

# Centre for Labor Research and Action

## Researching and Organizing Seasonal Migrant Workers

Annual Report

2022-2023



Image 1: Women from the migrant communities settled across Ahmedabad gathered at a drive to demand dignified housing and protection from eviction in the city of Ahmedabad in August 2022.

### INTRODUCTION

Centre for Labor Research and Action (CLRA) continues to work to promote workers' rights in the vast informal sector economy of India. It seeks to (i) organize workers into trade unions that can take up the struggle for decent wages and improved work conditions (ii) undertake policy advocacy with the state so that workers receive their due entitlements. Given that informal workers constituted up to 92 percent of the workforce in India in 2004-05 (NCEUS report 2004) making seasonal migration as the dominant mode of labor engagement in the informal sector in India. Workers, sometimes with their whole families, migrate from the relatively underdeveloped pockets to the developed areas for short term deployment, constituting what has been termed by a noted researcher as 'footloose labor' (Bremen 1996). This workforce is not amenable to traditional organizing activity that focuses exclusively on work place. The work places are dispersed, deployment of workers is on a seasonal basis and migrant workers are dependent on the employers in many ways – debt, residence at the workplace, and lack of support at destination.

This report seeks to highlight the efforts and outcomes of the various collaboration that CLRA undertook with their funding partners in 2022-2023. The projects teams working across Gujarat have developed an alternative paradigm of organizing workers that has proved its effectiveness over the last decade. The strategy factors in the constant movement of workers, the critical role of middlemen, the nature of production process, and the socio-economic profile of workers. This report discusses the main elements of the organization strategy, the organizational experience so far, the challenges, and progress of various ongoing projects for the given year.

## CLRA's Framework of Work:

**Research:** Field research is an integral component of CLRA's work. A principle reason is that there is no existing information about the informal workers that are the main target group. The very concept of informality arises from absence of record keeping. The large masses of seasonal migrant and informal workers CLRA works with are not recorded anywhere. Therefore, one of the first task that needs to be undertaken is to develop a data base of the target group of workers. Field research undertaken by CLRA comprises of (i) mapping and creating of data bases for different segments of workers (ii) in depth inquiry into working and living conditions (iii) value chain studies to understand the profile of the industry and different processes.

### The Organizational Strategy

**Migration Stream as the Unit of Intervention:** Seasonal migration is marked by constant movement that presents challenges to any organizational initiative. At any destination in a particular industrial cluster, workers come from a various of locations. Similarly, from any source cluster, workers may go to many dispersed destinations. The concept of migration stream makes it possible to bring focus to this bewildering jigsaw puzzle. Over a period of time, the migration corridors get established. CLRA has focused on these migration streams as units of organizational activity like factory or shop floor in the formal sector.

**Undertake organizational activity over the whole cycle from source to destination:** The emergence of stable migration streams opens up the possibility of undertaking the organizational process in source areas. CLRA looks upon Labor Exchanges that would collectivize and institutionalize the supply of labor as the viable alternative to traditional trade unions in the formal sector. The project teams have tried this out successfully in some streams that offered favorable conditions. In other streams as well, it makes senses to continue organizational activity in source areas. It is not easy to engage with workers in the destination as both the work place and the living space may be controlled by the employer. It is also helpful in gaining confidence of workers.

**Engaging the labour contractors:** The deployment of migrant workers at work is mediated through a vast array of labor contractors, that recruit workers from their homes and transport them to work place providing the linkage between work place and remote source clusters. Even though traditionally, the middlemen are looked upon as exploiters who charge exorbitant commissions. However, CLRA has from the very beginning adopted a more nuanced stand. CLRA understand that the middlemen are not a homogenous category. The approach of the workers collective towards middlemen is dictated by their class and caste character. In majority of the instances, middlemen are former workers who have graduated to the status of middlemen. In fact, becoming a middleman is the only career advancement opportunity for majority of the workers in the informal sector. Therefore, there exists a natural affinity between the workers and the middlemen. In most instances, the middlemen provide the leadership to the workers' movement. It also becomes necessary to engage with the middlemen for tactical reasons. They are the gate keepers. It is not possible to interact with workers in many instances before establishing an equation with the middlemen. The lesson from organizational experience of more than a decade has been that middlemen are bound to figure prominently in any workers movement.

**Tackling bondage and trafficking – focus on human rights:** Issues of workers in the informal sector are qualitatively different from those in the informal sector. The laws that regulate workers in the formal sector – Industrial Disputes Act and Industrial Employment Standing Order Act - are not applicable to informal workers. While there does exist minimal labor legislation for the informal sector – MW Act, Payment of Wages Act, WC Act – the enforcement is nonexistent. The issues that affect the migrant workers are bondage, trafficking, sexual harassment at work place, and non-payment of wages. These often fall in the realm of

human rights. In fact, one of the most powerful legislations for workers is the Bonded Labor Act. National Human Rights Commission has played a pioneering role in highlighting bondage in brick kilns.

**Public Service Linkage:** The migrant workers lose out on the public services like education, health, and ICDS in destination areas. As there are no effective statutory procedures to register migrating workers at source or at destination, and the entitlements of source are not portable, most migrating families already among the more vulnerable, lose out on several entitlements both at source and at destination. Most significant of these relate to women and children. School age children migrating for 6-8 months and those not able to stay back inevitably drop-out and become child and adolescent labour. Little children, pregnant and lactating mothers as well as adolescent girls lose out on nutritional supplements, and sustained reproductive and child health coverage. The Government health facilities seem alien and migrant workers at the destination as most facilities do not do effective outreach, and workers seek private professional as well as non-professional health care.

CLRA's approach has been to fill critical gaps, mainly related to lack of data on the extent and the work conditions of migrant workers; lack of specific orders by the Governments to the lower functionaries and lack of even an implementation policy, plan, procedures and mechanisms and most of all no proper monitoring of services even when they are provided.

### **CLRA's work for 2022-2023**

**Project Title: Facilitating research, training and education about labour rights and entitlements**

**Funding Partner: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung**

CLRA has been working with RLS since 2017 with teams located in Surat and Kadi. The project team in Surat engages with the seasonal migrant workers in the factory workers, construction and building industry and agricultural sector (sugarcane harvesters) to ensure their rights and entitlements. The objective of the activities is focused particularly on documenting the living and working conditions of the migrant workers and their families – so that this data so generated can help in facilitating and ensuring social protection for the migrant workers.

Following are activities undertaken in the year 2022-23:

**Mapping:** Labour and migration mapping carried out by the CLRA project team in Surat generated information on source and destination of workers and other basic information like number of workers in family, wage rates prevalent, and recruiting agent in a one-line format. During the year the team was able to map workers on labour stands, mukaddams of sugarcane harvesters, Halpati community workers and workers in Diamond cutting and polishing units. The data base created through the labour mapping by the project team during the year was shared with Government functionaries which led to regular health check-ups and mobile dispensary visits across all Nakas.

**Capacity Building Trainings and Workshops:** The project team members have been working with the migrant workers of the building and construction industry of Surat and the sugarcane harvesters of south Gujarat, in their source of origin as well as destination of the migration. As part of this initiative the members of the project team travelled extensively and visited various blocks to organize capacity building workshops in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan as well as the tribal rural areas of Gujarat to build upon the capacities of the workers. The cadres trained in these workshops helped the team to expand and intensify their base in the source this led to rise in the reporting of cases, awareness about the rights and entitlements of the workers, and expansion of collective membership. Action plan by the cadres after the week-long residential

training organized over a period of 6 months led to emergence of women cadres in Chhota Udaipur. The women cadres mobilized 70-80 women workers and have been organizing meetings to impart their learnings and to raise awareness about what could be redressal mechanisms for the agricultural seasonal migrants and wage-sharecroppers. They have initiated discussions on themes of Safe migration, access to public goods and services in the destination, safety of women at workplace (destination)

Due to the capacity building workshops organized across various source and destination areas, the project team received a total of 15 cases concerning non-payment of wages. The team was able to resolve 8 cases, with a total financial benefit of Rs. 364504.



Image 2: Research team paying visit to a centre in Surat to undertake a supply chain study and to map the condition of the workers in the diamond industry in the city

**Networking and Advocacy:** The project team has been working with a network of Trade Unions and CSOs in Surat – Navsarjan Trust, Shramjeevi Sevalaya, INTUC, CITU, Diamond Workers’ Union, MAM, Saath, Samta Charitable Trust, Ajeevika Bureau. The network has been working consistently to highlight and undertake policy advocacy for the betterment of migrant workers in the informal sector. The network came together to formulate a collective memorandum that was presented to all political parties in Surat to include issues of informal sector migrant workers in their manifesto during Assembly elections.

Due to the advocacy and mobilisation efforts, sugarcane Harvesters achieved multiple milestones – beginning with draft notification in February 2022 – result of repeated representations to the Department of Labour by the team and the workers, Tripartite Meeting organized by the Labour Commissionerate wherein the workers leaders presented their demand to raise wages and implementation of Draft Notification published in Gazette of India. The worker leaders formulated a demand charter submitted on August and September to local MLA. The workers were able to negotiate an 18% wage hike in the new season – about 1 lakh households stand to benefit from rise in wages (Rs.325) + accidental insurance raised to Rs.5 lakhs, workers to be paid for loading the canes to Rs.50 for each worker that is loading.



Image 3: Project team engaging with Sugarcane Harvesters in their destination area in Maharashtra

**Shelter for migrant construction workers:** The project team in Surat is continuing its collaboration with SMC since May 2018 at Sahara Darwaja to manage the Home for Urban Migrant Construction workers. The beneficiaries comprise of migrant construction workers and their families who were earlier living on the footpath or out in the open. Throughout the year, on an average 120 beneficiaries have been living on the premises. Particularly in the months of the summer and monsoons, the occupancy has gone up to 170 individuals. An extension of the ongoing collaboration with Surat Municipal Corporation resulted in the form of another family-based SUH in Mora Bhagal in Rander Chowk in Surat with a capacity of house. This resulted in better living conditions for the migrant informal sector workers– leading to better living conditions for construction workers and their families in Surat. The three-storey facility has a capacity of 280 individuals and is equipped with clean drinking water supply on all floors, seven dormitories, 4 kitchens and a separate washing area with solar water heaters. The SUH has been hosting 249 residents of the construction sector at the moment.

**Unorganized Labour Action School:** Unorganised Labour Action Online School (ULAS) is a training programme developed by CLRA in collaboration with Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung which seeks to train activists in organising informal sector workers employing various methods such as group discussions, role play, fish-bowl activity, structured conversations. CLRA has conducted two online trainings and due to the demand of the participants, one in-person training at Dang in 2022-23. Around 200 activists, worker leaders, union leaders and students have been trained so far.



In-person training – ULAS at Subir, Dang

## Research Publications:

- i. [\*The Invisibles: Towards Seasonal Migration Atlas of India\*](#)  
The Invisibles: Towards a Seasonal Migration Atlas of India is the first report in the series focused on the volume of seasonal migrants in India. The report is born out of an attempt to collate and curate data generated during the Covid-19 lockdown about the seasonal migrants in the country. The exercise of this expanse also required collaborating with CSOs across different states of India, to undertake an exercise to consolidate data on seasonal migrants generated during the first COVID-19 lockdown in 2020.
- ii. [\*Uncut diamonds\*](#)  
With more than 80 per cent of the world's diamonds being cut and polished in Surat, India has become the processing house for the world's diamonds (Ray Guha 2019) - due to factors such as easy availability of highly skilled labour at low cost, cutting-edge technology, and lower costs of operation. An industry valued at US\$ 23bn by TCPI (2019) with 6500 manufacturers employing approx. 7 lakh workers. This study supported by RLS-South Asia uncovers the diamond industry in Surat and the condition of its workers.
- iii. [\*Halpati Studies Part 2\*](#)  
This study is of an investigative nature seeking to document and examine the working and living conditions of the local agricultural community of Halpatis in South Gujarat. This study is integral to CLRA's existing work with the Sugarcane harvesters to forge synergies between the two working communities and become the foundation of the organization's intervention

**Project Title: Building a child rights-based model of sustainable food sovereignty for children of seasonal migrant families**

**Funding Partner: terre des hommes Duetschland e.V.**



Image 4&5: Food festival organized on 26th May 2022

This project seeks to contribute to SDG 2 on achieving food security and ending malnutrition and hunger in India, by improving the nutritional situation of 5250 children of migrant worker families in 30 brickworks in Ajmer, Bhilwara, and Mathura. This will be achieved through awareness and education interventions focusing on women and children, linking the workers with existing government programmes and services, building alliances with employers, trade unions, media, and policymakers at the regional and national levels, and empowering the workers to stand up for their rights. Status of activities for 2022-23 is the following:

**Health and hygiene:** 64 meetings were conducted across Bhilwara and Ajmer where 670 adolescent girls aged 14-18 years were trained on reproductive and menstrual health. 175 adolescents' girls are getting sanitary pad and multivitamins in Bhilwara and Ajmer. 600 hygiene kit to all the 600 children to all the 20 brickworks in Ajmer and Bhilwara. hygiene kit consists of school uniform, shoes, water bottle, undergarments, towel, nail cutter, socs etc.

**Access to public services:** 42 children aged 6-14 years were enrolled in schools across Ajmer and Bhilwara. In Ajmer and Bhilwara, due to efforts by the team, 9 out of 20 (40%) brick kilns have toilets and 20 out of 20 brick kilns have access to clean drinking water. 20 Brickworks have adopted the child protection policy and have anti-sexual harassment committees. A total of 654 children are enrolled in 20 health and nutrition centres established on-site at the kilns in Ajmer and Bhilwara. These children receive regular health and nutritional support, including hot, cooked meals. 71 children who come to the centres have been connected to the government's ICDS programme during this reporting period through the VHSNCs (Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committee) and SMCs (School Management Committee). 73 pregnant women and 48 children (0-6 months) have received immunization. 72 pregnant and breastfeeding women have received health check-ups. 13 institutional deliveries at local government hospitals were facilitated during this reporting period. 14 women and 1 man have opted for sterilization.

**Campaigns:** 2500 workers summit was facilitated this year by CLRA in which major issues were discussed related to labourers' rights and minimum wages decent working conditions and political mobilization due that a network of workers and CSO were created and female and male brickworks presented their at the forum as well as created a demand chart.

On the occasion of world day against child labour, 119 migrant workers took oath not to promote or engage in child labour at 6 brick kiln in Ajmer and 2 in Bhilwara.

The Union has also carried out surveys in Ajmer, Bhilwara, and Jaipur and advocated for workers' rights with government officials in Bhilwara. It has successfully resolved 58 cases of wage payment involving 51 workers and 7 cases of bonded labour involving 713 workers. This has resulted in 1248 brick kiln workers becoming members of the collective and raising Rs. 1,16,000 as contribution.

CLRA team has also been organizing food festivals since May 2021 across brick kilns in Ajmer and Bhilwara, presenting a rare opportunity for migrant brick worker families to come together to cook, eat, sing, dance, and enjoy themselves - while also learning how to diversify their diets using simple, locally available ingredients. 602 families working in brick kilns of Ajmer and Bhilwara have participated in 43 food festivals organized this year. Sample survey data shows that in Ajmer, about 90% of families have included four to five different foods in their diet. In Bhilwara, about 85% of the families have started using the recipes introduced in the food festivals on a daily basis, and 85% have included these recipes in their weekly diet.

Due to team's campaign, 97 women across 8 brick kilns in Ajmer have started receiving their own kharchi (wages) this season. In Bhilwara, 17 women across 3 brick kilns have started receiving their own kharchi (wages). A shift in health seeking behaviour, from using traditional and home remedies to visiting local government hospitals, has also been observed among the families. In Bhilwara, encouraged by a training conducted on health budgeting, the migrant families have started maintaining budget diaries, noting down their savings and expenses. Expenditure on health and nutrition has increased.



## **Project Title: Ensuring the rights of migrant children at the brick kiln through linking them with schools**

### **Funding Partner: We Trust**

CLRA team has been working intensively in Rajasthan (Ajmer and Bhilwara) to facilitate the integration of children who are currently employed at brick kilns into the mainstream education system, thereby preventing their engagement in child labour. The project intends to provide remedial education to these children, ensuring their continued enrolment and retention in formal schools. The activities undertaken by the project teams under the aegis of the project are listed below:

**Mapping of children:** A brief schedules were designed for mapping of total number of children (age between 0-14years) at different brick-kilns, for understanding education status of children, ICDS facility for children below 5 years, health facility for pregnant women, lactating mother etc. The objective of this mapping was : a) to know the current number of children who have come with their parents at the brick-kilns, b) to get an idea of about children current educational status present in the brickkilns.



The mapping has covered 610 children of age between 0-14 years, 133 between 15-18 and 708 children above 18 years of age. Based on the facts of the survey, details of the children were shared with the concerned department.

**Advocacy with state education departments to open on site schools, admission of children, and supplementary nutrition to children:** Extensive efforts were undertaken at the district, block, and local levels, including establishing contacts and conducting meetings, to facilitate the enrolment of these children in nearby government schools – we were successful in enrolling 26 children on the brick kilns in government schools.

Departmental meetings were convened to address the matter of educating children from migrant worker families. These meetings entailed discussions with education department officials at various levels, ranging from the district level to the gram panchayat level.

**Education Centres for Quality Education:** During the survey, it was found that many children had left their schools with their parents or there are children who have never been to school. In the situation of no structure of education on the kiln, children are forced to become laborers. So, education centers were opened by CLRA at Ajmer and Bhilwara brick-kilns. Nine education centres commenced operations from October 1, 2022. An additional centre in the Bhilwara division was initiated on November 1, 2022, owing to the unavailability of labourers' families. A total of 247 children, comprising 159 boys and 88 girls have been enrolled across all 10 brick kilns. Given the volume of migration from Chhattisgarh, 6 teachers from Chhattisgarh were appointed on education centres along with 5 local teachers.

**Sports Activities:** A series of sports activities were meticulously organized at the education centers. An array of engaging indoor and outdoor games was introduced with the aim of fostering a sense of regular attendance and engagement at the Centre. The activities were designed not only to encourage physical activity but also to foster cognitive and social development among the children.



Image 7: School run at a brick kiln in Ajmer

**Health, Hygiene and Rights:** 16 teenage meetings were organized, involving 38 teenage girls. Discussions centred on personal health and hygiene for teenage girls. 22 teenage girls and 35 women were provided with free sanitary napkins under the Udaan scheme from Anganwadi. 18 pregnant women received vaccinations and underwent health checkups. Within the framework of health services at all brick kilns, a vaccination drive was conducted for 10 children in the age group of 0 to 5 years, and 5 pregnant women were administered vaccinations. These vaccinations were administered with the assistance of the Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) who visited the kiln. Additionally, polio drops were administered to the children as part of the vaccination campaign. Furthermore, comprehensive awareness sessions were conducted among the women workers, focusing on menstrual hygiene and effective management practices. Women's Day was observed at five education centres where their rights were discussed.

**Earth Day:** At one of the kilns, Earth Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm. During this event, the "My Garbage is My Responsibility" campaign was inaugurated, emphasizing individual accountability for waste management. As part of this initiative, children led a rally to raise awareness about environmental protection within the kiln premises. Additionally, efforts were made to collect waste from the kiln surroundings as a practical demonstration of responsible waste management. Furthermore, discussions were conducted to highlight the detrimental effects of air and water pollution on the human body, underlining the significance of environmental consciousness.

**Parental/Guardian Engagement Meetings and cadre workshop:** Informative meetings were conducted at the source location with the parents of children, centering on pivotal topics. The main agenda of these meetings encompassed discussions on the significance of education for families engaged in labour-intensive occupations. The deliberations also delved into the potential strategies to ensure continuous education for children at their source locations, prior to their arrival at brick centre. Moreover, preparations and readiness for this transition were comprehensively addressed. Additionally, the importance of carrying essential documents and educational materials for children when returning to the brick centre was emphasized.

On August 27, 2023, a cadre workshop was organized in Dhanser village in Chhattisgarh in which 30 workers participated. It aimed to mobilize and unite the workers and emphasized the importance of facilitating children's education by making suitable arrangements for their education at their source locations before embarking on their work assignments in the brick kilns.

**Facilitating Children's Transition into Source area Schools:** In July 2023, concerted efforts were undertaken to facilitate the seamless transition of children who were previously enrolled in education centers in Rajasthan to schools located in Chhattisgarh. Each child's school registration number was diligently obtained by liaising with the respective source area schools, ensuring their smooth entry into the educational system. Total 68 boys and 61 girls were enrolled in the school of their source area.

**Project Title: Strengthening workers' organizations to ensure decent work for seasonal migrant workers in Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Maharashtra**

**Funding Partner: Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiative**

APPI has been supporting CLRA in its objective to develop strong workers' organization and collective strength since October 2022 across three states: Gujarat (Brick kilns), Rajasthan (Brick kilns) and Maharashtra (Sugarcane harvesting). A brief detail of activities undertaken by the project teams are listed below:



Image 8: Public rally organized in Chhattisgarh by United Front of Migrant Labor Organizations - a coalition of workers' organisations

**Mapping of workers and labour contractors:** Mapping of workers is done in Rajasthan by Rajasthan Pradesh Intt Bhatta Majdur Union and Maharashtra. Through this, around 1663 workers came in contact with the collective in the last six months.

**Meetings at Villages and Nakas:** Informal meetings were organized to spread awareness about labour rights and pamphlets were distributed to promote the work of the collective. A total 479 meetings were organized in Rajasthan, Maharashtra and source visits to Chhattisgarh and Uttar Pradesh and 2,018 workers came in contact of the collective.

**Capacity Building Training of Workers:** Workers were trained of their labour rights, laws, and public services to ensure safe migration. A total of 21 capacity building/safe migration trainings was organized during the last 6 months in which 1362 workers trained.

**Public Campaigns:** Public campaigns and conventions were organized to spread awareness about labour rights, revised minimum wages and to spread information about the workers' collectives promoted by CLRA. Two public meeting were held during source visits. One on 7 September 2023 which was attended by 20 workers. On 11 September 2023, a public meeting, demonstration, and rally program of PMSSM was carried out at Dr. Ambedkar Statue, Jail Road, Bilaspur. After a large public meeting at Ambedkar Circle, a rally took place from the circle till the labour office. A letter was submitted to the Assistant Labour Commissioner regarding the implementation of the Interstate Migrant Workers Act of 1979. Issues with the act and how it promotes contractualization which harms the workers was also highlighted. This was the first time such an event was held in Chhattisgarh for migrant workers. Around 215 workers attended the meeting. One public meeting was held in Rajasthan and nine in Maharashtra. A total of 3,522 workers attended public meetings.

**Source visits:** A total of four source visits were made to Chhattisgarh in June and August, and September, and to UP in September to establish contact with the workers at source.

A coalition of nine organizations was formed in Bilaspur. It was collectively decided that a demand letter would be drafted along with the migrant workers, and it would be submitted on 11 September with the CM, Labour Minister, Labour Secretary and Central Labour Secretary. During the September source visit to Chhattisgarh, a rally was held till the Labour Department and a letter was submitted to the Assistant Labour Commissioner demanding safe migration for migrant workers. It was highlighted to the authorities that the contractors take commission and this system is leading to the oppression of workers, hence the labour contract system should be removed.

For workers migrating to brick-kilns in Bhilwara, Ajmer, and Jaipur districts in Rajasthan, visits were made between July and September to Shahjahanpur, Bareilly, Pilibhit, Chitrakoot, and Banda in UP, and to Mahasamund, Balodabazar, Bilaigad, and Sarangagad in Chhattisgarh. Public meetings were held with workers at the villages to raise awareness around workers' rights and to build leadership within the workers to demand their rights.

**Advocacy with Labour departments:** The workers organizations collaborated to form an advocacy group comprising of organisations and collectives working on the rights of multiple groups of workers with initiative of Rajasthan Pradesh Int Bhatta Majdur Union. The collective was also able to establish a coalition with the People's Union for Civil Liberties.

United Front of Migrant Labor Organizations - a coalition of nine local organisations was formed to bring forward the issues of migrant workers and push the state authorities to work towards stopping the atrocities and injustice faced by them.

In Maharashtra, new partnerships were forged with five workers' collectives working with sugarcane workers in four districts of the Marathwada region, which is the source of majority sugarcane harvesting workers. An extensive campaign has been launched in Maharashtra since May 2023. For this, eight new fellows were recruited in Latur, Nanded, Parbhani and Beed taking the total number of partners to 10.

Memorandums were given to the respective departments for the education, health, safety, safe migration, NREGA, and other issues concerning seasonal migrant workers. Ith Bhatta Mazdur Union gave seven memorandums during the source visit to Chhattisgarh in September 2023. These were given to the CM, Labour Secretary, Assistant Commissioner of Labour, and Secretary of BOCW, amongst others. Four were given in Rajasthan and 28 in Maharashtra.

**Legal Cases and Membership:** The workers' collectives received 105 cases across three states concerning non-payment of wages, 27 cases of bonded labour and 22 other cases involving labour rights violations. For strengthening the workers collective in different locations, workers were made members of the collectives. In the last six months, a total 2,078 workers became members of the collectives and a total of Rs. 609,750 was received as donations, case fees and membership fees.

**Linkage to Services:** The team worked on ensuring linkages to services such as schools and health. During this project period, advocacy was done with local administrations and departments to ensure children of migrant workers will get linked to services. 54 children of migrant workers were admitted to schools and 84 families linked to RCH services. In the entire 2022-23 season, the collective was able to enable ration access for 881 families from UP, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, and Jharkhand who had migrated to work at brick-kilns in Bhilwara, Ajmer, and Jaipur.



Image 9: Advocacy with the state in Rajasthan pertaining to the issues of migrant brick kiln workers and provision of social security.

**Project Title: Ensuring safe migration for tribal migrant agriculture workers in Gujarat**

**Funding Partner: Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiative**

The project operating through a network of 12 grassroot organizations in both source and destination areas, aims to organizing and mobilize tribal agriculture workers who migrate to plains of Gujarat for agriculture work so that they get their due wages, entitlements and work in a safe and secure environment.

**Mapping of workers and labor contractors:** Mapping of workers is conducted in Junagadh, Amreli, Rajkot, Morbi, Banaskantha, Kutch, Surendranagar, Chhota Udaipur and Dahod of Gujarat, Badwani, Alirajpur district of Madhya Pradesh and Dungarpur district of Rajasthan during last 20 months of period. A total of 26,893 migrant workers came in contact and migration stream of the workers mapped.

**Meetings at Villages and Nakas:** A total 1399 meetings were organized in 13 districts across four states to spread awareness about the labour rights and 35009 workers participated in meetings.

**Capacity Building Training of Workers:** Capacity building initiatives were undertaken to educate workers on their rights, labour laws, and public services. They were also provided information regarding the updated statutory minimum wages in the agriculture sector. A total 2611 workers trained in 48 capacity building sessions.

**Public Campaigns:** Public campaigns and conventions were organised to spread awareness about the revised statutory agriculture minimum wages, on land-grabbing issues in Adivasi areas, to spread information about the Paschim Bharat Majur Adhikar Manch forum and its work. Till date, 49 campaigns have taken place at the source and destination areas in which 17043 people participated.



Image 10: Sammelan in Gandhinagar on September 22nd, 2022, wherein around 2300 informal workers participated and a demand charter was submitted to the District Collector, Gandhinagar

**Advocacy with Labour departments:** To ensure the enforcement of labour rights in practice, memorandums addressing multiple issues were presented to government officials. These memorandums encompassed topics such as the implementation of revised minimum wages in agriculture, access to public services, the construction of shelter homes for migrant workers in destination areas, access to education in destination areas, and compensation for animal-related threats, loss due to natural calamities and accidents. 106 such memorandums were submitted to the respective government departments and officials at different occasions at different locations.

**Legal Cases and Membership:** As a result of meetings and campaigns, a significant number of cases related to various issues were reported during the reporting period. The network partners received 221 cases of non-payment of wages involving 1282 workers, 38 cases were of sexual harassment involving 50 women workers and children and 238 cases were of violations including mainly workplace accidents, atrocity, and bonded labour involving 2189 workers. Partners also registered other cases including cases of basti demolitions and evictions, cases of missing workers from the workplace, and case of illegal possession.

Out of the total 497 cases registered in the last 20 months, approximately 35 percent cases were solved by the team and back wages worth Rs 90,05,500 were recovered. 85 victims of sexual harassment, workplace accidents, and atrocities received compensation from the government worth Rs 71,47,900.

In the last twenty months, a total of 11648 workers became members of the unions and raised Rs. 11,35,273 as a contribution.

**Linkage to Services:** The partners have worked on ensuring linkages to services such as schools and health. Numerous camps were organized to facilitate the issuance of e-shram cards, Ayushman bharat card, job cards and other respective state government schemes. Throughout the project duration, advocacy activities were conducted with local administrations and departments to ensure that the children of migrant workers are effectively linked to these services. 154 children of migrant workers were admitted to schools and hostels at source and destinations. 231 children below the age of 6 were enrolled in Anganwadis and received benefits under ICDS. 4960 workers received social security cards including E-shram cards, Ayushman Bharat cards, Mamta cards and job cards through the partners' efforts.

## **Project Title: Provide assistance to victims of human trafficking and debt bondage in Gujarat**

### **Funding Partner: United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery**

CLRA team is engaged extensively in rescuing victims of forced labour and debt bondage and providing them with legal as well as social assistance.

**Rescuing workers from bondage:** In the last six months, 206 workers (118 male and 88 female) were released from the bondage. Releasing children who come along with their parents is also a critical step taken and 39 children were released. Overall, nineteen cases were registered during the project period. All cases registered are against brick-kiln owners and land owners during the project cycle. In all cases workers were released and in 8 cases a total of Rs.3,23,003 debt was written off. In the other five cases, in which remaining payment were settled of the workers. A total of Rs. 6,25,000 payment of wages were paid to the workers after the CLRA team involvement.

**Assistance to victims:** The victims of bonded labour in the cases received so far are predominantly from Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste, and Backward Castes. This highlights the intersectionality of caste and class in perpetuating systems of exploitation and slavery-like conditions. It is crucial to address the root causes of such systemic inequalities to effectively combat bonded labour and ensure the rehabilitation and reintegration of its victims.

Prayas is taking a long-term approach to promote workers' rights and empowerment by conducting awareness meetings and capacity building training in the villages. So, to build sustainable solutions for the labour exploitations. Conducting awareness meetings help in raising awareness among workers about their rights and the risks of exploitation, while also building trust and cooperation between workers and the project team. By sharing information and engaging in dialogue with workers, the project also gather feedback on the effectiveness of its interventions and identify areas where further support may be needed.

Legal assistance is provided in case of bondage, non-payment of wages and physical and sexual harassment at work site during the project implementation period. Assistance is provided from filing of report in police station, submitting application to the DM, SDM, Labour Assistance Commissioner of respective case areas.

**Following up on cases:** PCLRA has maintained contact with the workers even after the completion of the case. This ongoing engagement ensure that workers continue to receive support and assistance as they transition to new employment or work to resolve any remaining issues related to their previous violations. The team also files application with the NHRC, SDM, and Collector for providing bondage certificates to workers and help them to secure their rights and transition to new employment. The team regularly follows each application filed for the bondage certificate.

**Collaborative efforts:** The project has established partnerships with workers' organization such as the Int Bhatta Majdur Union (Brick kiln workers union) and Majur Adhikar Manch (Workers union) to collaborate in implementing the project and filing applications for the release of workers from bondage. While the activities are undertaken by the project staff, the workers are also encouraged to become members of these organizations, and through which workers gain access to resources and support to advocate for their rights, as well as a platform to voice their concerns and grievances. PCLRA ensures that the workers themselves are at the centre of efforts to address labour exploitation and bondage. By involving workers' organization in the project and encouraging workers to become members of these organizations, the work help build sustainable solutions that empower workers and promote their rights over the long term.