerning agricultural labour and sharecroppers undertaking inter-state and intra-state migration. Although contractual arrangements in land and labour markets have a long history in India, the nature and impact of contractual arrangements have varied widely over time and space depending on various social, economic, political, technological and agro-climatic factors. The practice itself has evolved over decades, shaped by socioeconomic as well as politico-technical factors – both in the source as well as the destination of the migrant communities. One such form of contractual arrangement practiced widely across the rural parts of the state of Gujarat is wage sharecropping. It is a practice that has been described as ‘a deplorable method of cultivation, the daughter of necessity and the mother of misery’ by Marquis de Mirabeau (cited in Aajeevika Bureau, 2010: 3).

Of the few studies undertaken on the practice, the one by BSC (2009) documented the situation of tribal migrant workers from North Gujarat (Sabarkantha and Banaskantha districts). The report estimated that at the time of the study the sharecroppers received a share of the harvest that was about one-fourth to one-seventh of the total share. It also detailed the incidence of economic violence by marking the situation of uncertainty of payment as the owner of the land usually denied or delayed the payment, manipulated the accounts and deceived the sharecroppers of their share. The destination of migration as documented in the BSC study was Mehsana and Gandhinagar district for sharecropping agriculture. The study further discussed the situation of casual labourers, and the situation of abysmally low wages paid to labour employed in Bt cottonseed fields who reported a daily wage Rs. 40-60 for about 12 hours of intensive manual work during the year of 2009.

Kumar et al. (2017) studied the situation of tenancy and sharecropping in India and in particular that of Gujarat. The paper highlighted



the peculiar form of tenancy in Gujarat, which the authors termed as *bhagidaari* system practiced in the districts of Anand, Himmatnagar, Banaskantha, Sabarkantha, Surendranagar, Rajkot and Patan districts of Gujarat. The authors reported that the share of the harvest varied between 15 to 30 percent of the produce depending on the crops and land type. The 2017 study claimed that the system has been in practice for more than 20 years and had assumed a predominant role to an extent that it contributed to more than 95 percent of the labour engagement practice in the areas listed above. The study discussed how over the decades more and more farmers preferred *bhagidaari* system over other systems due to the ease of finding labour throughout the year.

Aajeevika Bureau (2010) undertook a comprehensive study of the practice of *bhagkheti* in Idar (in Sabarkantha, Gujarat) and Kotda (Udaipur, Rajasthan). The study as an action research highlighted the gap of contractual agreement between farmers and sharecroppers with a primary focus on devising ways to formalize the relationship between farmers and migrant sharecroppers in Kotda of Udaipur district of Rajasthan, in which 80 percent of the population was tribal. The authors of the study elucidate that the primary reasons of migration from the area were: inadequate land ownership, lack of irrigation facility and poor education system that deprived the communities the opportunity to access and obtain technical skills that would allow them to find livelihood alternatives. The study report continued to foreground how certain regions of Gujarat were perceived as developed state with respect to agricultural technologies, intensive groundwater irrigation with



production of high-value crops and therefore offered opportunities to agricultural workers and attracted labour from within and outside Gujarat. The study estimated that about 5,000 migrant households worked as sharecroppers in the district of Sabarkantha, with a daily per capita earning (of sharecropper) Rs. 42. The study concluded that the system, although prevalent widely – was anything close to its colloquial name. It rather, as the authors continue to remark – was an economic arrangement that positioned the wage sharecropper or the *bhagiya* – more as a servant than as a partner and thus contradicting the rationale of the *bhagidaari* system. While the abovementioned studies detail the conditions in the northern and central region of Gujarat, no studies, however, could be found which would discuss the conditions of the workers, the incidence and extent of their migration, their conditions of work as well as living and the access to rights and entitlements in all the regions of Gujarat.

Similarly, scant documentation can be found of the members of the tribal communities migrating for agricultural work to Gujarat. A study undertaken in 2019 by Adharshila Learning Centre in Barwani district of Madhya Pradesh discusses the phenomenon of migration among the tribal communities (Jayshree & Amit, n.d.). The report provides demographic details and gives a preliminary perception of about 502 households that undertook migration across 32 villages in the district to various sectors. The authors state that the 45.57 percent of the total of sample migrated to agricultural regions of Maharashtra and Gujarat. Of these the respondents who worked as agricultural workers found work in diverse crops depending on the

season and area of work. The survey reported that the respondents were working in onion, garlic, ginger, sugarcane, cotton, wheat, maize, pomegranate and groundnut fields. The authors discussed how migration had become an integral part of the livelihood strategies among the tribal communities in Barwani where workers were found to be migrating for agricultural work and employed on daily wages. The report is critical in terms of documentation conducted in an area that forms an essential source cluster concerning the agricultural workers.

Besides the studies by Aajeevika Bureau and Adharshila Learning Centre, the authors were unable to find any other work that documented or mapped the community of tribal agricultural workers migrating to Gujarat. At the time of conceptualizing and inception of the research study, the research team had intensive discussions with community-based organizations as well as the collectives that have been working with the tribal communities who migrate to work in the agricultural sector of Gujarat. It was during these discussions that the research team met the members of the legal team from *Majur Adhikar Manch* (a collective of informal workers in the unorganized sector) who discussed how they have been receiving information and cases on theft of wages, non-payment of wages and cases of harassment and abuse for about a decade. These cases foreground the condition of the agricultural workers. Members of the grassroots organizations during the inception and conceptualization of the study also shared in great detail about the movement of the army of footloose workers who were induced to find work in the agricultural farms of Gujarat for decades. However, there were little to no documentation or mapping of such movement. There appeared to be an absence of studies that had attempted to canvas the extent of such migrant population and their conditions as workers in the destination of migration.

The survey of literature thus informed and facilitated a need to address the vacuum in the documentation of the tribal migrant agricultural workers – both long and short-term. These workers are essential contributors to the growth of the state and fuel the engines of the agricultural sectors in Gujarat. The present study, therefore, is an attempt to contribute to generate some knowledge on the incidence of the tribal migrant agricultural workers and their conditions – both labouring and living in the source as well as the destination of migration.

Chapter 3

Methodology and the Methodical Framework of the Study

The review of literature reiterated the emergent need for the present study that would attempt at forming a grounded understanding of the tribal agricultural labourers that migrate for work across Gujarat. Additionally, the objective of this study is not limited to generating knowledge around these groups of workers who do not have resources at their disposal to find a foothold and not migrate; but it is also to contribute to formulating an action plan that can work towards improving the conditions of the workers and their families. For this the research team deemed that action research would be the appropriate methodology to fulfil the objectives of the present study.

Reason and Bradbury (2008) discuss how the methodology of action research emerged as a family of practices of living inquiry that aimed to link 'practice and ideas in the service of human flourishing'. They further explain how the said methodology extends itself more than just a methodological framework to orient inquiry that sought to create participative communities of inquiry in which qualities of engagement, curiosity and question posing were

brought to bear on significant practical issues. As development practitioners and activists working to ensure entitlements and rights of the migrant and tribal communities, action research as a meth-

odology challenges much received wisdom in both academia and among social change and development practitioners, not least because it is a practice of participation, but since it seeks to engage critically with those who might otherwise be subjects of research or recipients of interventions to a greater or less extent as inquiring co-researchers. Action research does not start from a desire of changing others 'out there'; rather, it starts from an orientation of change with others – others who have been working directly with the communities who migrate as agricultural workers. Thus, through this methodology and





the methods and tools of its engagement, the team of researchers and enumerators were attempting to initiate conversations with the respondents to arrive at what could be the course of action that would emerge at the end of the research study. The attempt is to work towards action that would seek to address the issues and concerns of the respondents by keeping the tribal migrant workers at the centre. This action would emerge only after forming a nuanced understanding of the condition of the workers and would thus become critical to initiate a change

in the lives of the respondents by ensuring their access to rights and entitlements.

Hence, the study was designed in close partnership with eight grassroots organizations that have had a rich experience of working either on rights and entitlements of tribal and other marginalized communities or who have been engaging to ensure the rights of the migrant workers. The research objectives thus offered an opportunity where CLRA and their partners (the eight grassroots organizations) could work collaboratively to improve the collec-

tive understanding of the material conditions of the agricultural workers to reflect on their own practice as development practitioners and activists. For the purpose of this study (for data collection and mapping exercise) and hence to formulate an action, the research team of CLRA reached out and collaborated with the following grassroots organizations and worked closely through the period of the research from its inception. The partner organizations are listed below:

- Saurashtra Dalit Sangathan, Junagadh, Gujarat
- Anandi, Maliya, Gujarat
- Rajkot Dalit Yuva Vikas Sangathan, Rajkot, Gujarat
- Jagrit Dalit Adivasi Sangathan, Badwani, Madhya Pradesh
- Adharshila Sikshan Kendra, Sendwa, Madhya Pradesh
- Khedut Majdur Chetna Sangathan, Alirajpur, Madhya Pradesh
- Vichardhara Foundation, Shahada, Nandurbar, Maharashtra
- Majur Adhikar Manch, Dahod, Gujarat

Realizing that the concerns and conditions of tribal migrant agricultural workers intrinsically has an intersectional dimension, it was thus imperative that the grassroots organizations who would support in the data collection exercise had a deep and nuanced understanding of the socioeconomic settings that pertain to various communities of workers.

Sampling Strategy

Following from the discussion above and keeping the research objectives at the centre of the study, the population for the study included workers who undertook seasonal migration in the agricultural sector across the state of Gujarat. The

sample population included both the short-term cyclical workers (or khet majdur) and the long-term migrant workers – known as the bhagiya or bhag kheti majdur. The blocks or clusters were thus selected in the districts in which the partner organizations had been engaging with the community of workers. Table 1 and Table 2 depict the areas that were chosen as the field of study at both the source and destination areas of the workers.

Purposive sampling was used to select respondents for data collection. Given that safety regulations due to Covid-19 had limited the access of the enumerators to the respondents, it was deemed that the team would rely on the knowledge of the grassroots partners who had decades of experience of working with tribal migrant agricultural workers. The main objective of purposive sample was to produce a sam-

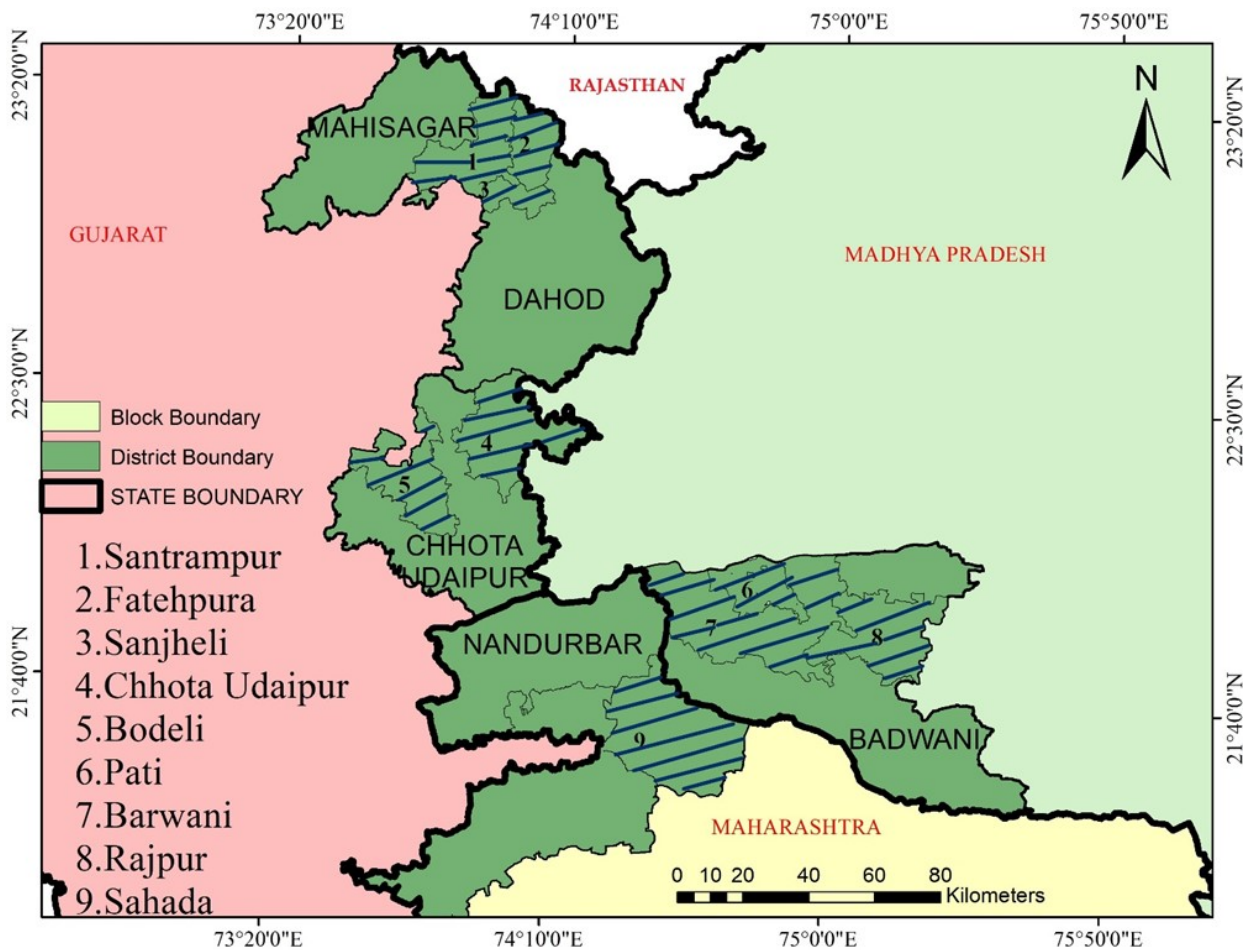
Table 1: Field Locations in Source of Migration

Source Area	District Name	Block
Gujarat	Chhota Udaipur	Chhota Udaipur
		Bodeli
	Dahod	Fatehpura
		Sanjeli
Madhya Pradesh	Badwani	Santrampur
		Pati
	Rajpur	
Maharashtra	Nandurbar	Barwani
		Shahada

Table 2: Field Locations in Destination of Migration

Destination Area	District Name	Block
Gujarat	Junagadh	Visavadar
	Amreli	Bagesara
	Rajkot	Gondal
	Maliya	Morbi

Map 1: Field Locations in Source of Migration



ple that can be logically assumed to be representative of the population of tribal agricultural workers that migrate across the state of Gujarat.

The first step towards mapping the movement of the agricultural workers was by documenting the migration stream. We started by attaining a geographic imagination through curating a list of villages at the level of the block in both the source as well as the destination areas. Survey of literature and the experiences of the grassroots organizations that have been working with the bhagiya and the seasonal agricultural workers indicated the field locations. Through preliminary discussions, it was found that the workers migrated to parts of northern Gujarat and Saurashtra all the way to Kachchh from the contiguous tribal belt shared by Gujarat with its neighbouring states – namely the western blocks of Madhya Pradesh, Northern Maharashtra, Southern Rajasthan, and the tribal blocks in the eastern part of Gujarat. Thus, through CLRA’s existing network of grassroots organizations, the research team chose nine blocks across Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh as the source of the workers; and four blocks across Gujarat as the destination of the workers.

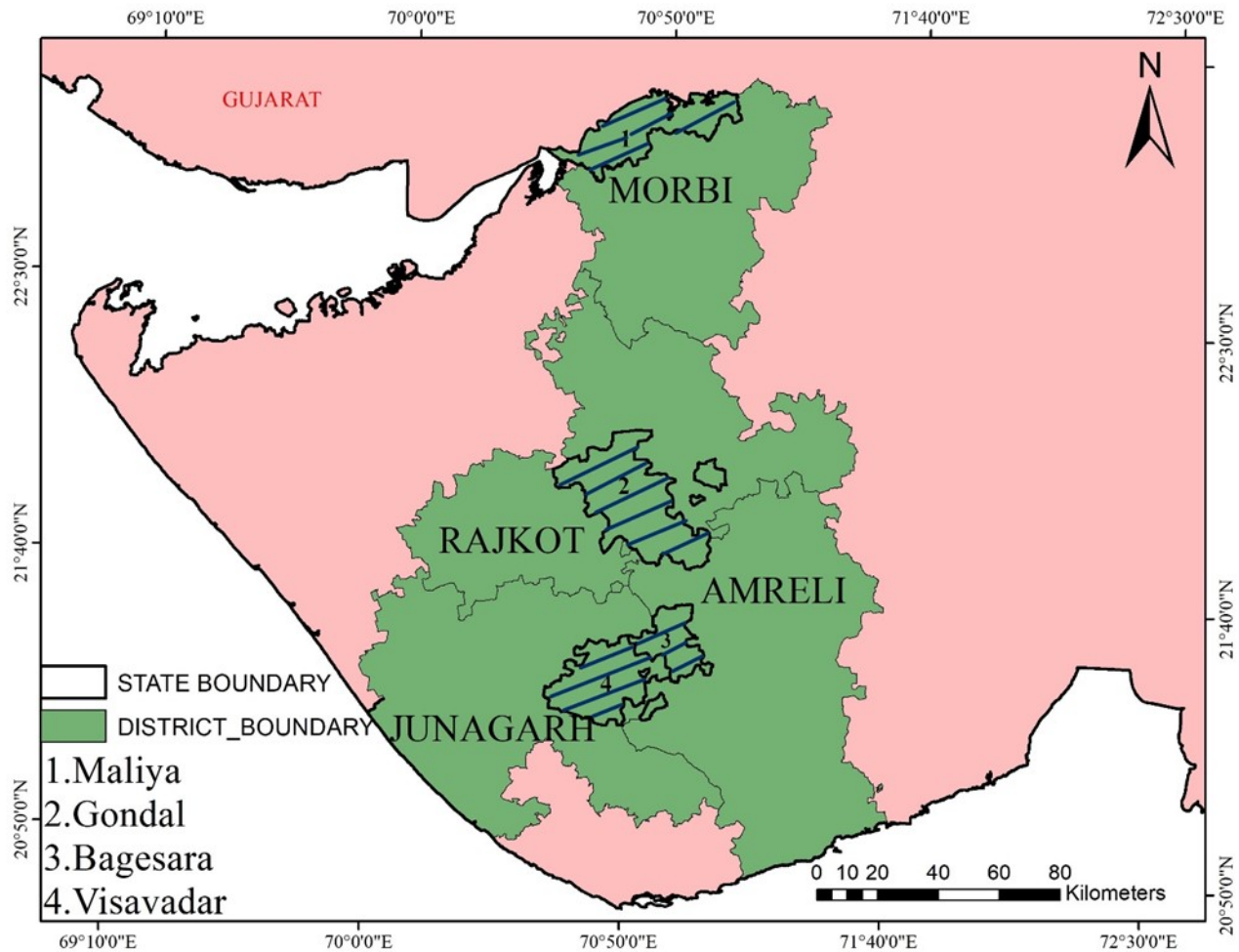
Map 1 and 2 depict the field locations in the source and the destination of migration that were selected for the mapping the migration movement of the migrant agricultural workers – both for bhagiya as well as khet majdurs. The shaded parts depict the blocks that were selected for the mapping exercise.

Survey schedules and the group discussion scripts were developed in close consultation with these partners. Due to restricted mobility due to Covid-19, regular meetings, review and feedback sessions were conducted online throughout the period of the study. The tool used for mapping exercise for the team was Google Forms, that allowed the enumerators to map and upload data from their respective locations.

Thus, the research team designed four survey schedules that included curating a village profile, enlisting the workers who migrated for seasonal agricultural work, accompanied by detailed household schedules. The schedules are discussed briefly as follows:

Village Mapping (VS-1 & VS-2): This schedule entailed that enumerators undertake

Map 2: Field Locations in Destination of Migration



village mapping exercise in select villages (minimum of 10 villages in a cluster). The selected villages comprised of geographically spread-out locations that formed clusters in the sampled district. The two tools were designed to create a migration profile, social structure, etc. of the village (VS-1) and collect baseline data for all the labourers who undertake migration in the agricultural sector and work as bhagiya or agricultural labour (VS 2). The first schedule was to be completed through a participatory process starting with a village meeting followed by a transect walk through the village. The baseline schedule was to be collected through consultation with the relatives of the migrating families.¹ The two forms were integral to map the migration corridors of the workers as well as form an understanding of the sociopolitical and economic conditions prevailing in source villages that induced the workers to undertake rural migration.

Household Mapping-1 (HS-1): The next step involved selecting a total of 20 respondents (10 of short-term migrants and 10 long-term migrants) who migrated for agricul-

tural labour listed in the village schedule (10 percent of the VS-2) and were interviewed in greater detail to capture the baseline data. The households were selected through purposive sampling from the baseline survey of workers in the previous phase of mapping. This information was gathered by visiting the family at the source as well as the destination village and was captured through an android-based mobile application developed by CLRA called 'Shramshakti'. Household mapping conducted by way of this application focussed on documenting the profile of the workers which included their work profile, details of the family members, members who accompanied the respondent to the destination and access to public services in order to draw an overall picture of a household.

Household Survey-2 (HS-2): For the purpose of capturing details pertaining to the work arrangements, living and working conditions, access to public services at the destination of work – a detailed schedule was designed. This schedule was canvassed from selected households (10 percent of households covered

1. Attached in the Appendix as VS-1 and VS-2

through HS-1) who were interviewed to map data regarding the contract agreement around the wages and the share (bhag), working and living conditions, share paid by the respondent in the cost of inputs, details of the crops cultivated, access to state-sponsored services, perceptions about violence by the respondent and their family members at the hands of the landowner. This form intended to capture work-related information for the last season of work. This survey schedule was to be filled in close conversation with the seasonal agricultural worker and bhagiya.

For a grounded and robust understanding about the perceptions of work and the experiences of finding work; negotiating contractual arrangement; the perception of workers pertaining to work; social dynamics prevailing in the destination of work, and; reasons that induced the need to migrate – the research team also generated scripts² to engage in focused group discussions (FGDs) separately with the workers, the women workers, and also with the farmers.

Furthermore, research teams were acutely aware that the possibility of undertaking an extensive mapping exercise of the kind that was underway in the source clusters would be difficult to replicate in the destination of migration. Thus, the team relied on the method of group discussions and guided conversations with the respondents and their family members. The constant gaze of the landowner and owing to the possibility that the landowning class may deny enumerators from interacting with the agricultural workers, the team thus conducted group discussions across Junagadh, Gondal and Morbi. Along with the partner organizations, three FGD scripts were formulated to attain a robust understanding of multiple perspectives of various stakeholders in the destination. This included discussions with the workers themselves, the women in their households, including discussion with the khedut to gauge their perception about the migrant workers. The partner organizations played a critical role to ensure that conditions that would be conducive can be created to hold such discussions without the interference and threat to the respondents from the landowning class. Details of these group discussions are shared below for the convenience of the reader:

FGD with Bhagiya and Agricultural

Labour: A list of questions was formulated to capture the general trends at the level of the village or the cluster. These discussions took place with a group of people from the village including few bhagiyas and farm workers. The objective of this FGD was to get overall information on migration patterns of the village, with a focus on bhagiya workers, mode of recruitment, terms of agreement, conditions of living and work, incidence of conflicts and the experience of lockdown due to COVID-19 by the migrating families and labourers. The FGD proved to be instrumental in providing a holistic picture of the migration trend and the practice of khet majuri and bhagiya kheti.

FGD with Women Agricultural

Workers: A list of questions was formulated to capture the working conditions for women at the level of the village. These discussions were to take place with a group of women or individuals, who migrated to work outside. The objective of this FGD was to understand the overall situation of migrant women workers, like division and burden of work, say in decisions pertaining to work, women's perception about work, health and information related to violence. It was hoped that the FGD will help in getting a holistic picture of the migrant women's condition.

FGD with Farmers:

A list of questions was formulated to discuss with the *khedut* at the village or taluka-level in the destination of migration. These discussions were to take place with the *khedut* who hire *bhagiyas*. The purpose of this FGD was to understand the opinion of *kheduts*. Although the team was aware that such conversations and discussions may not be possible, nonetheless it was hoped that FGD would be instrumental to paint the overall picture of the owners' opinion about the migrant tribal agricultural workers and their living and working conditions.

2. The scripts were generated to act as a guide for the field research teams for the sake of uniformity and to act as a compass for the discussions taking place across the varied locations.

Chapter 4

Mapping the migration corridor

Seasonal agricultural labour migration has become an irreversible aspect of the lives of many in the rural adivasi communities in India. Search for sustainable livelihoods has caused agricultural labour migration across rural parts of Gujarat; from areas with low resource that is inadequate to provide sustainable livelihood alternatives to relatively developed regions. For big farmers or landowners, the dominant trend now has become to hire migrant labour who are poor, socioeconomically disadvantaged and are in need of employment. Such migrations are inter-state, inter-district, or intra-blocks within the districts of nearby villages. As discussed in the previous chapters, this study is keen to explore the phenomenon both at the source (origin) of the migration and at the destination of the migrant labour to draw the migration stream of agricultural labour from the different



parts of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra into the districts of Gujarat. This chapter provides the extent of destination areas, source areas and mapping of agricultural labour migration streams.

To enlist the total migrant agricultural labourers from the selected village, baseline information was collected through a short survey conducted in the sampled villages. A database of agricultural labourers who migrate either for bhag-kheti or khet-majduri was created. A survey of this



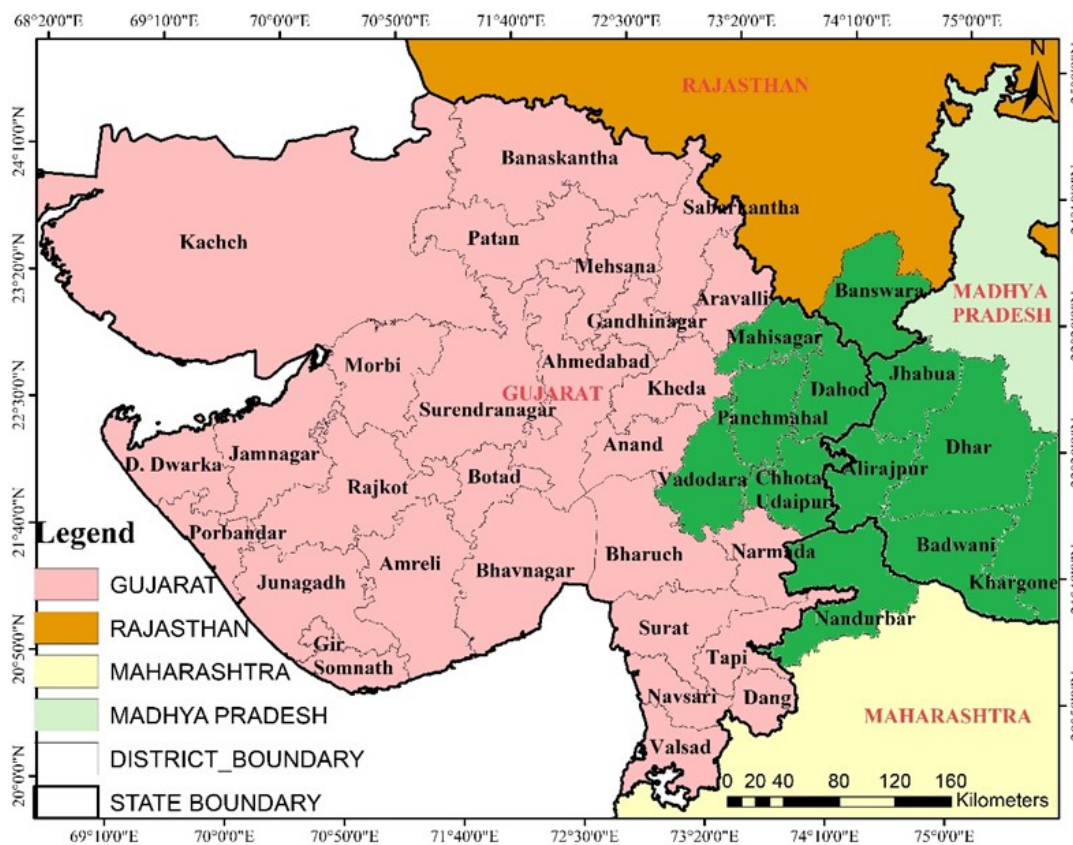
schedule was also possible in destination areas as the format of the schedule is short in length. A total of 99 villages³ were mapped, spread over

12 blocks of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, that reported 3,548 agricultural labourers and 1,253 bhagiyas (the number of la-

3. The reader shall note that the Table 3 depicts additional locations for villages that were mapped in the destination of migration, i.e., the three blocks in the districts of Amreli, Junagadh and Morbi. Although the field teams were able to map data for baseline survey, they were unable to canvas other questionnaires pertaining to information for village profiles, and detailed household surveys. The sociopolitical dynamics in the destination areas made it extremely difficult to carry out tools that required seeking in-depth information – primarily because the landowners would often not allow the field research team to engage with the agricultural workers. Furthermore, the team in general was met with pandemic-induced apprehension both in the destination and source of migration where the respondents refused to share their detailed village and household information fearing that as migrants, they might be reported to the authorities for Covid-19. However, in certain villages only baseline survey was possible and thus was included in the study, and therefore the sample for this tool varies from other schedules.

Table 3: Number of Villages Mapped in Baseline Survey			
State	District	Block	Number of Villages
Madhya Pradesh	Barwani	Rajpur	10
		Barwani	10
		Pati	10
	Alirajpur	Sendwa	10
Gujarat	Dahod	Sanjeli	10
		Fatepura	9
	Chhota Udaipur	Chhota Udaipur	2
	Amreli	Bagasara	9
	Junagadh	Visavadar	4
	Morbi	Maliya	5
	Mahisagar	Santrampur	10
Maharashtra	Nandurbar	Sahada	10
Total	9	12	99

Map3: Source Areas of Tribal Migrant Agricultural Workers



Source Areas of Migration in Western Tribal belt of India to Gujarat

Map 1 shows the source district of migration for seasonal and sharecropping work. 9 blocks from 6 districts have been chosen as the source area of the study, considering that there is a significant presence of tribal agricultural labour migrants in these blocks. From the sample, 12 districts of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan were recognized for having migrant agricultural labour.

Agricultural labour from Banswara district of Rajasthan, Jhabua, Dhar, Khargone, Alirajpur, Barwani districts of Madhya Pradesh, Nandurbar district of Maharashtra and Dahod, Mahisagar, Panchmahals, Chhota Udaipur, Vadodara districts of Gujarat migrate to different parts of Gujarat. Evident from the map, these areas together form what is known as the contiguous belt of Bhil tribal communities formed at the borders of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

bourers is reported after cleaning). Table 3 details the villages sampled in the study. The findings have highlighted the dispersion of destination and source of migration, which might not be exhaustive, but that gives the overall picture of distribution and scattered areas of agricultural migration stream.

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Table 4: Distribution of Sample Population Across its Source and Destination of Migration

State	Gujarat Regions/District Name	Saurashtra-Kutchh	Central	North	South	Sub Total	Total
Gujarat	Chhota-Udaipur	35	0	17	2	54	2668
	Dahod	577	124	917	29	1647	
	Mahisagar	185	241	534	6	966	
	Panchmahal	1	0	0	0	1	
Madhya-Pradesh	Barwani	259	49	4	0	312	345
	Alirajpur	16		0	0	16	
	Jhabua	2		0	0	2	
	Dhar	15		0	0	15	
Maharashtra	Nandurbar	435		0	17	452	452
Rajasthan	Banswara	83		0	0	83	83
Total		1608	414	1472	54	3548	3548

Extent of Agricultural Labour Migration in Gujarat

Table 4 has been extracted from the baseline survey of the villages. A total of 3,548 short-term migrant agricultural labourers were sampled during this phase of the study. The findings revealed that the Saurashtra in Gujarat received the highest number of migrant agricultural labour.

The reader will observe that a total of 3,548 agricultural labourers from the sample migrated to these regions. Agriculture labourers from Chhota Udaipur, Dahod, Panchmahal and Mahisagar districts of Gujarat, Barwani, Alirajpur, Jhabua and Dhar districts of Madhya Pradesh, Nandurbar district of Maharashtra and Banswara district of Rajasthan migrate to Gujarat. The region of Saurashtra-Kutch region received labour from clusters along the tribal belt shared by Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan.⁴ North Gujarat received labour from the Central region of Gujarat and from Barwani district of Madhya Pradesh. Each district in North region receives migrant agricultural labour predominantly from nearby districts. Sabarkantha, Banaskantha, Gandhinagar and Ahmedabad are popular destinations for migration for agricultural workers, particularly from the districts within Gujarat. In the region of Central Gujarat, we see the pattern of inter-district and inter-block migration. Labour from the neighbouring blocks or villages and districts migrate during the peak season. It is largely labourers from Chhota Udaipur, Dahod, Panch-

mahal and Mahisagar districts who migrate in this region. This region also has the intra-block and inter-village migration pattern. Many agricultural labourers migrate to the block of Mahisagar from villages nearby. The South Gujarat region, especially the districts of Surat and Navsari receives labour from the Nandurbar district of Maharashtra and Dahod district of Gujarat. The Sugarcane growing areas of Navsari and Surat district of South Gujarat receives quite a number of migrant workers and thus is a hub of a kind for agricultural labour that originates from the Nandurbar district in Maharashtra.

Table 5 indicates the distribution of agricultural labour across the Saurashtra-Kutch region. The table is extracted and detailed from Tables 3 and 4 for this region to depict the district-wise variation, as this region received the highest number of agricultural labour migrants in our study. The sampled data showed that this region received labour from different source areas of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat. It was found that Junagadh, Rajkot, Jamnagar, Amreli, Morbi districts in addition to Kutch were popular destinations for migrant agricultural labour. The other six districts of Saurashtra have shown fewer numbers of agricultural labourers.

In case of other regions of Gujarat, labourers from the tribal belt of Gujarat migrated to the Central, North and Southern regions of Gujarat. In these regions few agriculture dominant blocks received casual labourers or khet

4. The baseline schedule (VS-2) sampled in the destination areas have highlighted the other source area of migration through which Banswara (Rajasthan), Jhabua, Dhar, Khargone (Madhya Pradesh) and Panchmahal (Gujarat) came into highlight.

Table 5: Distribution Across Saurashtra-Kutch Region

Region/Source State	Gujarat	Madhya Pradesh	Maharashtra	Rajasthan	Total
Junagadh	193	117	302	50	662
Rajkot	133	106	96	0	335
Jamnagar	178	1	35	0	214
Amreli	115	46	2	33	196
Kutch	105	1	0	0	106
Morbi	32	13	0	0	45
Surendranagar	21	0	0	0	21
Porbandar	5	6	0	0	11
Bhavnagar	10	0	0	0	10
Dwarka	3	0	0	0	3
Gir Somnath	0	2	0	0	2
Botad	3	0	0	0	3
Total	798	292	435	83	1,608

majdurs. The second highest is the Northern region of Gujarat where Sabarkantha, Gandhinagar, Ahmedabad, Aravalli, Mehsana are the major destination districts. Banaskantha and Patan also received agricultural workers, although in lower numbers.

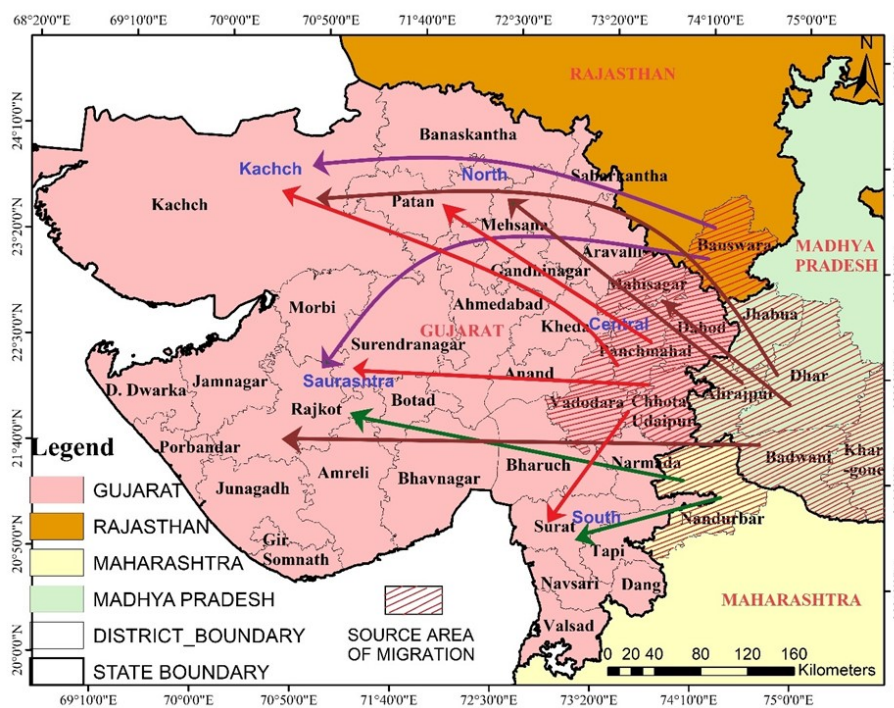
Migration Streams for Bhagiyas

Table 6 depicts the bhagiya worker migration stream across Gujarat. As evident from the table below, 1,253 bhagiya workers were mapped during the study. An observation that is re-enforced throughout the study was the popularity of Saurashtra-Kutch region of Gujarat, especially among the workers who undertook *bhag-kheti*. Labour from Dahod, Panchmahal, Mahisagar district of Gujarat, Barwani, Alirajpur, Jhabua,

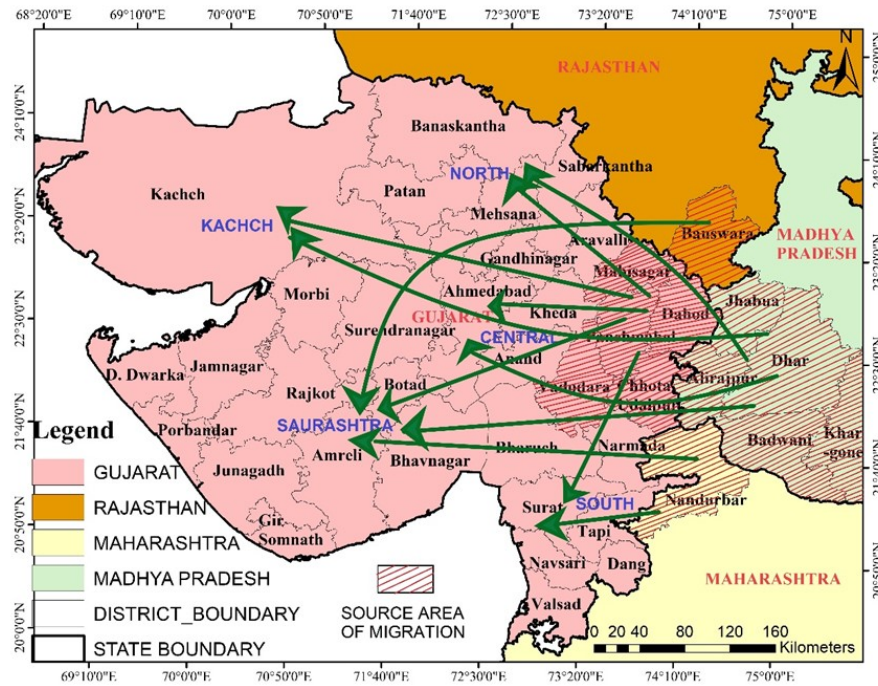
Dhar, Khargone districts of Madhya Pradesh, Nandurbar district of Maharashtra and Banswara district of Rajasthan migrate to the Saurashtra-Kutch region. Junagadh, Rajkot, Amreli, Botad, Dwarka, Surendranagar, Morbi, Porbandar, Bhavnagar, Jamnagar and Kutch are the main destination areas of migrant sharecroppers in the Saurashtra-Kutch region of Gujarat.

908 out of 1,252 labourers surveyed migrated to this region for wage sharecropping. Central Gujarat has received labour from Dahod, Panchmahal, Vadodara and Mahisagar district of Gujarat and Barwani district of Madhya Pradesh. Central Gujarat region mainly received labour from the neighbouring block and

Map 4: Migration Corridor of the Khet Majdurs from Source to Destination



Map 5: Migration Corridor of Bhagiya Labourers from Source to Destination



neighbouring villages within the same districts. Similarly, Gandhinagar, Sabarkantha, Ahmedabad, Banaskantha, Aravalli and Mehsana of North Gujarat region are also an important destination area for Chhota Udaipur, Dahod, Panchmahal and Mahisagar districts of Gujarat. Labour in a very less number, 41 bhagiyas depicted in Table 6 also migrate to Anand, Vadodara, Mahisagar and Kheda districts of Central Gujarat and Bharuch, Surat and Valsad of South Gujarat.

As evident from the findings of the data mapping and the map above Saurashtra-Kutch region has come out as the biggest corridor for agricultural migrant in Gujarat state; although the chapter highlights that destination areas for agricultural work are spread all over the state with small variation in number. The main source areas emerged from the chapter are the contiguous tribal belts of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Raja-

sthan and Madhya Pradesh. The next chapter explores the village profile of source area and the profile of migrant agricultural labour.

Table 6: Migration Mapping of Bhagiya Labourers

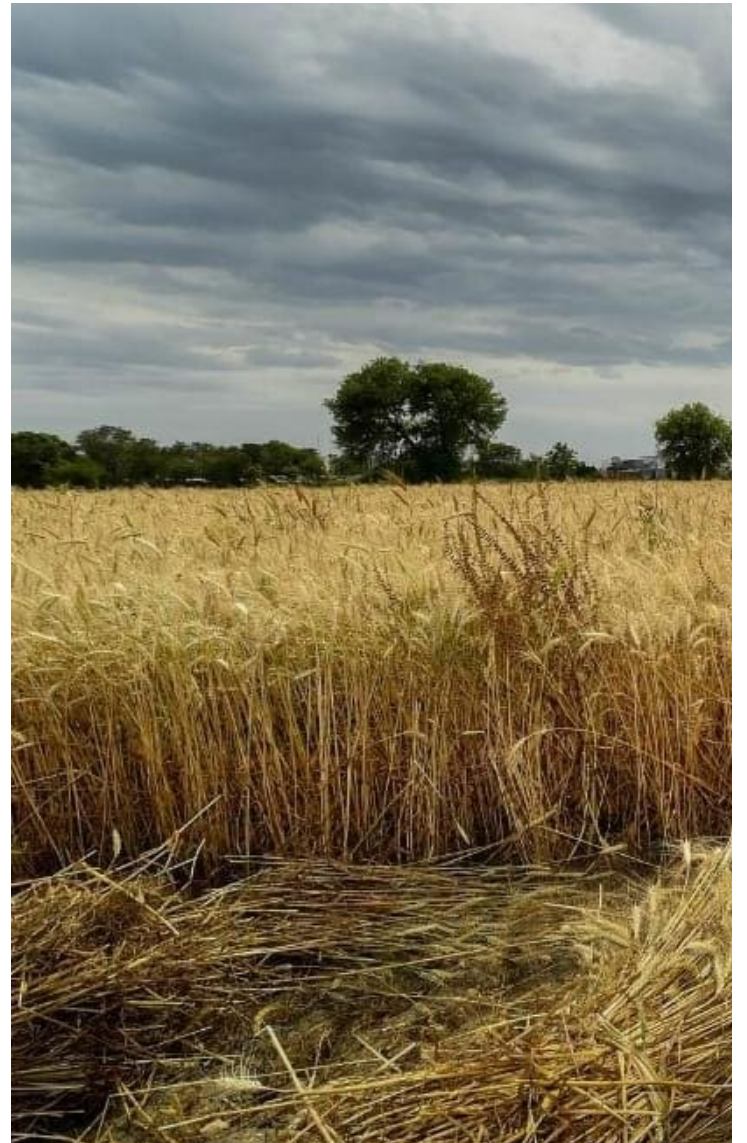
State	Gujarat Regions/ District Name	Saurashtra -Kutch	Central	North	South	Total
Gujarat	Chhota Udaipur	135	0	25	1	161
	Dahod	256	7	145	2	410
	Mahisagar	155	26	131	0	312
	Panchmahal	6	0	0	0	6
Madhya Pradesh	Barwani	164	4	3	1	172
	Alirajpur	61	0	0	0	61
	Jhabua	2	0	0	0	2
	Khargone	2	0	0	0	2
Maharashtra	Dhar	15	0	0	0	15
	Nandurbar	54	0	0	0	54
Rajasthan	Banswara	58	0	0	0	58
Total		908	37	304	4	1,253

Chapter 5

Demographic and Village Profiles of Migrant Agricultural Labour

The present chapter draws in detail the demographic profile of the sampled population as mapped in the source area of migration. As the reader would recall, the research tools were designed to map a comprehensive understanding about the migration stream and the extent of the prevalence of the phenomenon of rural-to-rural migration by the tribal migrant agricultural workers. Thus, aligning with the research objective to map the incidence of the practice and migration corridors, the research team agreed that without understanding the conditions that push the workers towards migration, the understanding of the sampled households would be incomplete and inadequate. Therefore, it was deemed imperative to collect the profiles of the villages and chart the demography of the workers and the households that would form an essential foundation for our understanding of what factors push workers to migrate as agricultural labourers.

The primary data collected and generated through the medium of the four schedules were to be read in conjunction with each other. As the reader would note from the discussion in the section on research methods, they would realize that the research tools were designed and implemented in a way that would help generate a ho-



listic perception of the conditions prevailing in the source that cause distress-induced migration. The discussion below draws from the data canvassed through mapping the conditions prevailing in the villages (in the source clusters) in 64 villages (across seven blocks of the four districts in the states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra). The findings of this phase are to be read in conjunction with the labour profiles collected through the household survey 1 of 700 households across the 64 villages listed in the previous phase (of this 413 agricultural labour households and 287 bhagiyas were surveyed).

For a comprehensive mapping of the extent of migration, profiles of the source villages were curated in the blocks selected as samples with our grassroots partners of migration. The village profiles thus were curated for 64 villages across seven blocks spread across the four districts of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maha-



rashtra that form the contiguous tribal belt. Table 7 details the villages sampled in the study.

This phase of mapping was focussed to arrive at the history of migration in the village, number of households who undertake migra-

tion, the sectors to which people migrate to, destination that people of the village migrate to in Gujarat, and the social profile of the members of the village. Since this phase of the survey was initiated during the unlock period of Covid-19 in

Table 7: Spread of Villages Surveyed

State	District	Block, District	Number of Villages
Madhya Pradesh	Barwani	Rajpur	11
		Barwani	10
		Pati	10
	Alirajpur	Sondwa	10
Gujarat	Dahod	Sanjeli	10
	Chhota Udaipur	Chhota Udaipur	3
Maharashtra	Nandurbar	Shahada	10
Total			64

August 2020, the schedule briefly also touched upon the effect that the pandemic and the lockdown had on the migrant population of the villages canvassed.

As the reader can recall from the discussion in Chapter 3 on methodology, the data collection strategy was cumulatively drawn with our grassroots partners who were to deploy their regional teams to collect and map the migrant agricultural workers. The choice and selection of field locations for primary data collection – the blocks, districts and consequently the villages in the sample – were facilitated by our grassroots organizations. The villages sampled were selected in consultation with the partners and the research team relied on the pre-existing knowledge of the grassroots partners – who have had decades of rich and extensive experience of engaging with tribal migrant workers. It was through them that the team delineated the districts and the blocks where agricultural workers migrated to the various blocks of the state of Gujarat. Furthermore, it should be noted that the safety regulations due to the ongoing pandemic had placed restrictions on the mobility of various regional teams and thus affected their access to the workers and their villages. Thus, keeping in mind the challenges induced by the Covid-19 restrictions resulting in lack of mobility and thereby access of the field teams, the research team collectively considered it wise to rely on the legitimacy and the knowledge of the regional research teams and undertake mapping in the field locations that could be accessed with ease – keeping in mind all the safety regulations pertaining to Covid-19.

Migration History

Social-Structure of the Village: The regional teams thus embarked on curating profiles of the villages to form an organic understanding of the incidence of migration and social structure of village from the source areas depicted in the table above. While discussing the presence of tribal communities in the blocks selected as the area of study, the Census (2011) states that 88.8 percent of the population in Alirajpur, 85.3 percent in Jhabua, 66.8 percent in Barwani, 72.3 percent in Dahod, 61 percent in Nandurbar district belong to Scheduled Tribe (ST). The data collected in our research also depicts the high presence of the Scheduled Tribes in this

Table 8: Social Composition of the Households Surveyed in all the Villages

Category	Number of Villages (Percentage)
Only ST	28
SC and ST	29
ST and OBC	3
SC, ST and OBC	3
All	1

region. As the intuition would inform and knowing that the source area aligns with the contiguous cluster of the Bhil tribal communities along the borders of the three states; the village survey schedule reported that tribal communities were present in all the sampled villages. Table 8 indicates that there were 28 villages that had only tribal population. While 45 percent of the total villages mapped indicated that there were both ST and Scheduled Caste (SC) communities present. While the rest of the villages reported presence of ST, SC and Other Backward Classes (OBC) communities along with marginal presence of other communities such as general and muslim.

Incidence of Migration: The mapping of the villages (see Table 9) highlights the incidence of migration among its population. It was found that of the total 64 villages that were mapped, cumulative percentage of migration of the households was 63 percent. About 59 percent of the households from 11 villages of Rajpur block (Barwani, Madhya Pradesh) reported migrating as seasonal labourers. Similarly, the other two blocks – Pati and Barwani in the district Barwani (Madhya Pradesh) reported that more than 80 of their households migrated for work outside of their district. A similar trend was observed for Chhota Udaipur Block in Gujarat which reported that more 80 percent of their population migrated to various parts of Gujarat for work. Table 9 indicates the block-wise distribution of households who migrate for work to various parts of Gujarat.

As per the data collected during this phase, it reflected that migration was an essential facet of rural livelihood. Households that constituted migrating population could no longer be characterized within the confines of a fixed occupational structure. Instead, it was found that the workers preferred to undertake cyclical seasonal migration. The respondents reported that they worked in their villages as subsistent or marginal farmers (true for those who owned land) while they migrated seasonally as casual workers in various sectors wherever they could

Table 9: Percentage of Households that Migrate from Different Blocks

Block, District	Number of Villages Surveyed	Total Number of Households Mapped	Total Number of Migrant Households	Percentage of Migration in the Block (in percent)
Rajpur, Barwani	11	4,937	2,928	59
Barwani, Barwani	10	2,424	2,035	84
Pati, Barwani	10	3,496	2,805	80
Sondwa, Alirajpur	10	3,530	2,614	74
Sanjeli, Dahod	10	3,550	1,718	51
Chhota Udaipur	3	1,300	1,050	81
Shahade, Nandurbar	10	1,885	241	13
Total	64	21,122	13381	63

find work. Migrant workers from these villages mapped reported migrating as casual workers in various sectors such as construction workers, brick kilns, factory units (in industrial towns), short-term and long-term agricultural work.

History of Migration: To understand the material conditions prevailing in the source and complement the extensive data mapping exercise, group discussions were organized across various source locations with the people in the villages or cluster to understand how the migration as phenomenon began in the village.

Table 10: Years of Migration from the Village

Years of Migration	No. of Villages	No of Village (In percent)
< 5years	4	6
5-10 years	8	12.50
10-15 years	33	52
15-20 years	8	12.50
>20 years	11	17
	64	100

As discussed in the chapter on methods the reader may recall that FGDs were formulated to capture the trends at the level of the village or the cluster. Such a discussion took place in Nandurbar, where in the team of field researchers had an opportunity to meet with the family members of R. Thakre and S. Thakre from Shahada block of Nandurbar who were the first ones to migrate from their village. The respondents shared that the Thakre family began migrating three decades ago to Saurashtra to work in the sugarcane farms. At that time, daily wage was Rs. 12 for a day work in the village, that was also

irregularly paid in the Saurashtra (FGD Sahada, Nandurbar, Maharashtra).

Like Thakres, many more such families began migrating to the hinterlands of Gujarat work in sugarcane farms primarily due to lack of sustainable livelihood alternatives and in search of better wages across Saurashtra. Soon many others followed the suit and thus the region has been witnessing migration for about 30 years for agricultural work and to other sectors as well. The data mapped across the source clusters reflected that the history of migration has been long in the source areas of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat. Table 10 below shows that in the 64 villages that were mapped, workers from 52 percent of the villages had been migrating from source for about 10 to 15 years. Migration in eight villages in the sample had been taking place for 15 to 20 years. Only six percent of villages reported that people had been migrating for less than five years. Since the village profiles also documented the communities that first migrated from the villages, it was found that the people from the tribal communities of Barela Adivasi (from all the sampled villages of Pati block), Bhils from Sanjeli and Chhota Udaipur block were the first ones to migrate.

The reported data shows that migration in majority of the villages is less than a generation old. Migration from the tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra are recent. Although, migration started earlier in region closer to the Gujarat plains that is the areas of Dahod and Chhota Udaipur. It was stated that migration from these regions are as long as 40 years. There were many who were migrating for agricultural labour who were second generation migrants.

Table 11: Age Distribution Among Migrant Agricultural Workers				
Age Range (in years)	Number of Labour	Seasonal Workers (In percent)	Number of Labour	Wage Sharecroppers (In percent)
Less than 18	35	8	1	0
19-29	164	40	74	26
30-39	123	30	110	38
40-49	59	14	84	30
More than 50	32	8	18	6
Total	413	100	287	100

Profile of Migrants Households

Having formed an understanding about the migration stream and the incidence of the migration, the team canvassed 700 households of agriculture labour in the seven blocks spread across districts of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. Out of 700 households that were mapped, 413 respondents worked as casual agricultural workers, while were 287 workers that worked in the bhag-kheti arrangement. Readers may note that while the mapping exercise was underway, the workers who undertake bhag-kheti had already migrated to their destination of migration along with their families for the kharif season. Following which the enumerators met higher number of casual workers than the wage sharecroppers which was thus reflected in the mapping exercise. Furthermore, due to paranoia surrounding Covid-19, many of the respondents were hesitant to engage with the team of enumerators. The team found that the workers were hesitant to engage with people who were not from within the village and thus many refused to share information with the team. In spite of the team informing and elaborating on the objectives of their visit and details about the study on numerable occasions, it did little to relieve the workers and their family members of their pessimism of meeting and sharing information with the strangers. Their pessimism was further fuelled by the hardships that lakhs of migrant workers had faced during the lockdown due to Covid-19. This unquestionably impacted the various stages of the mapping exercise and on many occasions the team found that the workers refused to divulge details of their households and the members. It was in such cases that the legitimacy of our grassroots partners came in handy and the team was able to map the households wherever the villages

were familiar with the organizations and their representatives.

The section below thus elaborates on the details of the findings from the Household Survey Part-I that was carried out among the agricultural labours to map demographic details about the respondent and their family members.

Age Group of the Migrant Agricultural Workers: The table 11 below states the age distribution of the workers across casual seasonal workers and wage sharecroppers. One can see that 40 percent of the casual workers were between the age group of 19 to 29 years, and 30 percent were within the age group of 30 to 40 years; the age distribution for wage sharecroppers was crowding in the age group of 19 to 49 years, with 38 percent workers in the 30 to 40 years.

One observes that the workers in the age group of 19–39 years preferred to work as casual workers when they are younger, however as the workers aged, they preferred to work in long term and stable livelihood alternative such as the wage sharecropping. Jagdish Jamre from the block Pati (Badwani, Madhya Pradesh) explained this age group phenomenon. Jamre had been working in Gujarat for 10 years at the time of the interview. He shared that like him, many other began working as a seasonal agricultural labourer for the first few years, however workers preferred to move into wage sharecropping as they aged. Jamre himself has been working as a wage sharecropper for 8 years in Amreli with the same landowner. He elaborated that there was more money in working as a short-term agricultural labourer than there was in working as a wage sharecropper. But the reason why most people choose the latter was that it allowed them to take care of the children and keep them safe while also taking care of the household. Jamre detailed that when one worked as a khet majur,

workers are required to work different fields every single day and for long hours, and thus taking care of the children was not possible, especially if children were really young where they require constant care and attention. Jamre shared that some landlords often penalized parents if they saw them interrupting work and caring for children. If on any day there was any difficulty – for instance one got late while tending to children or if the child got sick – the worker would lose the day’s wages. On the other hand, if one worked as a bhagiya, one gets to stay in one place, in one field. Living arrangement allowed the workers to keep his wife and children in the destination of migration and allowed him to look after his family while he worked in fields. ‘And how much you work was upto you’, He stated that one can earn Rs. 9,000 – Rs.10,000 a month working as a labourer for a month, it is extremely rare for bhagiya to earn that much.

Educational Status of Agricultural Labour: In discussions pertaining to choice of work, the respondents shared that their choice was limited since they lacked technical skills that

could make them employable in sectors that paid better than agricultural sectors; and thus limited their choice of livelihood to agricultural work. Oftentimes the respondents cited that lack of skill set acquired through education and technical training did not allow them to be employed in other sectors such as construction or industrial sector. Many stated since the skill set they possessed was pertinent to the agricultural sectors, they relied on finding work that could help them earn a living based on their skill set.

According to the discussions and conversations, the respondents and the members of the household often shared that the people migrated as agricultural workers since the workers had never been enrolled to a school or had completed their education, they did not have the required skills to be employable anywhere else. As evident from the table above, 81 percent of total households that undertake agriculture labour reported as being illiterate, while 19 percent had attained education upto the level of primary level or above. Of these, 9 percent of the respondents had received education till primary level, five percent had completed middle school and another five percent secondary education.

Education	Number of Agricultural Labour	Percentage
Illiterate	567	81
Primary	65	9
Middle	34	5
Secondary	34	5
	700	100

Distribution of Land Holdings among the Sampled Households:

Landholding or landownership has been cited time and again as a key resource base for the rural households. Lack of landholdings or inadequate landholdings were one of the primary reasons that were cited in group discussions as push factors for migration in addition to lack of alternative livelihoods.

As Table 13 indicates for casual workers that 90 percent of the respondent house-

Size of Landholding (in Acres)	Casual Workers		Wage Sharecroppers	
	Number of Households	Percentage	Number of House-	Percentage
<1	85	21	35	12
1-1.50	76	19	191	67
1.50-2.00	117	28	26	9
2.00-2.50	92	22	7	2
2.50-3.00	9	2	5	2
More than 3	34	8	23	8
Total	413	100	287	100

holds owned less than 1 hectare or 2.5 acres of land holding which can be termed as marginal holdings.⁵ Only 10 percent of respondents have Small land holdings.⁶ Out of 90 percent, 21 percent have less than one acre of land, which was reported as being inadequate to support the survival of a household of five people. 69 households reported that they had no landholdings to work.

Similar to the trend among the households of the casual workers was of the households who undertook wage sharecropping. It was found that 90 percent of the respondents were also marginal land-holders while 10 percent could be categorised as small landholders. 35 households among the *bhagiya* owned landholding less than an acre while 191 households (67 percent of the sample) owned about 1-1.50 acres of landholdings.

When one compared the distribution of landholdings among the casual agricultural workers with that of the wage share croppers (*bhagiyas*) one finds that while the former had some kind of foothold in terms of land resource (even though it was inadequate) in their source villages, the latter group of households of wage sharecroppers had lower size of the landholdings. Thus, it can be inferred that low landholding could a prime determining and contributing factor that pushed workers to undertake long term migration as wage sharecroppers in contrast with the casual workers who migrated only seasonally. During the off season they often worked on their own land. This insight was reiterated in numerous discussions, especially in Badwani where the respondents reported that one of the important reasons of migration was marginal and inadequate landholdings. These landholdings, which often are owned collectively by families further became inadequate as they shrunk with each generation. The respondents in the same discussion stated that a minimum of 2.5 acres of land was required to ensure annual food security and survival of a family of at least five members in the village, however with growing number of family members in each generation and the land-size remaining fixed; forced the younger generations to seek work outside



their homes to support themselves and their families.

Family Members Accompanying to the Destination of Migration: The practice of wage sharecropping relies on the labour of the family members of the *bhagiyas*, while casual agricultural labour relied on the labour of the single workers. Therefore, as intuition would inform the distribution for family members migrating to the destination was higher when compared for casual agricultural labour. Furthermore, the landlords in the destination often preferred the large migrant families for the work that was for longer durations, since this also means that they do not have to employ other workers throughout the agricultural season. The following chart shows the number of family members above the age of 14 years migrating with *bhagiyas* in the field.

A total of 986 family members who were *bhagiyas* reported that they migrated to the destination. Out of 280 households, 30 percent migrated with four family members, 26 percent with 3 family member and 24 percent with either one or two family members for sharecropping work. As the *bhagiyas*' work is long seasonal work and preferred by households that had small children; respondents mostly migrated along with the family member including chil-

5. Marginal holdings are categorized as landholdings equal to or lesser than 1 hectare, that is, 2.5 acres

6. Small land holdings are landholdings that are more than one hectare but less than two hectares.



dren. As the table mentions, 91 percent of total respondents migrated with more than 1 family member.

Having drawn a preliminary picture about the sampled worker households – members of which have been migrating to Gujarat as both long-term and short-term agricultural workers, the next chapter will elucidate the reader of the nuances about the conditions and experiences of working as agricultural workers. This chapter draws on the details about the household of the workers, particularly when they are in the destination of migration. So far – we know the migration stream of the workers, where they come from – where they migrate to, what are the reasons for migration, level of education, level of landownership, members of the household accompanying the migrant – together these findings help us collate reasons that facilitate and induce workers to migrate as agricultural labourers. The findings from the next stage of mapping contains the accounts of the workers themselves wherein they detail the structure of work, the arrangements of work, the conditions of living, experience of working, economic returns on the work, access to public ser-

vices – all these findings come together to strengthen the formulation of the action of establishing a support group for the agricultural workers in Western India.

Table 14: Number of Family Members Accompanying Respondents

Number of Family Members	Number of Households	Percentage
One member	26	9
Two members	42	15
Three members	72	26
Four members	85	30
Five members	33	12
Six members	13	5
More than six members	9	3
Total	280	100

Chapter 6

Working and Living Conditions of the Tribal Migrant Agricultural Workers

This section seeks to discuss the findings of the detailed household survey carried out with the 357 families of agricultural workers. Of this, 153 households were wage sharecroppers (bhagiyas) and 204 were casual agricultural workers. There were differentiated survey schedules for both the set of workers and hence the discussion here would be divided into two parts: the first would detail the findings for wage sharecroppers while the second would present the findings for casual agricultural workers.

Findings for Wage Sharecroppers (Bhagiyas)

For a robust and grounded understanding of the wage sharecrop-

ping agreement, the team decided to undertake a detailed mapping of the households that



Table 15: Geographic Distribution of Households Surveyed

Tehsil Name	Block Name	No. of Households
Badwani	Badwani	46
Bodeli	Chhota Udaipur	11
Chhota Udaipur	Chhota Udaipur	11
Fatehpura	Dahod	6
Pati	Badwani	14
Rajpur	Badwani	40
Sahada	Nandurbar	5
Sanjheli	Dahod	19
Santrampur	Mahisagar	1
Total		153



undertake wage sharecropping in the source of the migration, where they could discuss at length various facets entailed in the arrangement. The teams were able to map 153 bhagiya households in the source of migration in the nine blocks spread across five districts in the state of Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh. These locations form the contiguous tribal belt shared by the bordering districts of the three states. The mapping at the stage was focused to arrive at the nuanced characteristics of the contractual labour agreement seeking details on the agreed share of the output, terms and conditions of the agreement, crop cycles undertaken, details about the share in the inputs of the crops, the cost of the additional labour in-

curred by the bhagiya, acreage of the crop, production of the output, the market price in addition to advance amount taken and the weekly allowances borrowed from the landowner to arrive at the cash inflow and the earnings of the each respondent. It was also at this stage of mapping that details were sought regarding access to healthcare and experience of violence.

Table 16 depicts how during this particular period of research, it was found that of the 153 households of wage sharecroppers that were mapped, about 65 percent of them had been working in this arrangement for about two to five years, while 11 percent of the households had spent more than six years but less than a decade as bhagiya. About 14 percent workers

Table 16: Time Spent by Respondents as Wage Sharecroppers		
Time Spent as Bhag-kheti Workers	No of Households	No of Households (%)
1 year or less	14	9.15
2-5 years	100	65.36
6- 10 years	17	11.11
11- 15 years	14	9.15
More than 15 years	8	5.23
Total	153	100

Table 17: Frequency of Migration for Wage Sharecroppers		
Frequency of Migration	No of Households	No of Households (Percentage)
Migrating for the first time as <i>bhagiya</i>	4	2.61
Migrated as <i>bhagiya</i> only when seasonal agricultural work was unavailable	11	7.19
Migrated every year	137	89.54
Migrated as per need	1	0.65
Total	153	100

had been working as *bhagiya* for more than a decade – of which five percent had spent more than 15 years as *bhagiya*. The rest of respondents had recently moved into sharecropping and had spent a year or less.

This group of worker households (9 percent) who had spent less than one year as wage sharecropper stated that they preferred to work as casual agricultural workers – but decided to try their hand at wage sharecropping the first time due to the certainty of work for longer duration of the year and were able to find work through network of fellow villagers and relatives. Two cited lack of adequate seasonal work induced them to work as *bhagiya*. This group also had respondents who preferred to work as

casual agricultural workers, but engaged in wage sharecropping as per their family's need.

The majority of workers of the total workers, that is., 100 households who had been *bhagiya* for about two to five years, eleven of such worker respondents reported that they worked as wage sharecroppers because their family and kin members worked as *bhagiya*. It was through this network of relatives and kin-ties that they were able to find landowners. Of these two respondents reported that they chose sharecropping over other alternatives because

they liked the autonomy that wage sharecropping gave them and reported that they would reach out to farmers themselves for work. 74 respondents reported that they sought wage sharecropping as work due to the length of work, thus ensuring that they had certainty of work for long duration. It was found from the data mapped that often lack of other livelihood alternatives and the length of the duration of the work in wage sharecropping often worked in tandem to induce rural tribal migrants to work as wage sharecroppers (12 reported lack of other options pushed them to undertake *bhag kheti* and the length of season – out of which four stated that lack of other options forced them).

90 percent of all households mapped reported that they migrated every year, as can be seen from the table 17 below. 7 percent workers reported that they

would migrate to work for *bhag-kheti* only when they did not find work as agricultural labour.

Table 18 discusses the reasons cited by the respondents that often act to create distress to induce them to seek work as wage sharecroppers. It emerged that 60 percent respondents preferred wage sharecropping over other forms of livelihood due to the certainty it offered in terms of work for longer durations. During the discussions respondents often cited that working as *bhagiya* relieved them of finding work repeatedly and gave them a sense of assurance of work and hence some form of earnings for greater part of the year; unlike the case of casual agricultural workers who had to find work every peak season. 20 percent of respondents reported that they followed in the footsteps of their families who had been working as *bhagiya* themselves. Conversations held during the mapping

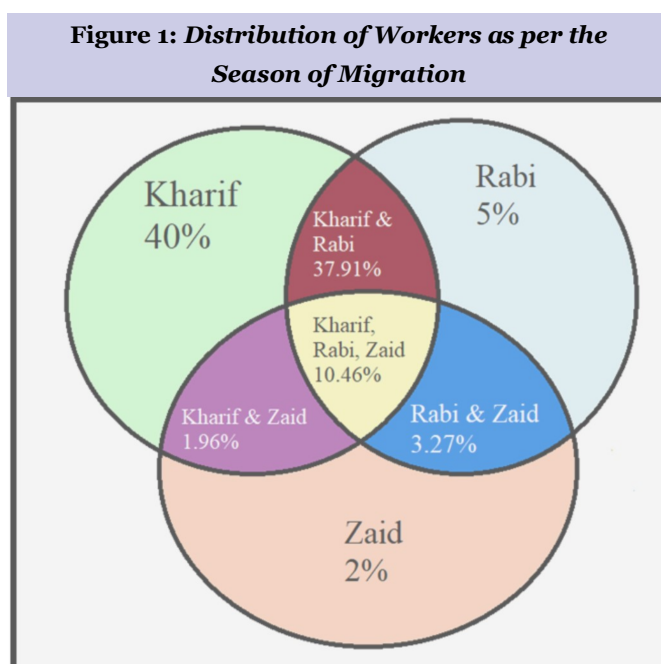
Reasons for Migration	No of Households (Percentage)
Due to length of the season (8-9 months)	60
Lack of other options of livelihood in the source	5
Because family members have been bhagiya	20
Because they liked bhag-kheti as work	2
Lack of any other skill	2
Other reasons: Because family members have been bhagiya, Lack of any other skills , Due to the length of the season	11
Total (n=153)	100

exercise revealed that 36 households in this survey were second-generation bhagiya workers. While 18 households discussed that in addition to the presence of family members in this trade, lack of any other skill and assurance of work for longer duration of the year also added as an incentive to prefer migration for bhag-kheti.

Table 19 depicts the seasons or length of the agricultural seasons that the households preferred to migrate for bhag-kheti. As the table below informs, of the total number of households mapped 40 percent of wage sharecroppers migrated for the Kharif season; while the 38 percent worker households undertook two seasons – Kharif and Rabi which amounted to about nine months of migration from months of July to March. 16 households (10.5 percent) that migrated for the three seasons only returned to their place of origin for a brief period of two weeks to three weeks during the month of March or April – after the crops for Rabi season have been harvested and they have received their share. These households then would leave for the next agricultural cycle beginning at the Zaid.

As depicted from the Table 16 and Figure 1 above, one realizes that majority of the households cultivated Kharif crops. Among these crops, cotton fibre emerged as the crop grown by 110 households, followed by 29 households who grew ground nut. Among the other crops grown during the Kharif season as reported by the respondents were chickpea, cotton fibre, cumin, flowers, groundnut, potatoes, sesame, tuar (pigeon pea pulse), vegetables (like auber-

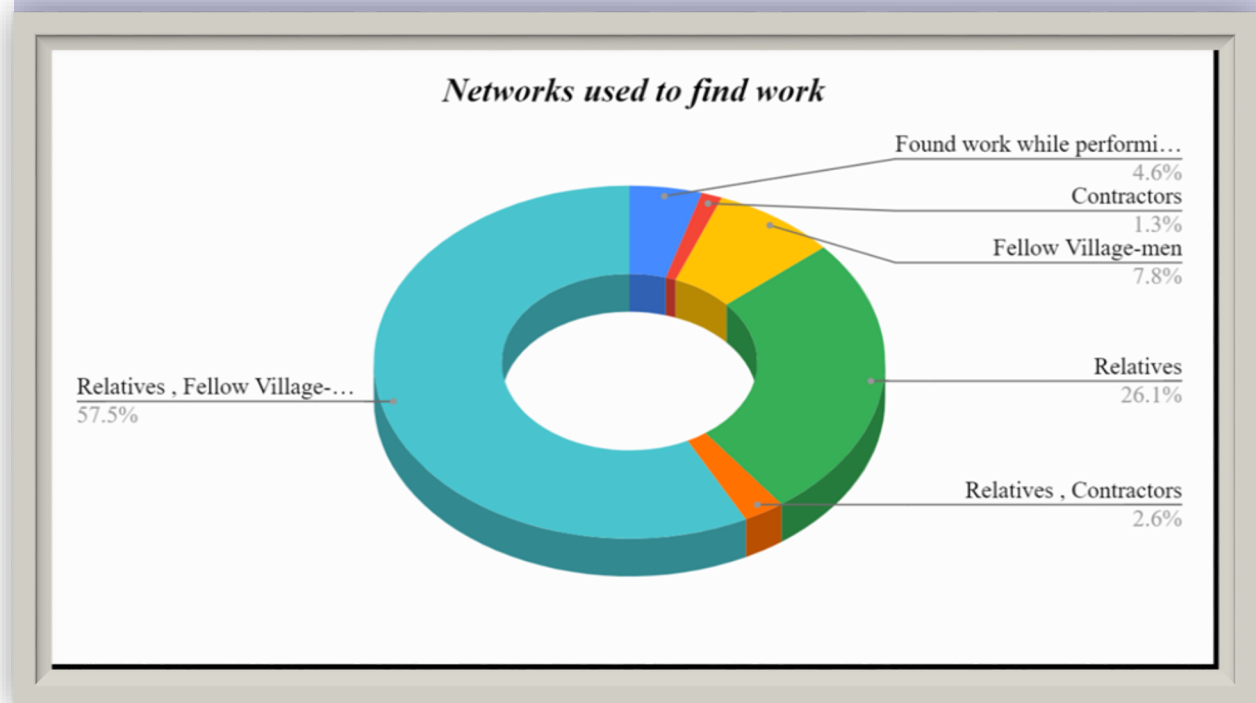
Agricultural Seasons of Cropping	No of Respondents (Percentage)
Kharif (July to October)	40
Rabi (October to March)	4.5
Zaid (March to June)	2
Kharif (July to October), Rabi (October to March)	38
Rabi (October to March) , Zaid (March to June)	3
Kharif (July to October), Zaid (March to June)	2
Kharif (July to October), Rabi (October to March), Zaid (March to June)	10.5
Total (n= 153)	100



gine, cauliflower and onion).

Table 20: Modes of Recruitment Used by the Households to Find Work		
Modes of Recruitment	No of Households	No of Households (Percentage)
Found work while performing casual labour	7	4.48
Contractors	2	1.3
Solely through the network of fellow village-men	12	8
Solely through the network of relatives	40	26
Relatives and contractors	4	3
Relatives and fellow village-men	88	57.52
Total	153	100

Figure 2: Networks Used by the Respondents to Find Work as Bhagiya



As the discussion on migration stream discussed elaborately that the households entering an agreement of wage sharecropping originate from the regions that fall in the contiguous tribal belt across the three states, migrate to the areas of North Gujarat, Central Gujarat, Saurashtra, and Kutch. The passage of migration and the path is often defined through the network of relatives and kin-ties. These familial networks play an integral role to help connect the landowners with the prospective wage sharecroppers and pool of agricultural workers required due to the peak seasons. Additionally, the network of the village fellow men also help workers to locate work. Table 20 informs the reader the various pathways through which the households found work as wage sharecroppers. One observes that 57.5 percent of households relied on a combined network of relatives and the fellow village men to help locate work across

the state. These networks also form a crucial link since the actors in these chains also provide source of guarantee for the both side of the parties – before they enter into an agreement and hence form a crucial actor in the mode of recruitments.

Once the contact has been made, respondents informed the team over several discussions and during the mapping exercise of the two things that they discussed with the landowner was the agreed share of the output and the advance amount. The respondents discussed that through their experience of work they were aware that there existed a regional difference and norm across the state of Gujarat. For instance, it was known knowledge that the share across the districts of Saurashtra was one-quarter of the harvest across the various seasons. The norm in Northern and central Gujarat was one-fifth; while in Kutch the landowners

were willing to offer one-third of the output. Three of the respondents stated that they preferred to migrate to Kutch primarily because of the higher share offered. The respondents elaborated that the distance from the source also determined the share of the output. Since the regions of North Gujarat were relatively closer to the source areas of the migrants – they often received lesser share. On the other hand, bhagiya in Kutch were required to travel more and could not return as often as the migrants in the northern Gujarat.

The team also found variation in the share offered within the same village. When the research team enquired about the reasons behind the prevalence of variation that seemed to exist within the same regions, the respondents explained that if the landowner was unable to find a wage sharecropper before the beginning of the agricultural season, then he would have to offer a higher proportion. However, the variation of one-sixth was observed only for the crop of potatoes – since the manual agricultural work required was relatively lesser when compared to other crops.

Another factor that determines the choice of landowner was the advance that the landown-

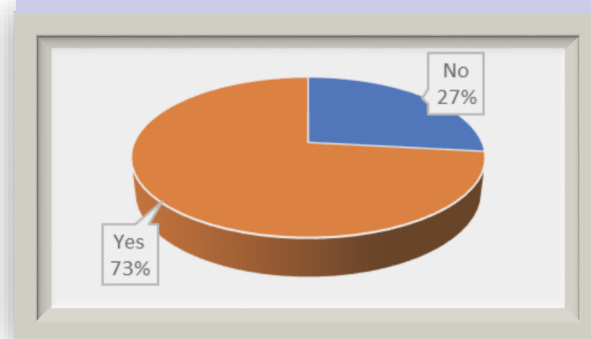
er was allowing to lend to the prospective wage sharecroppers. The provision of borrowing an advance amount before the beginning of the agreed period of work made wage sharecropping a preferred mode of livelihood – an observation that emerged from the many conversations with the respondents throughout the period of the research. The fact that the bhagiya can incur debt at the time of their need and work through the year to repay it seemed to act as a factor that affected the households' choice to work as long-term agricultural labourer than as casual agricultural workers. The Figure 3 reinforces the finding wherein 112 workers of the 153 had taken an advance from the landowner. If at the end of the year they were left with nothing or incurred a debt due to crop failure or low prices, the respondents continued to report – the advance amount acted as some kind of security for the family. While the family was away, Arvindbhai of Zarol, Sanjheli (Dahod, Gujarat) continued to explain that when the *bhagiya* migrated and was away for long months, this amount was left behind with the members of the family who used it for household expenses, maintaining the homestead and undertake subsistence agriculture in the source. Medical expenses, expenditure on social and communal rituals like wedding ceremonies, death and birth rituals, and repairing or renovating the houses were other reasons cited by the respondents. There were also times when the wage sharecroppers used the advance amount to repay old debts to other landowners. Arvindbhai quoted the experiences of his fellow village men who had been caught in a vicious cycle of debt. He continued to state that in order to repay one landowner and due to crop failure in the subsequent year the said village men were

Table 21: Variations in the Share of the Produce Received

Variations	No of Households (Percentage)
One- third	4
One- fourth	89
One- fifth	6
One-sixth	2
Total (n=153)	100

er was allowing to lend to the prospective wage sharecroppers. The provision of borrowing an advance amount before the beginning of the agreed period of work made wage sharecropping a preferred mode of livelihood – an observation that emerged from the many conversations with the respondents throughout the period of the research. The fact that the bhagiya can incur debt at the time of their need and work through the year to repay it seemed to act as a factor that affected the households' choice to work as long-

Figure 3: No. of Respondents who had taken an Advance



unable to repay the debt. Now they were stuck in a situation where they and members from their families were bound to the landowner for years in order to repay the debt amount. Owing to this alternate dimension to the argument presented above by the bhagiya in favour of seeking advance, 27 percent of the respondents reported that they did not seek any advance amount in the last year of work.

Table 22 discusses the amount of advance taken by the respondents. The reader would observe that 80 percent of the respondents took an

advance of less than Rs. 25,000. This amount was used, as discussed above for the daily expenditure of the members who stayed behind in the source.

During the period of the work arrangement the bhagiya respondents shared that advance amount acts as a tether and essential fea-

Table 22: Distribution of the Advance Amount

Amount of Advance Taken	No of Respondents	No of Respondents (Percentage)
Less than 10,000	5	4
10,000-25,000	89	80
25,000-50,000	9	8
50,000-75,000	7	6.4
75,000-1,00,000	1	0.8
More than 1,00,000	1	0.8
Total	112	100

ture that made bhag-kheti preferable to other alternatives of livelihood.

Relationship between the wage sharecroppers and the landowners: The survey reported that 40 percent of worker households had a verbal agreement and maintained that they themselves maintained no records or accounts of the transactions during the year. While 95 (62 percent of the sample) households – all of whom were from Madhya Pradesh reported that they did maintained a dairy to keep a record of the transactions – however entries that were made in the diary were by the landowner. The data revealed that the bhagiya relied solely on the landowner for record keeping, a fact that was repeatedly reported in the survey and throughout the period of research the ultimate and unquestionable authority of the landowner over the settlement of accounts.

The power embedded in the socioeconomic dynamic between the tribal migrant sharecropper and the landowner granted the khedut to exercise the instruments of exploitation over the bhagiya. This dynamic granted the landowner the freedom from accountability and authority to exercise power impose his decisions over the bhagiya. Respondents explained that

this was because the wage sharecroppers were working in an alien land – wherein the khedut was the only known person to the family. The khedut was also the only source of cash and assistance in times of need while in the destination of migration. This came to light repeatedly even when the respondents were enquired on their participation during the process of sale of the harvest. 108 respondents discussed that while they accompanied the landowner during the sale of the produce, they were only taken to load and unload the produce. They had no part or presence during the transactions. Even if the trader came home to the landowner to purchase the outputs, as reported by the four households, the bhagiya was not invited to the discussion. One respondent explicitly stated that even if he was present during the sale of the produce, he could hardly say anything since the language was foreign to him. On the other hand, 37 households clearly stated that they were not invited by the khedut to accompany or partake in the process of the sale of the output. Three respondents shared that the extent of the bhagiya participation in the transaction process was also dependent on the nature of the khedut – which was why there were times where the landowner himself invited the respondents to be present during the sale of the produce.

The exercise of power by the khedut became evident when the Parwatbhai Naik from Zoz in Chhota Udaipur – who had been practicing bhagiya across various parts of Saurashtra for more than 15 years discussed in detail that the caste difference between the both the parties of the agreement, the insider outsider dichotomies, the have and the have-nots – all worked against the bhagiya and placed the landowner outside the ambit of accountability and responsibility. To demonstrate his argument, Parwatbhai explained that even though the agreement was restricted to the agricultural practice, yet it was an unsaid condition that the bhagiya and his family members would be required to perform any and every labour as demanded by the khedut. The work entailed that the wage sharecropper would tend to animals owned by the khedut, khedut's domestic chores, fetching water, tending to animals, cleaning of the fields, storing of the grains after harvest, so on and so forth. Parwatbhai added in conclusion that the practice varied across the destination of bhag-kheti migration – however most bhagiya are prepared for this. During the mapping exercise,

when the respondents were sought if they performed any additional tasks other than agricultural manual work – 62 percent households reported that they performed some kind of additional task for the landowner and his family. 38 percent stated that in the past year, the landowner had not required them to perform any tasks besides the agricultural work.

Given the inherent inequality of the power dynamics between the khedut and the bhagiya, the respondent reported that there were instances when the landowners have resorted to manipulation of the accounts and some have resorted to not paying the farmers altogether. While the respondents reported about such in-

the sections above, the workers relied on the khedut for maintaining and settling accounts and due to low literacy levels among the tribal migrant agricultural workers; the many households were unable to share the information required for calculation of their net income from all the crops. However, in order to exact some kind of an understanding about the income earned by the wage sharecroppers, the research team extracted the information pertaining to total number of days worked in the destination, number of family workers that migrated with the bhagiya, earnings from each crop rotation, labour costs paid by the bhagiya to arrive at the income earned at the end of the agreed periods.

Table 23: Additional Tasks Performed by the Bhagiyas

Type of Work	No of Respondents (Percentage)
No additional work	38
Only tending to animals	30
All kinds of work: household work, fetching water, tending to animals, cleaning/weeding the fields	32
Total	100

Table 24: Daily Wages of Bhagiyas in 2019

Daily Wages Earned Bhagiyas	No. of Respondents	No. of Respondents (Percentage)
Less than Rs. 75	64	70.33
Rs. 75- 100	11	12.09
Rs. 100- 150	10	10.99
Rs. 150- 178	4	4.40
More than Rs. 178	2	2.20
Total	91	100

stances where they knew someone from their network of relatives or village men had faced such an instance, however only six respondents reported having faced non-payment of their share/wages.

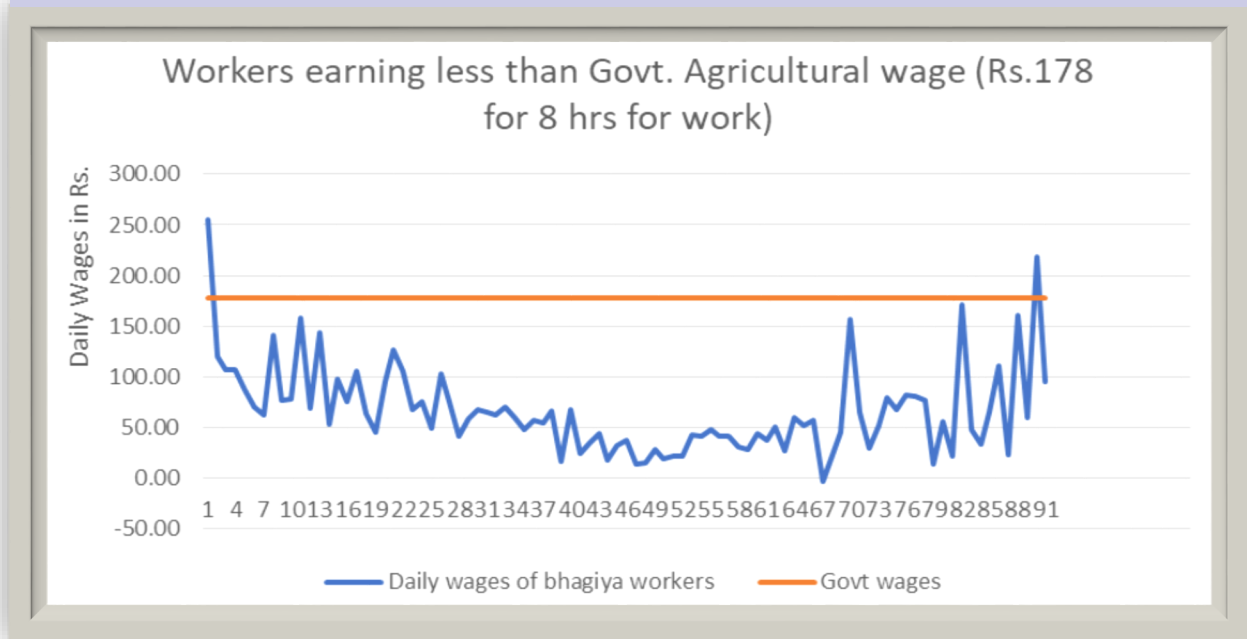
Returns from Bhag-Kheti: From the detailed survey of 153 workers, 91 profiles of the bhagiya workers were chosen and the team attempted to calculate their wages. As discussed in

earn more than Rs. 178 as daily wages, the rest of the bhagiya workers and their families were clearly earning far less than the minimum agricultural daily wages applicable in the state of Gujarat – which is one of the lowest minimum agricultural wages in the nation.

Findings also revealed that casual workers who were receiving Rs. 250-300 for up to twelve hours of wages, were also falling short of the stipulated minimum wage which after add-

This net income was divided among the family members of bhagiya and divided by the number of days worked on the field. The wages thus obtained are depicted in the table 24. When the wages are juxtaposed with the minimum agricultural wage as per the state government of Gujarat which stands at Rs. 178 for eight hours of work, it produced the following graph in Figure 4. One realizes that barring two respondents who were able to

Figure 4: Daily Wage Earned by the Bhagiya Workers Against the Minimum Agricultural Wages in Gujarat



ing over time would be at least Rs. 267 (as per the Minimum Wages Act, 1948).

Access to Basic Amenities: During the period of the survey and in the field visits made by the research team at the destination of migration it was found that the bhagiya families were required to stay in the fields often next to the structure that housed the borewell for irrigation. As indicated by Figure 5, 114 respondents stated that they lived in *kuchha* or temporary structures often adjoining the structure housing the borewell.

The rest of the respondents who had permanent structures to stay were often structures built primarily to store the equipment and store the harvest, with small semi-open space for the bhagiya family.

All the households reported as having access to drinking water. Since the families usually would be found living next to the borewell or the water motor – 83 percent the workers had access to electricity as well. This means that 103 households had access to drinking water, water for other uses and electricity. As the data reflected in Table 25 states, 93 percent of the households had no toilets and thus were forced to defecate in the open.

As far as the access to public services were concerned, the respondents reported that in case of illness or injury while working in the field, the landowner would provide assistance at the time – as was reported by 86 respondents. However, if the landowner had to incur the medical costs, he would pay at that time but would make deductions later. 67 households reported that the landowner provided no assistance in case of injuries during the work.

Figure 5: Typology of Housing for the Bhagiyas

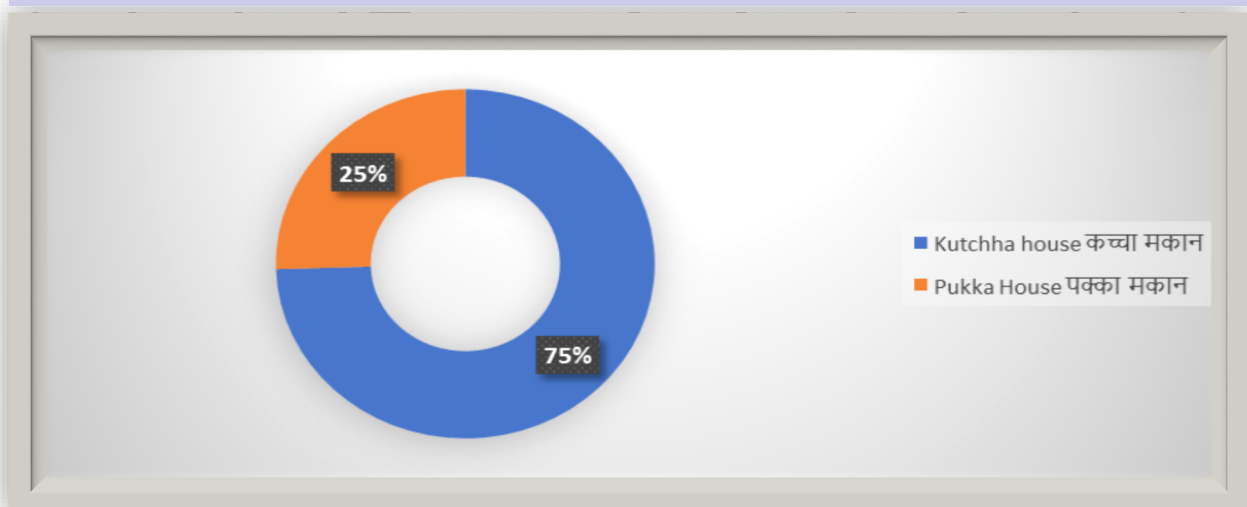


Table 25: Basic Amenities Available to the Bhagiyas		
Basic Amenities	No of Respondents	No of Respondents (Percentage)
Drinking water	153	100
Electricity	128	83
Toilet	10	6.5
Water for other uses	114	74.30
Firewood available	2	1.20



Long hours of work meant that the workers were unable to access the state provided medical services and thus 135 households reported that they had to access the services of private medical practitioners. However, 18 households reported that they visited government dispensary at the time of illness.

126 respondents reported that there was no access to health and nutrition services available to the respondents and their families at the destination of migration. Since they lived away from the village settlement, this entailed that the ASHA worker would not visit their dwellings often. Only 9 households reported that their

children below the age of three years received nutrition from the Anganwadi. Regular Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) visits were reported only by eight households, while 41 households reported that their children were immunized at the destination of migration. 19 families reported that they left their young children either at home or there was no migrating member in their family who would require these services.

Perceptions on Violence: Throughout the study period, while the data was being collected and the FGDs were conducted with the bhagiya and khet majdurs in the destination across Junagadh, Amreli, and Gondal as well as in the source clusters of Dahod and Chhota Udaipur – the respondents reported high incidence of violence of various kinds – verbal abuse, physical and sexual harassment and molestation. Many respondents would often discuss how the kheduts or farm owners (who enjoyed a clout of power and influence owing to their socioeconomic capital) often inflicted violence and exploited workers who were vulnerable to such forms of violence due to their socioeconomic vulnerability which was often compounded as outsiders and tribals in the destination.

Conversations with bhagiyas and agricultural workers revealed that the stereotypical images harboured by the farmers about migrant tribal workers being aggressive, merrymaking, callous and lazy – often also created conditions that awarded more power to the class of farmers in addition to their socioeconomic class-caste position that gave them protection and local support; in turn emboldening them to inflict violence especially sexual harassment to the women migrant workers. The xenophobic attitude and perception towards the tribal migrants further created hostile condition against the victim and their families, who are blamed for causing unnecessary trouble for the farmer and

in turn attract penalization when they are barred or boycotted from finding work in the village (where the incident has taken place) and in other villages in the vicinity. For instance, 81 percent of the respondents reported that there were instances of violence, however only 15 households were willing to share or report instances of violence.

The conversations revealed that all the bhagiya workers and their families lived on the agricultural land which is the property of the farmer, which is usually located away from the settlement in the village. Thus, the bhagiya live secluded and are isolated from other bhagiya families and other villagers. Furthermore, the farmers and his family have access to the hutments at all times and visit the family often under the garb of supervision and surveillance. Often, since the farmers are aware of the routine of the bhagiya, the farmers who are sexual predators and/or repeat sexual offenders often resort to tactics where they direct the bhagiya men to water the fields at odd hours, sometimes late at night so that the women are left alone; or visit the settlement in the absence of the men. The respondents reported that such sexual predators kept a tab on the routine and the movement of the family members often taking advantage of the situation when men are not around. The respondents also divulged that most bhagiya women were often scared for their husbands and families' safety and hence would not report the incident. Instead they would insist their husbands on relocating to another khedut. At other times when the women have confided into their husbands or relatives – the victim's families have often worked to suppress the case – due to the fear of social embarrassment and humiliation. The discussions further revealed that the kheduts themselves have often threatened the victims with causing physical harm to their husbands or charging a case of theft against the husband or the victim's young sons – which further discourages the victim from confiding the incident to anyone else.

These discussions paint a dismal and a bleak picture of the state of bhagiya workers and their families – especially in the context of violence – particularly sexual harassment/abuse and physical assault. As shared above and re-emphasized in the cases discussed below – taboo and social embarrassment in addition to



threat to the victims' family from the perpetrator, the political clout enjoyed by the perpetrator or their families – work together to keep such cases in the dark. The cases discussed below are a researcher team's humble attempt to offer a fleeting view into the horrors and traumas that haunt the everyday lives of the bhagiya workers:

***Hadmatiya, Junagadh – FGD
with Sulekha and Sunita⁷
(reported in August 2020)***

The team met Sulekha (42) and Sunita (22) at the *vadi* where they have been working as bhagiyas since 2017. While Sulekha along with her husband and three children has been working since 12 years in the same village and the same farmer, Sunita and her family have been working as bhagiyas with the same farmer for last five years.

During the conversation on violence and harassment, the women reported that even though there is high incidence of such events – they are rarely reported even to the family members primarily due to the social ostracization and humiliation back in the source and due to the powerful position of the farmer – where bringing such cases to light is only going to backfire – since then the family and their network will be barred from finding work in the village and in the neighbouring vicinity for 'creating trouble'.

Sunita detailed how she is aware of such incidents, one such being the case of harassment with Sulekha. She detailed how Sulekha too was a victim to such an incident about six months ago – where another farmer from the same village sexually molested her.

7. Names have been changed to protect the identity of the respondents.



Sulekha explained that the incident took place in the morning at 4am when she went out to relieve herself. As she was returning, the Patel (farmer) who was riding on a bike followed Sulekha and stopped her way and threatened to abduct her. When she hurried to get away from him, he continued to follow her. Out of fear, Sulekha tried to scare the man away by threatening him to attack with a stone. The victim ran from the scene by running through the fields and reported the incident to her husband. Even though Sulekha insisted that the matter be reported to the *malik* or the farmer they worked for, her husband responded that if the man ever tried to molest her again – only then will they raise the issue with the farmer. Sulekha and Sunita shared that such reactions of husbands or family members often also discouraged women to report cases of harassment and molestations even to their own families and spouses. The burden of defending and justifying ones' self and the trauma that was compounded when the survivor had to first convince her family of her innocence, then to the outsiders often am-

plified her trauma and thus she chose to rather remain silent than put herself and her family through the ordeal that accompanies in bringing the matter to the light.

Rupakheda, Fatehpura, the details of the victim and their family was withheld by the respondent (reported in March 2020):

During the preliminary field work the respondents shared an incident of how unsafe the work of Bhagiya women can be while they discussed the conditions of work and living arrangements. The respondents – whose son has been working as a bhagiya in Savarkundla, Amreli for the last two years from Rupakheda reported that incidents of women being harassed and assaulted are aplenty and was almost a common knowledge among the community of bhagiya workers across Dahod. Yet the victim's family refrained from reporting these incidents due to the looming fear of humiliation and ostracization the family would face in the source,

the threat to the security of the victims' family while in the destination. Furthermore, the migrant workers were often no match against the perpetrators/sexual offenders who either the farmers or their relatives often backed with such power that initiating proceedings against the perpetrators are almost impossible. Furthermore, since the incident has taken place in the perpetrator's village, the victim and their family do not find any support either from the police or the Panchayat in the destination of migration. This forced the victims' family to not report such incidents no matter how heinous they are. Even in cases where the victim and their family were courageous enough to initiate lodging of a case the fact that police is hostile to the victim and often sympathetic or in nexus with the perpetrator and hence often does next to nothing – also hampers the morale of the family.

One such incident narrated – took place in January 2020 – where the teenage sister-in-law of the bhagiya was raped and murdered in Jamnagar. The respondent hesitated to share the details of the family or the location where the incident took place – due to the severity of the crime. He narrated that the incident had left the community rattled, although they were not surprised. The respondent detailed that the incident took place when the young victim went to deliver food to her sister and her husband who were out to water the crops late in the evening. The Patel (khedut) and his relative who were aware of the victim and the family's routine abducted the teenager, raped her in the room where the water motor is kept. When the victim threatened to report the matter, the perpetrators strangled the woman and disposed her body in the nearby jungle, before fleeing the crime scene. After the family of the victim began searching for her, they found the body in the forest and realized that she has been sexually abused and murdered. Even though the family was able to escalate the matter and lodge an FIR in the destination against the perpetrators – the family had to then flee from the village due to the threats by the Patel and his family. The family left their place of work and the wages that would have been accrued to them, and decided to never return to that village again. However, the respondent shared that escaping or fleeing is the extent of agency the victim and the family had – to not return to the place of the incident. Many of the migrant tribal families have no faith in the

procedures of redressal, and their economic and social precariousness forces them to move on with their trauma instead of seeking justice and pressing charges against the perpetrators.

Chhota Udaipur, Rajeev and Suresh (reported in September 2020)

Continuing with the discussions in the source clusters of bhagiyas and agricultural labourers, the respondents shared about the presence of violence in various forms that kheduts inflict on the bhagiyas and their families, and the agricultural workers, yet none was willing to share their experiences. It was then that Rajeev and Suresh came forth to report their own experiences of being bhagiyas, the ordeal that the families were subjected to due to their socio-economic vulnerabilities that often rendered them helpless – a fact that many perpetrators – the farmers and their families were acutely aware of and would often take advantage of.

Both Rajeev and Suresh – both of whom were in their early thirties, detailed how they were second generation bhagiyas – and the brutal reality of rampant violence primarily towards the bhagiyas and their families was part of their lived experience. They reported that they decided to quit working as wage sharecroppers about four to five years ago and now worked as construction workers in the rural parts of Chhota Udaipur. Rajeev, had worked as a Bhagiya for seven years across various districts of Saurashtra, including Kutch. The incident that he reported took place in Kutch⁸ when he was a victim of an atrocity. Rajeev detailed that in addition to everyday verbal abuse, he was forced to flee the village when the khedut beat him and forced him to carry the plough to weed the field. The respondent elaborated how in the fourth month of his stay as a bhagiya, the first crop, that is, cotton, was ready to be weeded and the farmer demanded that weeding be done before it rained. Weeding was to be done through *khapedu* (the oxen driven manual plough), however since one of the oxen was injured, the farmer forced Rajeev to carry the heavy equipment along with the other ox. In spite of Rajeev pleading, the farmer verbally abused the respondent and continued to beat him with a stick used to direct the pair of oxen and made the victim to work the field for more than eight

8. The respondent withheld the name of the block and the village.



hours. That night, the victim continued – and he decided that he wanted to leave immediately and never return to work as bhagiya. Rajeev added of his own accord that given his past experiences and having seen his parents work in inhuman and deplorable conditions where there was literally no one to support the migrant bhagiya workers, he decided it was best to leave with his family instead of reporting the incident of physical harassment. The respondent described that he had to escape in the dark of the night and as discreetly as possible – since the other bhagiya workers often inform the farmers/malik and which meant more abuse at the hands of the farmers. Hence most families who escape due to violence, harassment and abuse are often forced to do so discreetly in the dark of the night, often leaving behind their belongings and even their share of wages for the previous months of hard agricultural work.

Suresh and Rajeev discussed in detail how violence in the form of verbal harassment and verbal abuse was normalized amongst most bhagiya families to such an extent that they do not even consider these as incidents of violence and hence these remain under-reported. Fur-

thermore, many tribal families do not report cases of rape and sexual harassment due to the hostility they often face at the hands of the police. Secondly, they are constantly threatened of losing their livelihood – since lodging a complaint or reporting the incident often means earning a reputation of being trouble makers. This affects the family both in the source as well as the destination. While in the source the family is at the risk of being ostracised, humiliated, and victim blaming, at the place of destination the family is at the risk of losing their livelihood since the farmers do not wish to engage with families who ‘create trouble by lodging reports’. Furthermore, there have been cases wherein the perpetrators were the farmers themselves who employed the bhagiya and threatened the victim and the family with a case of theft against them. Additionally, the solidarity and well-connected political clout exercised by the farmers with the support of the local bureaucracy only added to the ordeals of the victim and their families – who are forced to withdraw or flee from the place of incident often leaving behind their belongings, their wages, their share of output and their dignity.

Findings for the Casual Workers

This section similar to the previous one seeks to elaborate on the details that emerged from the data collected from 204 households working as khet majdurs / casual agricultural workers from 9 blocks of 5 districts across the tribal region located on the borders of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Since the nature of the agricultural work was cyclical, the information sought is of the last recall period, that is the period of migration undertaken before the period of the Covid-19 induced lockdown.

Conditions of Work: The schedule began by seeking details of the number of days the respondent and the members of their family had migrated in the last season. Table 27 depicts that 26 percent of workers migrated for a period 30 to 45 days, followed by 22 percent of respondents who migrated for 90 to 105 days and 13 percent of workers who worked for 75 to 90 days.

During the period of mapping, it was found that the workers from these states migrated to perform work such as cotton picking, groundnut harvesting, paddy sowing, soyabean harvesting, wheat harvesting and sugarcane harvesting. The survey was carried out in the post kharif harvest period. Since the survey captured the last season of work, the work performed during the Rabi season could not be captured. Table 28 and Figure 6 depict the type of work the respondent performed in the last the period of migration.

One realizes that 47 percent of workers migrated to pick cotton – which is a labour-intensive work and requires the workers to work for more number of days. Conversations with agricultural workers in destination revealed that the pattern of migration for casual workers is such that once a team of workers arrived in a village in the destination of migration, they would harvest the crops on fields of multiple landowners. Thus, an activity such as cotton-picking entails that the team spent about 75 to 90 days at the destination.

Often since seasons for harvesting cotton and groundnut come consecutively, the workers often opt for harvesting the groundnut as well after cotton picking. To explain the mechanism involved, Kamlaben Naika, akhet majdur for the last ten years who we met in Bodeli, Chhota Udaipur – explained that it was due to consecutive periods of harvesting that certain workers ended up spending 90-100 days in the destination of migration (as depicted in Table 26). This was also beneficial for the workers since then they would have to migrate only once and be able to work for about two to three months at a stretch, which would enable them to sustain themselves through the year.

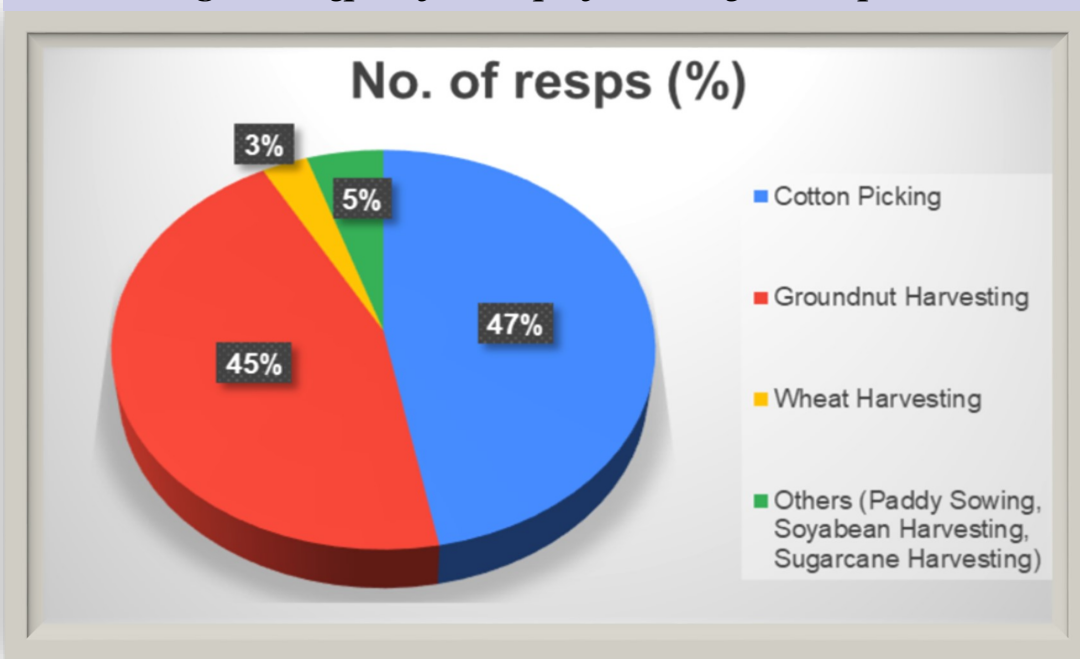
However, Sukhiben Naika – who too was a khet majdur added to supplement Kamlaben's statement that in such a scenario the workers ended up working for longer hours. These short or brief periods of work often meant that the workers ended up working

No. of Workers Mapped from Various Blocks	Name of the District	No. of Respondents (Percentage)
Badwani	Badwani	87
Bodeli	Chhota Udaipur	10
Chhota Udaipur	Chhota Udaipur	10
Fatehpura	Dahod	3
Pati	Badwani	21
Rajpur	Badwani	32
Sahada	Nandurbar	17
Sanjheli	Dahod	23
Santrampur	Mahisagar	1
Total		204

No. of days Worked	No. of Respondents (Percentage)
0-30 days	1
30-45 days	26
45-60 days	2
60-75 days	7
75-90 days	13
90-105 days	21.6
105-120 days	3
120-135 days	17
135-150 days	4
More than 150 upto 180 days	4
Total (n= 204)	100

Table 28: Types of Work Performed in the Last Season of Migration	
Type of Work in the Last Time Respondent Migrated	No. of Respondents (Percentage)
Cotton Picking	47
Groundnut Harvesting	45
Wheat Harvesting	3
Others (Paddy Sowing, Soyabean Harvesting, Sugarcane Harvesting)	5

Figure 6: Types of Work performed by the Respondents



three months worth of work in about a month's time. The duo shared that the location of migration often plays a role in matters of the hours spent working. For instance, their representative or the gangmaster of the team negotiates with the kheduts about conditions of work, hours of work and amenities to be made available for stay during the period of work. It was revealed that the workers from Madhya Pradesh (who constituted 68 percent of the sample) in addition to workers from Sahada, together constituting 82 percent, reported working for 8 hours. 14 percent reported working for more than eight hours but upto 12 hours; while 4 percent respondents (all of whom were from Dahod) reported that they were forced to work for more than 12 hours. During the FGD carried out in Asus, Sahada, Nandurbar, by our partners at Vichardhara Foundation with the women who worked as agricultural workers described that their day began by waking up early at 4 am. Due to gender division of labour, they completed their domestic chores and cooking by 6 am. The men and women would be ready to leave by 7 am. At about 7 pm, when they would be done with work, men would either go to fetch firewood or groceries

and the women would resume their domestic chores. Since the teams live in pasture land outside the village settlement – they have to fetch water for drinking and other purposes, like cooking or defecation in the open.

Table 29 depicts the daily wages earned by worker respondents. It was found that 61 percent of respondents received Rs. 200-250, while 21 percent workers received Rs. 250 to 300. The conversations with the agricultural workers in Dahod revealed that there were times when they have received Rs.300 per day for wheat, Rs. 400 for groundnut, and Rs. 100 for 20 kg of cotton picking. In case of high demand for labour during the cotton picking seasons – the respondents reported that they had received Rs. 500 per quintal for cotton picking. Data from workers from Badwani and Dahod revealed that the workers received Rs. 250 for cotton picking, groundnut harvesting and paddy sowing for eight hours of work.

The respondents from Badwani discussed that they had received Rs. 300 for cotton picking and wheat harvesting only if they worked for more than 8 hours, that is, around 11-12 hours of work daily.

Figure 7: No. of Hours Spent working by the Casual Workers

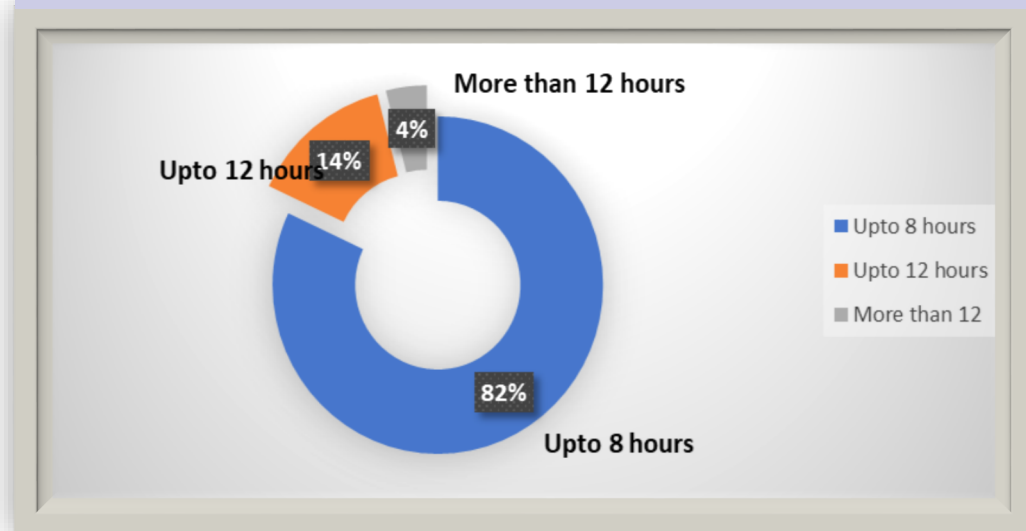
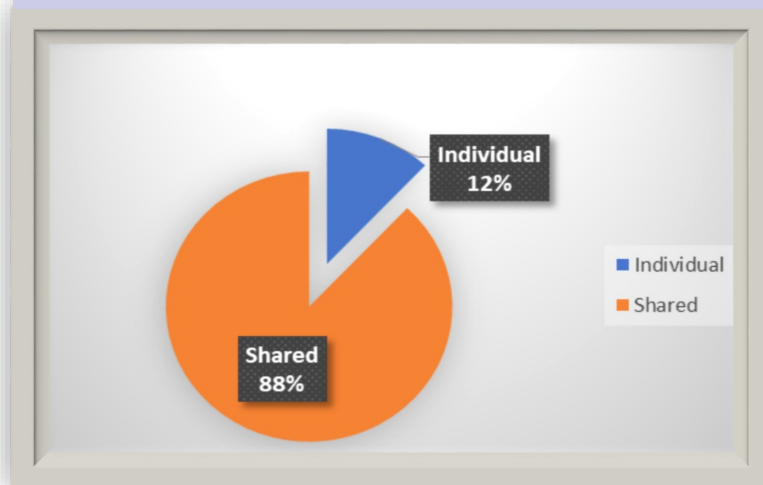


Table 29: Wages Received by the Respondents

Wages Received (Rs.)	No of Respondents (Percentage)
150- 200	3
200-250	61
250-300	21
300-350	13.70
More than 350	2.3

Figure 8: Type of Accommodation Reported by the Casual Workers



Living Conditions:

Due to the short duration of the migration, casual agricultural workers often live in camps set up outside of village perimeters. As reflected in Figure 8- 88 percent of casual workers lived in shared accommodations – such as the open settlements. 12 percent workers reported that in the last season the destination of migration was such that they had individual living space.

However from the innumerable conversations and discussions with the workers it was revealed that they often lived in open spaces, located outside the village settlement. This automatically entailed lack of access to basic amenities such as water, toilet, electricity, and firewood. All workers reported that they could access drinking water from the common tap in the village, while water for other uses had to often be fetched from distances. This was also true for firewood. Open camps often meant no access to electricity. However, they added that they were able to manage charging their phones from nearby connections in the vicinity.

Access to Medical Services: The workers reported that due to the short-term migration children and pregnant women were often left behind in the homestead. Even if there were

women who were pregnant or lactating they do not receive health and nutrition services while in the destination of work since they are in the field all through the day and the ASHA and ANM workers seldom visit outside the perimeters of the village. Also, since the work entailed long hours of hard work, caring for children becomes extremely difficult.

In case of injury or illness the workers did access medical services. However, 88 percent of workers reported that they visited a private practitioner or dispensary, while 18 reported that they visited a government dispensary. One worker reported that the only time they would visit a private dispensary would be in the case the government dispensary was closed. Long hours of work, however, and the timings of the government dispensary were often incompatible, forcing the workers to access private dispensaries instead.

56 percent workers reported that in the event of accidents or illness during the work, the landowner or contractor would provide assistance or aid to the casual agricultural workers. 44 per-



cent stated that they had to take care of any injury or illnesses themselves.

Perceptions about the Work: When enquired about why the workers preferred to work as casual workers, instead of other livelihoods during the group discussions and conversations during the exercise of mapping – the workers reported that as compared to bhag-kheti – khet majuri appeared as relatively less risky as a livelihood option and allowed them to return home. The workers met in Sanjheli, Fatehpura, Bodeli and Chhota Udaipur shared that since they were daily wage workers – there was assurance of receiving their wages. At the end of every season – they would receive their wages – while the bhagiyas were required to wait for an entire year to have their accounts settled. 95 percent of the respondents stated that they had not encountered any instance of non-payment of wages.

Additionally the bhagiyas, as Kamlaben of Bodeli shared, would often come across instances of violence against their family members, especially women. Kamlaben stated that since the family was at the mercy of the khedut due to the structure of the arrangement, they are often subjected to a lot of excesses and violence. Further, the sheer number of the workers that move together as a team the landowners do not attempt to bully or subject the workers to violence. Sexual harassment, while being a common occurrence among the bhagiya workers, was not so common for khet majdurs as respondents elaborated that women were at a much lesser risk while working as khet majdurs. As we saw in the case studies cited in the previous section, bhagiya workers often do not report the instances of violence due to stigmatizations, and humiliation in their own community

Table 30: Violent Incidents Reported by the Respondents

Kind of Violence Faced	No. of Respondents
None faced	151
Verbal abuse	49
Pressurised to work and verbal abuse	3
Physical abuse	1
	206

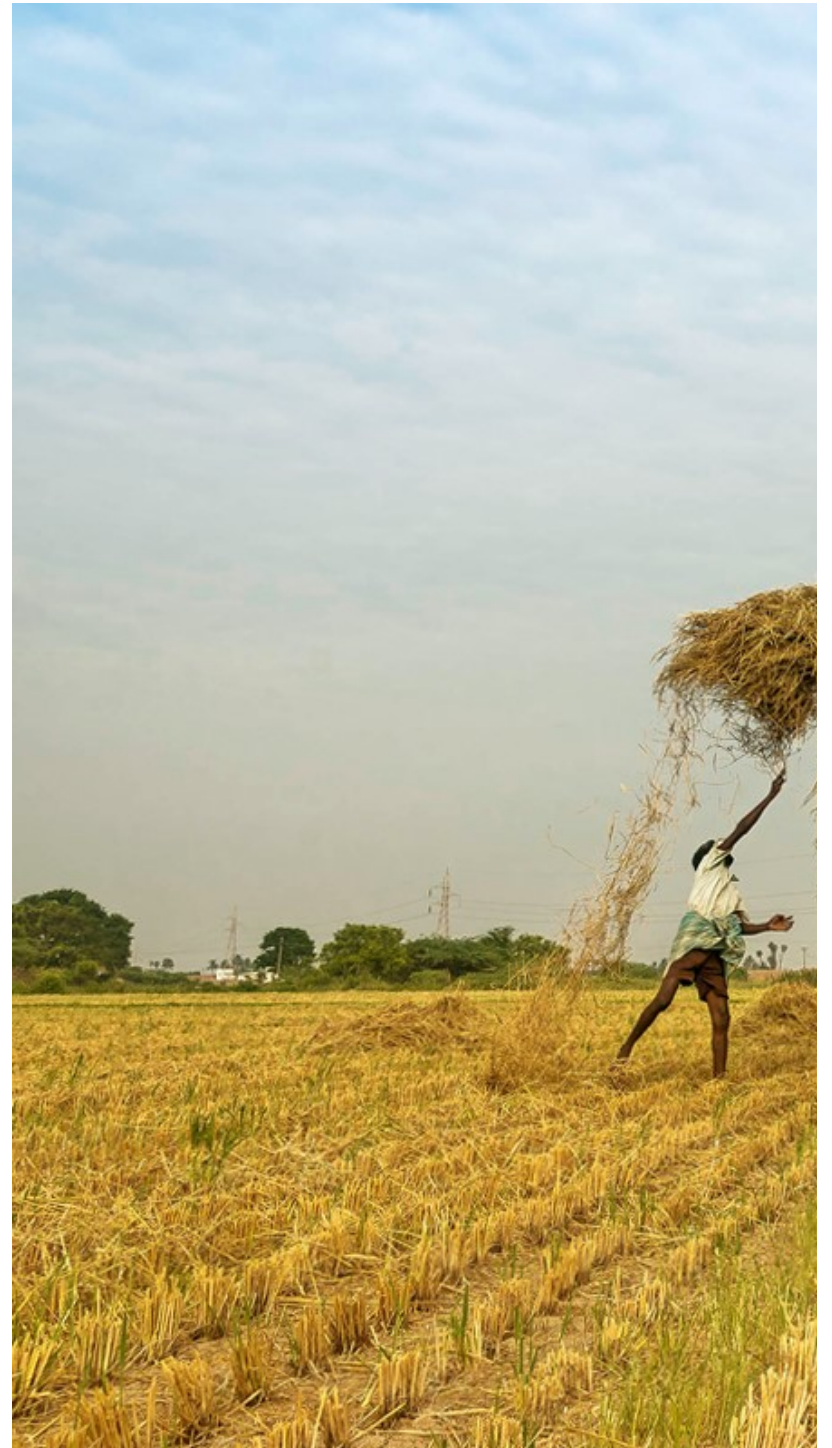
and fear of boycott by the landowners. However, Kamlaben shared that even though she has not faced as much violence as the bhagiyas, agricultural workers also face instances of violence from time to time. The data collected and indicated in Table 30 that while 74 percent workers reported no incident of violence, 53 workers respondents reported events where the kheduts have resorted to violence. The workers reported incidents of verbal abuse/caste-based slurs along with pressure to work for longer hours, one instance of physical abuse. Yet, the structure of khet majduri allowed the workers to resist either by relocating to another village or resisting violence as the number of workers in a team acted as deterrent against violence by Kheduts.

Chapter 7

Concluding Remarks

The findings of this study foreground how agricultural rural migration is a result of emerging ground realities. Multiple socio-economic factors work together to render the workers from tribal communities footloose, creating conditions where migration to agricultural farms across Gujarat has become an integral part of the livelihood and survival strategies among the tribal communities. Factors such as inadequate landholdings, no access to resources, climate change, lack of alternative and sustainable livelihoods, and lack of technical skill (that would allow tribal communities to migrate to industrial areas or other sectors) together have created factors that induce small and marginal farmers to undertake seasonal migration across the vast hinterland of Gujarat. Over the decades, these tribal migrant workers have come to replace local agricultural workers across various regions of Gujarat – Central Gujarat, North Gujarat, Saurashtra, and Kutch.

The phenomenon of rural to rural migration for agricultural work is also



representative of the perpetuation of the core and periphery dichotomy – where sectors that can offer varied employment opportunity were found to be concentrated in regions that can be categorized as the core of the industrialization processes, while the hinterlands and the people who undertake rural to rural migration continue to stay at the periphery. The rise in industrial



pockets across central Gujarat and the parts of Saurashtra in the last three decades has led to migration of local workers and the generations of the landowning class who have moved to the city or found work in the industrialized and commercialized parts of the state. Furthermore, as development has created urban pockets that are mushrooming with possibilities, rural hinterlands continue to dwell at the periphery.

The people forced to undertake rural to rural migration are households with poor resource base, lack of access to other forms of livelihoods, lack of technical skills that could make them employable in sectors other than agricultural work. Thus, regional policies that focused on creating opportunities only in the certain pockets of the states, while leaving out areas which are inhabited by the tribal communities



has led to the creation of a reserve army of agricultural workforce in the tribal hinterlands.

Bhag-kheti system thus created a possibility for the landowning class in need of cheap agricultural workers to access the reserve workforce of the tribal migrants. This access was facilitated through the wage sharecroppers and their kinship networks that act as a catalyst to ensure an uninterrupted supply of agricultural labourers. Migrant workers were willing to work for long hours for lesser wages. The landowner was able to replace the local workers with relatively cheaper, docile and compliant migrants workers – who were willing to work for long hours for wages as low as Rs. 200-250 while the local labour would charge Rs. 500-600 (as reported in the districts of Junagadh, Rajkot, and Amreli).

The findings of the study exhibit the vulnerabilities that inherently accompany the migrant status of the agricultural workers in addition to conditions created and maintained to ensure that the migrant workers always remained isolated, alienated and hence vulnerable in a foreign land. Furthermore, conditions and status quo were perpetuated in

a way that the migrant workers were always found at the mercy of landowner. A characteristic that came forth strikingly during the mapping exercise, FGDs and guided conversations, where the respondent would repeatedly emphasize the ultimate and unquestionable authority of the landowner in all the matters – leaving no scope to negotiate or bargain. In detailed household schedule, where the enumerators attempted to estimate the returns to the wage sharecropper, the team was often met with responses that it was the landowner who maintained and settled the accounts. Multiple respondents stated that they relied on the book-keeping of the landowner and accepted the share that was given to them by the landowner.

One is provoked to ask what kept the wage sharecroppers from holding the khedut accountable. As many respondents had recounted that there was no scope for the workers to retaliate against the khedut since: a) the political and socioeconomic position of the khedut; and, b) lack of support from their own or the local community. These often left the workers with no support that would allow them to persevere towards resistance against



the kheduts.

The position that the landowners enjoyed in the destination of migration with access to various kinds of social and economic capital in addition to the support of the political systems – made any resistance against the kheduts difficult. Firstly, in cases where the workers tried to lodge a case with the Panchayat or the police – the respondents stated that the systems of social justice seldom stood by them. In cases of abuse and violence – the workers prefer to flee from the location instead of following due process since they are aware of the political clout enjoyed by the landowner.

Secondly, the isolation and alienation experienced by the agricultural workers in general, and bhagiyas in particular also placed them in a disadvantageous position. The agricultural workers – both the wage sharecroppers and the casual workers, often lived away from the settlement in the destination village. While the wage sharecroppers were to stay at the field, the casual workers' camps were relegated to a pasture land often outside the periphery of the village. The workers were left with no opportunity to engage with the local workers or

communities

who were at the lower echelons of the political economy like them. Further, the landowning community often ensured that the migrant workers had no opportunity to form any ties with the local communities of the workers. During the field visits, the research team came across testimonials and narratives wherein the landowners as well as the local workers often believed that the migrant agricultural workers were a lazy and complacent community of people – who migrated to the developed and better endowed parts of the state – due to the abject deprivation in their own villages. Such conversations would often stench of the intense distaste the landowners harboured for the wage sharecroppers – who they saw as people who were coming and earning in lakhs by working on their land. Conversations with the workers and the landowners often gave away the sharp inequity in dynamics between the landowners and the migrant agricultural workers. During a group discussion with landowners of Bhojpara in Gondal, Rajkot the landowners spoke about the wage sharecroppers and the agricultural workers as appropriators. The group spoke at length about how migrant workers come to Gondal to reap the fruits of the fertile land in

Saurashtra and returned with high returns that were used to expand their landholdings and their asset base back in their villages of origin. Landowners often quoted repeatedly about incidents where the bhagiyas and khet majurs have returned home with large sums of money and expanded their assets. Landowners often peddled such narratives that fuelled the xenophobia against the migrant workers. The research team also had an opportunity to interact and meet with the erstwhile agricultural workers of the local communities in Hadmatiya village in Junagadh. The respondent – Ramjibhai explained that the local community harboured hostility towards the migrant workers. Ramjibhai explained that it was because of them that the landowners preferred migrant workers since they were willing to work for lesser daily wages for longer hours without any resistance.

Since conducting an intensive mapping exercise in the destination was not possible, the team relied on group discussions and guided conversations to understand the perception of local communities towards the migrant agricultural workers and their condition in the destination of migration. The group discussions conducted across Maliya, Amreli, Junagadh and Rajkot offered deep insights into the condition of workers and their position when placed against the fabric of political economy operating in the destination. These discussions laid bare the threads of social dimensions that have kept the tribal population at the margins perpetuated through the bhag-kheti system. The wage sharecroppers and the casual workers, – who have been historically kept at the margins of the social and economic fabric – continue to experience the same levels of marginalization, if not more.

The above discussions clearly delineate how the practice of bhag-kheti is steeped in relations of power, tilted in the favour of the landed community of kheduts across Gujarat – that absolved the landowner of all risks and made them party to profit. This imbalance has often allowed kheduts to manipulate and deceive the bhagiyas, and the bhagiyas' own resignation to the will of the kheduts granted them the means to constantly oppress the agricultural workers. It is worth emphasizing that the process and system perfected over decades to continue the perpetuation of exploitative ways of neoliberalism has been



rendered far more complex and inaccessible to the bhagiyas – who then were found to be reliant on the kheduts for maintain and settling of accounts. It was realized that the odds were heavily stacked against the tribal migrant agricultural workers who found themselves to be:

- isolated and alienated from the class of fellow labourers from marginalized communities due to the xenophobia perpetuated by the kheduts;
- left with no agency to hold the khedut accountable – due to the political and local clout on the side of the landowning class;
- not getting support from their own communities who are scattered across the destination of migration, especially in the case of the bhagiya workers;
- at the receiving end of various excesses –



ranging from pressure to work for longer durations and under harsh conditions, being subject to caste-based slurs and abuse and sexual harassment and abuse;

- living in abject deplorable conditions and absolute no access to any kind of state sponsored services and basic amenities.

The study demonstrates the structural conditions that work to perpetuate vulnerability and deprivation among the migrant tribal agricultural workers. One thus was provoked to explore what made workers to continue to return every year to work for a system that perpetuates exploitation. Since such an enquiry cannot be pursued through schedules and questionnaires alone. Qualitative methods such

as FGDs, semi-structured interviews and guided conversations helped the team understand what made workers to continue reproducing labouring conditions. The respondents cited two primary reasons for opting for bhag-kheti over other choice of livelihoods:

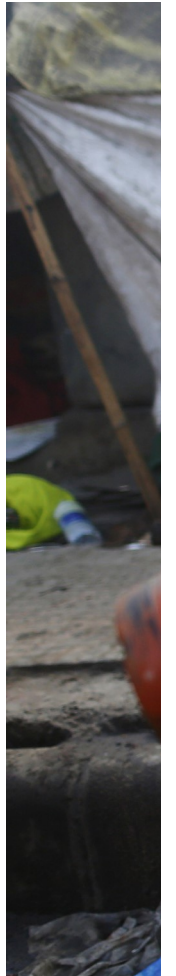
- A sense of autonomy
- Agricultural knowledge as the only skill set possessed⁹ by the subjects of the study

Discussions with Rajeev and Suresh¹⁰ in Bodeli, Chhota Udaipur elaborated that the colloquial term bhag-kheti exuded a sense of partnership; that the migrant agricultural worker shall work as a partner in this economic endeavour with the landowner. Rajeev¹¹ elaborated how the term although exuded a

9. In the sections in the previous chapters, the respondents often stated that their lack of any other skill set besides agriculture left them with no other option other than to work as migrant agricultural workers.

10. Both Suresh and Rajeev were second generation bhagiyas who were now working as casual construction workers since the last five years in Bodeli.

11. The respondent had moved out of bhag-kheti five years ago due to an incident of violence discussed in detail in the previous chapter.



sense of autonomy that was entirely illusive and elusive. While the bhagiya performed all labouring activities throughout the year for a fraction of the share of the output– it was the landowner that appropriated the fruit of tribal migrant worker and their families’ hard work. The duo elaborated to explain that the exploitative system had been perfected for decades – wherein the bhagiya only appeared as a stakeholder – while in reality they were just long-term contractual agricultural workers that worked for much lower wages than the casual agricultural workers working on daily wages. Unlike the casual workers who worked for daily wages for predefined or fixed hours of work, the bhagiyas and their family members could be found working round the clock. Furthermore, the family migration often meant that children could be found working with their parents on the field. Few parents who could have their children admitted to schools shared that the quality of education was dismal.¹²

Through this metaphor of partnership, the landowners often used it to transfer all the responsibility of risks and liabilities onto the bhagiyas, while the returns to the bhagiya remained a fraction of the harvest. Furthermore, in case of crop failure if there was any compensation announced by the state – it often went to the landowner and they seldom shared the compensation with the bhagiyas.

Suresh and Rajeev explained that this trope often came handy to subject the bhagiyas to excesses of various kinds. Often this ‘partnership’ was used to ensure that the bhagiyas worked more than 15-18 hours on the field with no holidays or leave of absence. This trope, Rajeev continued to remark, justified all kinds of unreasonable demands made by the khedut.

The practice of bhag-kheti entailed that the bhagiya himself became an extension of the system and exploit workers from their own community. The system of bhag-kheti in the process offered the bhagiya an interest to ensure the supply of the agricultural workers at cheaper wages to the landowning class. Since the bhagiya had to bear all costs pertaining to labour on the landholding – it was in their interest to minimize the labour cost by sourcing the workers from their own villages or vicinity. Thus, tribal migrant workers were sourced from a docile and compliant population that would be willing to work for long hours at lower wages. While discussing the conditions of work, khet majdurs discussed that they have often faced instances where the landowner pressurised them to work for longer hours and underpaid them for the work performed. Again,¹³ the network of relatives becomes a tool of exploitation that the landowners could use to source cheap, docile and submissive agricultural workers to work

12. Osada ben in Morbi explained that when she enrolled her children into the school, often the teachers would remain absent for days. So the kids would start playing. In fact, on odd days when the teachers actually showed up, they would throw their bags on the desk and start playing with the kids. She explained that no studying actually happened. Students in the ninth standard were unable to write their names. Osada ben stated that in fact it was better to assign the children other work like household chores and other things so that once they are old enough they can start



on their lands.

From the analysis of returns to the workers from the months spent for agricultural work, as the reader may recall from the discussion from previous chapter – that barring two respondents, the rest of the bhagiya workers and their families were clearly earning far less than the minimum agricultural daily wages, that is, Rs. 178 for eight hours applicable in the state of Gujarat – which is one of the lowest minimum agricultural wages in the nation.

Findings also revealed that casual workers who were receiving Rs. 250-300 for upto twelve hours of wages which came to about Rs. 167 for eight hours of work – again fell short of the stipulated minimum wage for agricultural work.

Thus, as the findings of the study establish that the tribal migrant agricultural workers were found to be at the receiving end of violence of various kinds – physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, and even economic abuse in addition to the abject violation of their rights and entitlements as workers.

If one attempts to view the laws pertaining to the agricultural workers, one finds that such workers do not have dedicated legal

framework for them that would define legal provisions and entitlements of the tribal migrant agricultural workers. There are, however, parts of various laws/ aspects that are relevant to the subjects of our study:

- *Minimum Wages Act, 1948*: An Act to provide for fixing minimum rates of wages in certain employments.
- *The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions Of Service) Act, 1979*: An Act to regulate the employment of inter-State migrant workmen and to provide for their conditions of service and for matters connected therewith (applicable only to those agricultural workers who undertake inter-state migration).
- *Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976*: An Act to provide for the abolition of bonded labour system with a view to preventing the economic and physical exploitation of the weaker sections of the people and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- *The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled*

13. Pravinbhai of Jhinjharwani, Chhota Udepur – stated during a group discussion that often times the landowner deceives the team of the khet majdurs through miscommunication regarding the size of the land. Pravinbhai reported that when he migrated to sow paddy, there have been times then the team harvested land-size that felt like more than one acre, but the khet majdur only paid them for one acre of land.



Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act, 2015: Actions to be treated as offences: The Act outlines actions (by non SCs and STs) against SCs or STs to be treated as offences. The Amendment Act amends certain existing categories and adds new categories of actions to be treated as offences.

- 1) Offences added under the Act include:
 - (a) garlanding with footwear; (b) compelling to dispose or carry human or animal carcasses; or do manual scavenging; (c) abusing SCs or STs by caste name in public; (d) attempting to promote feelings of ill-will against SCs or STs or disrespecting any deceased person held in high esteem; and, (e) imposing or threatening a social or economic boycott.
- 2) Assaulting or sexual exploiting an SC or ST woman is an offence under the Act - The Amendment Act adds that: (a) intentionally touching an SC or ST woman in a sexual manner without her consent; or (b) using words, acts or gestures of a sexual nature; or, (c) dedicating an SC or ST women as a devadasi to a temple, or any similar practice will also be considered an offence. Consent is defined as a voluntary agreement through verbal or non-verbal communication.

When the indicators of Forced Labour formulated by International Labour Organization are taken in purview and the condition of workers were juxtaposed against the framework listed below:

- Abuse of vulnerability
- Deception
- Restriction of movement
- Isolation
- Physical and sexual violence
- Intimidation and threats
- Withholding of wages
- Debt bondage
- Abusive working and living conditions
- Excessive overtime

One realizes that barring one indicator (withholding of identity documents) all the indicators hold true for the bhagiya workers. While in the case of khet-majdurs the following indicators are found to be violated:

- Abuse of vulnerability
- Deception
- Restriction of movement
- Isolation
- Physical and sexual violence
- Intimidation and threats



- Abusive working and living conditions
- Excessive overtime

Thus, one can postulate that the footloose tribal migrant agricultural workers work in conditions comparable with neo-bondage.

The above analysis clearly depicts how the system of bhag kheti and agricultural workers stands as a prime example of perpetuation of neo bondage in the 21st century capitalist mode of production. The classical bondage in feudal times was marked by long-term bondage of the worker to their master through debt or customary practices. In neo-bondage, however there is no single master. But the worker continues to work under a burden of debt in a bonded situation.

Building a Support Group for Agricultural Workers in Western India:

The Action drawing from the findings of the study thus produces a critical need to form and build a platform where workers can reach out in times of distress while in the destination of work. The practice of bhag-kheti coupled with casual agricultural work has become a bedrock of not only complete lack of labour laws but also replete with instances where human rights are violated rampantly. The formation of the support network that would assist workers to address the isolation and alienation encountered by the workers, the denial of rights and entitlements, their wages and violation of their human rights. The support network appears to be one way to counter the excesses of the practice.

For this, the grassroots organizations have come together with CLRA to form a platform spanning across the three states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, with roots in the areas of source as well as the destination of migration. The need for such a platform emerged when the members of the research team met and engaged in discussions, conversations – wherein the respondents, their family members, the relatives detailed the ordeal of the workers who migrated to work as agricultural labourers across various parts of Gujarat. The team encountered numerous of cases where landowners denied a proper settlement leading to non-payment of wages, instances of conflict and violence inflicted upon the workers, the excesses to which the workers were constantly subjected to.

The team of Majur Adhikar Manch in Surat received a call from a travel agency that informed the members about 17 agricultural

workers from Pati in Badwani (Madhya Pradesh) who had migrated to Keshod (Junagadh) and were subjected to verbal and physical abuse at the hands of the landowner. When the team members reached out to the workers, they were informed that the landowner had threatened the workers forcing them to flee the work site and had refused to clear the dues a total amount of Rs. 1,60,000 to the workers. The situation of the agricultural migrant labour was vulnerable, and due to the socioeconomic conditions in the destination of migration placed workers in an adverse position and thus aggravated their state of helplessness. The support group immediately got in touch with the partner organization Saurashtra Dalit Sangathan of Junagarh. The representatives instantly contacted the landowner and ensured that the case was resolved and the workers were able to receive their dues. However, this was one case amongst the many that represents the ordeal of the workers. Since the period when the study began various research teams and partner organizations have come together with information pertaining to the hardships faced by the workers. Responding to the need presented and voiced by the workers, the partners in the source areas undertook a visit to the destination locations in the month of December 2020 and worked towards seven more cases regarding non-payment of wages.

The support group which is taking shape has already undertaken a visit to the destination, where in the partners from the organizations at the source visited the Junagadh- a popular destination of migration for many migrant agricultural workers from the tribal hinterlands. The team was able to resolve nine cases of disputes pertaining to payment of the shares of the bhagiyas across villages Amreli, Junagadh and Jamnagar.

The support group constituted by the grassroots organizations and the worker representatives from the source areas charted a plan that involves working together and establishing contact at the source as well destination of the workers, and the organizations intend to hold series of public meetings, undertake awareness campaigns, and make efforts to cushion and create a support group that would work to work through a bleak picture to offer some light at the end of the dark tunnel in the lives of the tribal migrant agricultural workers.

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Appendix

Appendix -1

A Study on the Tribal Migrant Agricultural Workers in Gujarat by Centre for Labour Research and Action

Village Schedule -1 (VS-1)

This section is to be filled through discussions with a group of people from the village including few farm workers. The objective of this section is to get overall information on migration patterns from the village, with focus on bhagiya workers. This meeting is to be followed by household visits and canvassing of household schedules.

Name of the surveyor:

Contact number of the surveyor:

Details related to Migration:

This section is to be filled in consultation with well informed and learned people in the village

1. Name of the Village/
2. Hamlet:
3. Panchayat:
4. Block:
5. District :
 - a. Chhota Udaipur
 - b. Panchmahal
 - c. Dahod
 - d. Narmada
 - e. Mahisagar
 - f. Aravalli
 - g. Banaskantha
 - h. Badwani
 - i. Jhabua
 - j. Alirajpur
 - k. Burhanpur

l. Khandwa

m. Nandurbar

6. Total number of households in the village/hamlet:

7. Caste Profile

- a. SC
- b. ST
- c. OBC
- d. General
- e. Other

8. Total number of households that undertake migrate

9. How long have people been migrating?

10. Who were the first families that migrated first?

11. What sector do workers migrate to?

- a. Bhagiya Kheti / Wage Sharecropping
- b. Construction Sector
- c. Brick-kiln
- d. Agriculture Worker
- e. Factory Workers
- f. Other:

12. What are the locations that workers from within the village migrate to?

- a) Ahmedabad
- b) Rajkot
- c) Surat
- d) Gandhinagar

- e) Jamnagar
- f) Surendranagar
- g) Morbi
- h) Mehsana
- i) Bharuch
- j) Ahmednagar
- k) Dhule
- l) Aurangabad
- m) Akola
- n) Jalgaon
- o) Nasik
- p) Pune
- q) Solapur
- r) Kolhapur
- s) Khandwa
- t) Khargone
- u) Indore
- v) Badwani)

Additional remarks:

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Appendix – 2

A Study on the Tribal Migrant Agricultural Workers in Gujarat by Centre for Labour Research and Action

Village Schedule 2 (VS-2)

This form is to be used along with the Village Schedule (VS-1). The purpose of this form is to enlist baseline information of the workers who migrate as agricultural labourers or bhagiya khet workers.

- 1) Village name:
- 2) Name of the worker:
- 3) Contact no of worker:

- 4) Name of the father:
- 5) Respondent's type of work:
- 6) Block Name (Destination of Migration):
- 7) District Name (Destination of Migration):

Appendix – 3

A Study on the Tribal Migrant Agricultural Workers in Gujarat by Centre for Labour Research and Action

Household Schedule 1 - To be filled through the Shramshakti App.

Worker profile

Personal profile

1. Name of the surveyor
2. Date of Mapping
3. Name of the project:
RLS_Bhagya Study 2020
4. Surname of the worker
5. Worker's name
6. Father/Husband's name
7. Age in years
8. Date of Birth
9. Gender- Male/Female/Other
10. Religion

11. Caste
12. Caste category – SC/ST/OBC/
General
13. Marital Status : Single/
Married/Widow/Divorced

Address

Source Address

14. Mobile number
15. State (drop down options)
16. District (drop down options)
17. Block (drop down)
18. Village / Area
19. Address
20. Pincode

21. Police station	34. ID Address
Destination Address	Source
22. Mobile number	Destination
23. State (drop down options)	35. Union membership number (if any)
24. District (drop down options)	36. Date of membership (if applicable)
25. Block (drop down)	37. Upload photograph
26. Village / Area	Assets
27. Accommodation at the destination	38. Land in Acres
a. Worksite provided by the owner	Details of the family members:
b. Workers Camp	1) Name of the Family member:
c. Rental	2) Relation with the respondent:
d. In Open	3) Gender: Male /Female / Other
e. Own Housing	4) Age:
f. Others	5) Education status:
g. In unauthorised settlement	6) Is there any pregnant woman in the house? Yes No N/A
h. Govt night shelter	7) Is there any lactating women in the house? Yes No N/A
i. Commuting	8) Is she/he/they are staying with the labour in the destination? Yes No N/A
28. Address:	9) Have you ever met with an accident at the workplace? Yes No N/A
29. Pin code:	
30. Police station:	
Education details	
31. Last educational Level	
Illiterate	
Primary	
Middle	
Secondary	
Graduate	
ITI	
Identity documents	
32. Type of document	
Adhaar Card	
Voter ID	
Driving License	
Other	
33. ID number :	

Appendix 4

A Study on the Tribal Migrant Agricultural Workers in Gujarat by Centre for Labour Research and Action

Household Schedule 2 (HS-2)

This schedule is to be filled through discussions with Bhagiya or Agriculture labour. This schedule is divided into two parts: one section is about bhagiya work and the other section is about Agriculture labour who migrate during peak time of agriculture season. The objective of this survey is to get overall information on agriculture work, specifically focusing on conditions of work and incidences at work-site. This interview should be followed after personal detail filled in the Shramshakti application.

Surveyor Name :

Surveyor Name :

1. Labour Full Name :
2. Source Address (Village name/Block/District/State):
3. Labour's work :
 - I. Bhagiya
 - II. Agriculture labour

Section 2: Details of Bhagiya Work

This section seeks to capture specific details concerning the conditions of work. Please document the previous year's data.

- 2.1 How long have you been working as bhagiya (in years?)
- 2.2 why did you choose to work as a Bhagiya?

- a. Due to the length of the season (8-9 months)
- b. Because family members have been bhagiya
- c. Lack of other options of work
- d. Other

2.3 How did you get in to wage sharecropping ?

- a. Relatives
- b. Contractors
- c. Fellow Village-men
- d. Other

2.4 How many members are there in the household?

2.5 How many family members from your household migrate with you?

2.6 How many members above the age of 14 years from your household migrate with you?

2.6 Did you take any advance for the current season? Yes No

2.7 If yes, can you share the amount of advance taken?

2.8 What are the reasons for seeking advance?

- a. To repay loan
- b. For daily household expenses
- c. To perform social rituals (Death, Birth, Marriage, religious)
- d. Medical Expenses
- e. Education
- f. Repairing or building house
- g. For agricultural inputs for own land

- h. Other (please specify)
- 2.9 What are the medium of agreements?
 - a. verbal
 - b. on paper
 - c. maintaining a diary
 - d. Other (please specify)
- 2.10 When did the family arrive for work?
(date format)
- 2.11 How many cropping seasons you have agreed to work?
 - a. Kharif (July to October)
 - b. Rabi (October to March)
 - c. Zaid (March to June)
 - d. Other
- 2.11 What are the crops you cultivate?
 - a. Cotton
 - b. Groundnut
 - c. Vegetables
 - d. Spices (coriander, turmeric)
 - e. Flowers
 - f. Other
- 2.12 what is the landholding size given on bhag (in Acre)?
- 2.13 How much weekly allowance do you get?
- 2.14 Do you accompany farmer/khedut during the sale of produce?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Other
- 2.15 When did family go back home?
_____ (day, month, year format)

Section 3: Details of last year work

This section specifically capture the last year work details. This can be filled with detail of five crop.

3.1 Name of the first crop name:

- 3.2 What is the share of produce you agreed to work on?
 - a. 1/3 b. 1/4 c. 1/5 d. 1/6 e. others
- 3.3 Acreage (in Acre):
- 3.4 Production in Quintal:
- 3.5 Earned income from Crop Residue:
- 3.6 Market Value:
- 3.7 Share received in kind:
- 3.8 Share received in cash:
- 3.9 If wage labour hired for work, total such man days?
- 3.10 Wage rate (per day) paid to hired agricultural labour?
- 3.11 Any other expenses paid by the respondent?
- 3.12 what are the other works you do besides agriculture labour?
 - a. Tending to animals/cattle
 - b. Household work for Khedut (landowner)
 - c. Fetching water
 - d. Other
- 3.13 Total travel expenses incurred during the last period of work:

Section 4 - Details for the second crop

Section 5 - Details for the third crop

Section 6 - Details for the fourth crop

Section 7 - Details for the fifth crop

Section 8: Public Services

This section explores the public services availability at the destination areas.

- 8.1 If you have children between 3-5 years, do they go to the Aanganwadi?
 - a. Yes b. No c. Not applicable
- 8.2 Do children 0-3 years and pregnant

women get food packets from Anganwadi?

- a. Yes b. No c. Not applicable

8.3 Do children 6-14 years go to school at the destination of migration?

- a. Yes b. No c. Not applicable

8.4 If there is a pregnant woman, does an ANM visit her regularly for check ups (at destination of migration)?

- a. Yes b. No c. Not applicable

8.5 In case of illness, where do you or your family members for treatment?

- a. Govt Hospital/dispensary
b. Private hospital/dispensary
c. Other (please specify)

Section 9: Instances of violence faced at the site of work

This section explores the violence faced by the Bhagiya during work.

9.1 Have you faced any kind of violence by the Khedut

- a. Yes b. No c. Maybe

9.2 What kind of violence have you faced?

- a. Verbal Abuse/harassment
b. Physical Abuse
c. Mental harassment
d. Sexual Abuse/harassment
e. Other

9.3 Any incidence of violence you want to share/report:

9.4 Have you ever faced non-payment at the end of the work

- a. Yes b. No

9.5 Additional Remarks:

Section 10 - Agriculture-Labour Detail

This section seeks to capture the work details of agricultural labour. Information can be filled in discussion with agriculture labour or family member. The information should be filled for the last period or duration of work.

10.1 How did you get in to agriculture labour work?

- a. Contractor
b. Fellow Village-person
c. Relatives
d. Other

10.2 How many times did you go for agriculture work in the last year?

10.3 Duration of the period when you last migrated for agricultural work:

- March-April
June-July
November-December
Other

10.4 Types of work carried out by you:

- a. Paddy sowing
b. Wheat harvesting
c. Groundnut harvesting
d. Soyabean harvesting
e. Millets harvesting
f. Cotton picking
g. Onion crop harvesting
h. Wheat threshing
i. Other

10.5 Type of work undertaken in the last season of migration as agricultural labour:

- a. Paddy sowing
b. Wheat harvesting
c. Groundnut harvesting
d. Soyabean harvesting

e. Millets harvesting

f. Cotton picking

g. Onion crop harvesting

h. Wheat threshing

i. Other

10.6 Total number of days worked on the field for last season work:

10.7 How many hours did you work for a day?

10.8 If on daily wage, then what is the wage rate?

10.9 What was your wage per day as per the contractual agreement for the agriculture work?

10.10 If on Contract and payment received in cash, then what was the total amount you received?

10.11 If on Contract and payment received in kind, then what was the total amount you received?

10.12 Travel expenses during the last work done?

11.4 Have you ever faced non payment at the end of the work

a. Yes b. No

11.5 Additional Remarks:

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Section 11: Instances of violence faced at the site of work

This section explores the violence faced by the Bhagiya during work.

11.1 Have you faced any kind of violence by the Khedut?

a. Yes b. No
c. Maybe

11.2 What kind of violence have you faced?

- a. Verbal Abuse/harassment
- b. Physical Abuse
- c. Mental harassment
- d. Sexual Abuse/harassment
- e. Other

11.3 Any incidence of violence would you want to share/report?

Appendix – 5

A Study on the Tribal Migrant Agricultural Workers in Gujarat by Centre for Labour Research and Action

Guiding Questions for Focused Group Discussions with the migrant agricultural workers

The following list of questions is formulated to capture the general trends at the level of the village or the cluster. These discussions are to take place with a group of people from the village including few farm workers. The objective of this FGD is to get overall information on migration patterns from the village, with focus on bhagiya workers, mode of recruitment, terms of agreement, conditions of living and work, incidence of conflicts and the experience of lockdown due to covid-19 by the migrating families. The FGD will prove instrumental in providing a holistic picture of the migration trend and the practice of Khet majuri and Bhagiya Kheti.

Section 1: Migration History of the village

1. When did migration become widespread in your village? Why do you think that happened?
2. Which were the families to migrate first?
3. Has there been a change in the sectors/locations workers have

been migrating to?

- a. If so, what were the sectors people migrated to then?
 - b. What were the locations they migrated to then?
4. What sectors do workers migrate to now?
 5. What are the locations the workers migrate to now?

Section 2: Land and Assets related

- a. What proportion of households who migrate (either as Agricultural Labour/ Bhagiya) own land?
- b. Is it sufficient for your family? Why not?
- c. What other assets do people who migrate own?
- d. Have they acquired assets due to the money earned through migration?

Section 3: Conditions of Work

	For Bhagiya Workers	For Agricultural Labour
Mode of recruitment:	<p>A. How do people migrate from the village? Through contractor, through the network of fellow village men or relatives, the employer contacted directly</p> <p>B. How do you decide where you wish to migrate for bhagiya/whom you work with?</p> <p>C. Have you ever worked with a different contractor/landlord than you are currently working with?</p> <p>D. What (if any) is the relationship between the Landlord/contractor and influential people in the village?</p>	
Negotiating the terms of agreement	<p>A. Are terms of the agreement decided before leaving or after reaching?</p> <p>B. If after reaching, then what did you know about the terms of work before leaving?</p> <p>C. Are the terms of work decided according to the landlord or does the worker have a say?</p> <p>D. Have you ever negotiated for better working and living conditions?</p> <p>E. The very first time you worked Bhagiya Kheti, were the terms and conditions of work the same as you had been led to believe? What has been your experience since then?</p> <p>F. How/what and when (before leaving/after reaching) were the terms of work agreed upon?</p> <p>G. What did you know about the conditions of work when you decided to travel the first time? Did the actual conditions meet your expectations? What has been your experience since then?</p>	
Travel	How did you travel? Who paid for it?	
Conditions of living	<p>A. Type of accommodation:</p> <p>B. Provided by the Khedut/Contractor or had to make own arrangements; kachcha / pucca; individual or shared</p> <p>C. Public Utilities- water (drinking and washing purposes), toilets, electricity</p> <p>D. What happens in case of a workplace injury/illness? Do you receive any assistance from the landlord/contractor or from your home village?</p>	
Conditions of work	<p>A. How do you keep track of work done/ payments made?</p> <p>B. How does the landlord keep track?</p> <p>C. Can you describe a typical day of work?</p>	<p>A. Does the landlord allow breaks during the day? Any set time requirements for particular tasks?</p> <p>B. How many hours did you work for a day?</p> <p>C. After work hours, are the workers allowed to go outside/ travel/socialize?</p> <p>D. Are you able to keep in touch with your family members in villages?</p>

Payment for work	<p>A. Is the share calculated in front of you or do you accompany the farmer during sale of produce?</p> <p>B. How is the share paid? (in cash, kind, both)</p> <p>C. Are they sufficient? How much do you want them to be?</p> <p>D. What happens in case of crop damage?</p> <p>E. Were you ever cheated out of your bhaag?</p> <p>F. Have you ever faced non-payment at the end of work?</p> <p>G. What happens if the worker tries to leave in the middle of the contract (what happens in case advance is taken)?</p> <p>H.</p>	<p>I. Daily/hourly wage? Wage rate?</p> <p>J. What was your wage as per the contractual agreement for the agriculture work?</p> <p>K. How are the wages paid? Are wages paid regularly? Are they sufficient? How much do you want them to be?</p> <p>L. How do you keep track of work done/payments made?</p> <p>M. How does the landlord keep track?</p> <p>N. Have you ever faced non-payment at the end of work?</p> <p>O. What happens if the worker tries to leave in the middle of the contract (what happens in case advance is taken)?</p>
Allowances	<p>How much weekly allowance did you get? In cash or in kind?</p> <p>Are weekly allowances paid regularly? Are they adequate? How much do</p>	
Advances	<p>A. Did you take an advance before joining? If yes, at source or destination (i.e. by whom)</p> <p>B. Can you share the amount of advance taken?</p> <p>C. Are advances generally paid?</p> <p>D. Are they paid to everyone or do you have to ask for it?</p> <p>E. Is the advance then adjusted from final payment?</p>	
Others	<p>A. What is the difference between your village and the village of your work? What is good and what is bad?</p> <p>B. What is the difference between farming which is done in the village and the farming which you do at your destination village? What is good and what is bad?</p> <p>C. Are you familiar with/part of any local organization? (religious/civil society etc.)</p> <p>D. What do you generally have for food? How many meals do you have a day? Could you please describe what you have for each meal? Where do you get grains from? Do you have access to or buy fruits/vegetables regularly?</p>	

<p>Conflict Resolution:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. What is the relationship of migrants with others in the destination village such as panchayat members? B. What is the relationship with the contractor like? C. What is the relationship with the landlord like? (is he a good man/did he pay wages on time/did he ever cheat you/do you suspect him of cheating)? D. Are grievances ever taken up with the landlord/contractor? E. Are you aware if any migrant family members have faced any kind of violence at destination of work? F. If yes, can you tell us what happened? G. Are incidents of violence ever reported to the police? If yes, what was that interaction like?
<p>Experience of Lockdown due to Covid- 19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Can you tell us about your experience of the lockdown? B. How were these workers affected during the lockdown? C. How many of them were able to return? D. How did the workers return? By foot, hitchhiked, special train, private vehicle E. How many of them reported instances of harassment by the police (while crossing borders)? F. How many migrants received any sort of assistance? ? G. How did those who did not receive assistance manage?

Appendix – 6

A Study on the Tribal Migrant Agricultural Workers in Gujarat by Centre for Labour Research and Action

Guiding questions for Focused Group Discussions with Women Migrant Agricultural Workers

The following list of questions is formulated to capture the women' working conditions at the level of the village. These discussions are to take place with a group of women or individually, who migrate to work outside. The objective of this FGD is to understand overall situations of migrant women workers, like divisions and burden of work, say in decisions pertaining to work, women' perception about work, health and violence related information. We hope that the FGD will help in understanding a holistic picture of the migrant women' conditions.

Perceptions and Burden of Work

Divisions and Burden of Work: this section focuses on the kind of work a woman is responsible for undertaking, and thus has been divided broadly into household chores and agricultural work. This section seeks to capture the distribution of the burden of work, and how much time women in generally spend while

they are at the destination.

I. Households work:

1. Describe a typical day at the destination of migration?
2. How much time of your day is devoted to household chores?
3. How much time is devoted to sourcing water?
4. Do you have basic utilities such as toilets, electricity, sourcing fuel for cooking
5. Do men of your family assist you in any of the chores deemed as household?

II. Agricultural work:

1. Describe a typical day while in destination of migration?
2. What are the tasks that are undertaken specifically by you or women (in bhag kheti or khet majdoori)?
3. How much of you time in a day is devoted to performing such tasks?
4. Are you required to undertake other tasks in addition to the agricultural work? Such as tending to the kheduts' domestic chores, tending to animals, collecting

- cattle dung so on and so forth. Is the entire family is supposed to do these tasks or are women only responsible for such tasks?
5. How much work is performed by you in comparison with the rest of the family?
 6. Can you rank the members of the family in terms of the load of work that do on any given day?
 7. (self, husband, elder son/daughter, eldest son's wife, mother-in-law or father-in-law (if applicable)

III. Perceptions about work:

1. How do the people in your village (source) perceive your work when you migrate as agricultural workers?
2. How do the people in your village (in the destination) perceive your work when you migrate as agricultural workers?
3. How do you perceive your work when you migrate as agricultural workers?
4. Do you prefer to work as bhagiya or khet majdur? (If yes, kindly elaborate)
5. If given a choice, would you work in some other sector or perform other work, besides a bhagiya or khet majdur? What would you like to work in?

IV. Decisions pertaining to work:

1. Do you have any role to play in the decision to migrate as a bhagiya or khet majdur?
2. Are you asked about the location or kind of crops that would be cultivated (since you would end up performing majority of the work)?
3. Do you play a role in the decisions inputs/share/wage rate?
4. Is your opinion sought when decisions pertaining to khedut or contractor are being taken?
5. Is your opinion sought while deciding the terms of agreement or conditions of work and living are being decided by the male of your family and the contractor/khedut?
6. Are you aware of the transactions or the share that is received at the end of the season?
7. Do you receive any share in the income/bhag (cash or in kind)?
8. Do you take decisions pertaining to how returns will be spend?
9. What is the role of men in such economic decisions and the burden of work that they perform at the destination of migration?
10. **V. Access to health services:**
11. In case of illness , who do you prefer to go for treatment?
12. Do you get to access public healthcare services? (If not, why or what stops you?)
13. How accessible are health services

- such as ANMs? Have you faced discrimination while accessing health services (private and govt)?
14. In the days of menstruation, how you manage work and chores?
 15. What is the attitude/behaviour of the public health service providers towards the migrants?
 16. Are you aware of cases of delivery or miscarriages in other worker families? Who do they refer for treatment?
 17. In case of health emergencies or incidents at work – does khedut or contractor assist you?
 18. What do you do in case of attack by wild animals or venomous creatures?

VI. Violence and concerns around safety of women:

A. Violence at the site of work:

1. Have you faced any instance of violence or harassment at the hands of the employer?
2. If yes, did you report the incident to anyone – family members, contractor, panchayat members, police or the village members back in the source?
3. How do you manage or overcome such instances (what are the coping mechanisms)?
4. Are you aware of other women who have been victims of

harassment and violence? If yes, kindly elaborate.

5. Are migrant women more vulnerable to instances of violence and harassment – due to their status of migrants?
6. How do the locals respond when such instances come to light? Are they supportive?
7. What are the steps that should be undertaken at the worksite that would make you feel safe?

B. Violence in the domestic sphere:

1. Have you faced violence/harassment within your homes (by men or elder women)
2. Are you aware of other women at the destination of migration who are vulnerable to domestic violence?
3. What are the precipitating factors that trigger such violence in the domestic space? (instances have been reported where the men have blamed women for talking to the contractor or the landowner, for the attention they receive)
4. What are the steps that should be undertaken at the worksite that would make you feel safe?
5. **VII. Other questions:**
6. How do you or older generation adapted to the work of bhagiya or khet majduri?

7. (in terms of clothes, habits – particularly the adaptive behaviour of women)
8. How does the family ensure food security during the months of migration? do the families carry their grains (especially maize) with them or have they started consuming bajra or wheat at the destination?
9. Other challenges or Concerns faced in the destination (that have not been covered in the sections above).

Appendix – 7

A Study on the Tribal Migrant Agricultural Workers in Gujarat by Centre for Labour Research and Action

Guiding questions for Focused Group Discussions with Farmers

Following list of questions are formulated to guide the researcher in their discussions with the khedut / farmer at the village or taluka level in the destination of migration. These discussions are to take place with farmers/ khedut who hire tribal migrant agricultural labourers. The purpose of this FGD is designed to understand the perception of the farmers / khedut concerning the tribal migrant agricultural workers. It can be discussed at the village /block level with a group of farmers / khedut. It is hoped that the FGD will bring out the overall picture of the owners' opinion and working conditions.

Section 1: Profile of the village

1. Name of the village, Panchayat, Taluka, District
2. No of households:
3. Caste breakup of households:
4. Communities that land owners belong to :
5. Communities that labourers or landless workers belong to:
6. What is the relationship between the two communities?

Caste									
No of house holds									

Section 2: Farming system in the village

1. Total agriculture land in the village:
2. Irrigated land in the village:
3. Main sources of irrigation: Canal/ Tubewell/ Pond/ Other
4. What are the types of crops cultivated in the village:

Season	Crop name	Crop	Crop	Crop	Crop	Crop
Kharif						
Rabi						
Zaid						

Section 3: Situation of agriculture labour in the village

1. Where do the agriculture workers come from: local / migrant
2. Breakup of agriculture workers in the village:
3. Do you get agriculture labour easily? Is there a shortage?
4. Who do you prefer to employ for agriculture work? Local workers or migrant labour? Why?
5. What are the problems faced in engaging migrant labour?

Type of workers	Agriculture worker	Bhagiya	Saathi
Local			
Migrants			
If migrants, then name the source states			

Section 4: Migration History of the village

1. When did migration become widespread in your village? Why do you think that happened?
2. Who were the farmers who brought migrants into the village first?
3. Which were the families/communities who migrated to your village first?
4. Which are the locations that the workers migrate from?

	For Bhagiya Workers	For Agricultural Labour
Mode of recruitment:	A.How do people migrate into the village? B.Through contractor / Through relatives /The farmer calls them C.Do farmers decide or have preference for where they would bring D.Do farmers work with different contractors/group of workers every year?	
Negotiating the terms of agreement	A. Are the terms of agreement decided after the arrival of the migrants to your village? B. Have migrants negotiated for better working and living conditions? C. How/what and when (before leaving/after reaching) were the terms of work agreed upon	
Travel	How do migrants travel? Who paid for it?	
Conditions of living	A. Type of accommodation: B. Provided by the Khedut/Contractor or had to make own arrangements; Kachcha/pucca; individual or shared C. Do the accommodations have basic Utilities- water (drinking and washing purposes), toilets, electricity D. Do workers have access to nutrition and health services in destination?	

Glossary of Terms

bhag: fraction of the agricultural produce

bhag-kheti: wage sharecropping. Bhag-kheti is an agricultural arrangement where a family unit agrees to contribute and bear the cost of all forms of agricultural labour on a piece of land in exchange for a fraction of the output. This arrangement can range from one season to all the seasons of an agricultural year

bhagiya: also known as bhag kheti majdur is an individual who engages in the bhag-kheti contract with a landowner

khet majdur: agricultural labour. Often the term is used colloquially to refer to short-term cyclical workers who migrate to various parts of Gujarat to undertake agricultural work during the peak seasons when the demand for additional labourers on the field is high.

khedut: – farmer. The respondents often used this term to refer to the landowners across the state of Gujarat to indicate on whose lands they would work on.

kharchi: allowance borrowed by the bhagiyas for their expenditure of groceries whilst in the destination of migration

kharif: agricultural season in India that begins in July and ends in October

majdur: worker

rabi: agricultural season in India that begins in October and ends in March

vadi : the fields where bhagiyas and their families stay while in the destination of migration

zaid: agricultural season in India that begins in March and ends in June

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Centre for Labour Research and Action (CLRA) promotes workers' rights in the vast informal sector economy of India. It undertakes research to document the work conditions in the informal sector followed by policy advocacy with the state so that the workers receive their due entitlements. The centre has done pioneering work in documenting the seasonal migration streams that feed labour to labour intensive industries like agriculture, brick kilns, building and construction. Its work has facilitated development of an alternative paradigm of organizing workers that factors in the constant movement of workers, the critical role of middlemen, the nature of production process, and the socio-economic profile of workers.

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