

DEPRIVED CHILDHOOD

A photograph of a woman in a green sari with a gold border, sitting on the ground and holding a baby. The baby is wrapped in a blue cloth with a white and green floral pattern. The woman is looking down at the baby. The background is a dry, dusty ground with some sparse green plants. The overall scene suggests a rural, possibly agricultural, setting.

Assessing the Access to Schooling for Children
from Migrant Agricultural Families in Gujarat

Centre for Labour Research and Action

2023

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to offer sincere gratitude to our respondents - the Bhagiyas, who patiently answered and offered us insights into their lived experiences. I would also like to extend gratitude to our partner organisations: Saurashtra Dalit Sanghatan, Sangharsh Sewa Sanstha, and Majur Adhikar Manch, who supported us in data collection for this study, and it was through their network that we could access Bhagiya majdur at their migration destinations. Furthermore, I deeply appreciate the unwavering guidance provided by the CLRA team members, especially our secretary, Mr. Sudhir Katiyar, whose support was integral from the inception to the conclusion of this study.

Date: November 24, 2023

Gautami Kulkarni

Members of the Data Collection Team:

Junagadh

Babubhai Chauhan

Prabha Chavda

Kutch

Poonam

Sunil Rathod

Dinesh Charpot

Rajkot

Satish Sangathiya

Suresh Bagda

Jayesh Rathod

Vaishali Rathod

Rohit Chauhan

Amreli

Mansukh parmar

Devdan Mucchadiya

Morbi

Mansukh Chauhan

Mahesh Chavda

Surendranagar

Jaydeep Parmar

Prakash Parmar

Jigna Parmar

Contents

Abbreviations and List of Tables.....	2
Executive Summary.....	3
Chapter 1 – Introduction.....	5
Chapter 2 – Methodology	9
Chapter 3 – Findings and Analysis.....	12
Chapter 4 – Case Studies.....	21
Chapter 5 - Conclusion and the Way Forward.....	24
Bibliography.....	28
Annexures.....	30
• Annexure 1- Survey Questionnaire	

Abbreviations:

ICDS: Integrated Child Development Scheme

NGO: Non-Government Organisation

NSSO: National Sample Survey Office

SSA: Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan

RTE Act: Right to Education Act, 2008

CSO: Civil Society Organisations

ASER: Annual Status of Education Report

List of Tables:

Table 1: Distribution of sample population across its source and destination of migration

Table 2: Age bifurcation of children migrating along with parents

Table 3: enrolment status in Anganwadi for 0-5 years of children

Table 4: enrolment status in school for 6-14 years of children

Table 5: Reasons behind non-enrolment at destination for males and females (6-14)

Table 6: Destination districts wise analysis

Table 7: Source districts wise analysis

Chart 1: Source states of the sampled population (%)

Chart 2: Reasons behind non-enrolment at destination (%)

Chart 3: Type of work dropout children get engaged in (%)

Map 1: The Bhil Tribal Belt

Map 2: Destination districts selected for data collection

Executive Summary

A significant portion of the workforce in the agricultural sector of Gujarat comprises migrant wage labourers, mainly from tribal areas in Western India, which is also known as the Bhil tribal belt. The majority of these tribal migrants migrate seasonally to Western Gujarat (Saurashtra and Kutch) as casual agricultural workers or sharecroppers. In simple terms, sharecropping is a verbal arrangement between the landowner and the worker's family stating that the wage sharecropper family (Bhagiya) will get a fraction of the produce (usually one-third or one-fourth) in return for cultivating the land. It usually involves family migration, with the children accompanying their parents to the destination sites. Despite special provisions under RTE and Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) for such migrant children, a large number of children remain out of school.

This study attempts to assess the access to schooling for children of agricultural migrant workers in Gujarat who accompany their parents to the destination sites and aims to understand the reasons behind their school dropout. The study aims to obtain a holistic picture by employing both quantitative and qualitative methods while utilising tools such as case studies and household surveys. The study was carried out in six destination districts of Gujarat, namely Junagadh, Amreli, Rajkot, Morbi, Surendranagar and Kutch. It covers 1476 migrant agricultural households that brought their children along with them to the destination sites. The data collection, which spanned from December 2022 to February 2023, was done with the help of four partner civil society organisations in Saurashtra. A special emphasis was placed on obtaining gender-disaggregated data.

As per the present research, 53.7% of the migrant agricultural workers in Saurashtra came from the tribal regions of Gujarat - mainly Dahod, Panchmahal, Chota Udepur, and Mahisagar, while a significant number also came from Madhya Pradesh (42.5%). Among the 1476 migrant agricultural households surveyed, a total of 2844 children accompanied their families to the destination site. 94% of the children below the age of 6 weren't going to Anganwadis, while 63% of the children between the ages of 6 and 14 weren't going to schools in the destination districts. Approximately 18% of the children aged 6 to 14 who didn't go to school at the destination ended up working on farms alongside their parents, while around 28% looked after the household chores and younger siblings in the absence of their parents.

The enrolment ratio recorded for all districts is extremely low and a cause for concern. The lowest enrolment rate is in Amreli, with almost 13%, while the highest enrolment rate has been recorded by Junagadh (53.2%). The enrolment ratio at the source is also low. It stands at a mere 44% highlighting the barriers faced by tribal children in accessing schooling. With the respondents being allowed to answer by selecting more than one option, 'distance of the school from the farms where the workers live' and 'language barrier' emerged as the top cited reasons behind not going to school at the destination. 50% of the children who don't go to school at the destination responded that they have to look after their younger siblings,

while other tasks which the children who don't go to school perform include fetching water, livestock care and farm work such as weeding and harvesting, paddy planting, etc.

The survey findings raise pertinent questions about the effectiveness and implementation of government policies. Despite over a decade since acts like RTE and initiatives like SSA were launched, gaps in their implementation and coverage persist. There have been some examples where the state governments and the CSOs have launched innovative measures to address the barriers faced by migrant children in states like Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and even parts of Gujarat. However, in the absence of a systematic policy and adequate funding, there are no large-scale programmes to address this issue. Effective execution of the existing schemes, increased budgetary support and collaborative efforts between states and civil society organisations, including awareness campaigns, database establishment, transport facilities and out-of-school support centres, will prove vital in upholding every child's right to education.

Chapter 1

Introduction



In Gujarat's agricultural sector, a significant portion of the workforce comprises migrant wage labourers, mainly from tribal areas in Western India. The border areas of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh form a 'Bhil Tribal Belt' from where many tribal workers have been undertaking migration as a defensive coping mechanism and a livelihood strategy. Increasing pressure on limited resources and social relations like debt and dependency have led thousands of tribal workers to migrate to Gujarat's northern and Saurashtra-Kutch regions for wage labour during agricultural seasons. Within this labour pool, there are two distinct groups: those undertaking short-term tasks during peak periods like sowing, rice transplantation, and harvesting, and those involved in a practice known as "bhag-kheti." The practice of bhag-kheti, predominantly observed among large landholders, involves a verbal agreement between the landowner and the wage sharecropper (Bhagiya). Under this agreement, the Bhagiya commits to cultivate the specified land for one, two or three agricultural seasons per year and bears all labour-related expenses, while the landowner provides other necessary inputs. At the season's end, a fraction (Bhag) of the produce is given to the Bhagiya as compensation (CLRA, 2020).

Typically, this is a family migration where both husband and wife migrate and children often accompany them. Young infants cannot be left behind and the older ones can look after the younger siblings as well as perform household chores when the parents are at work. Slightly older children, aged 13 and above, work alongside their parents to contribute to the family income. However, they are rarely recognised as such by the state and are not the subject of state action (CLRA, 2019). The education of the children of migrants suffers the most from this arrangement.

In the last decade, there have been a few attempts at estimating the number of children of migrant workers and the impact on their education in Gujarat. One of the recent reports on children of migrant workers and child labour by the Centre for Labour Research and Action

(2019) tries to estimate the presence of child labour in various sectors in Gujarat, including agriculture. The study notes:

As per the report "The State of Gujarat Agriculture 2011-12" (Swain and Kalpana, 2012, p. 20), Gujarat has a total of 650,013 medium and large agriculture holdings. Assuming that at least 10 percent of these holdings have tribal migrant wage sharecroppers, there would be approximately 65,000 such families in the entire state. Among these families, around 80 percent have at least one child accompanying them, resulting in a total of 52,000 migrant children present on farms in Gujarat (CLRA, 2019)

Another decade-old study by Prayas Centre for Labour Research and Action covering 876 respondents in three districts of Saurashtra—Jamnagar, Rajkot, and Amreli—found that in 82 percent of the cases, children migrated with their families. Of the children who migrated, only 20 percent were enrolled in schools in the destination. The study observed that some children who remain closer to their villages manage to continue their schooling since they get mid-day meals. However, for many migrant parents, education is not a priority, and they prefer their children to begin working as labourers between the ages of thirteen and fourteen. Consequently, none of the migrant children are observed to pursue education beyond the primary level. In the case of Madhya Pradesh's migrant children, they tend to discontinue schooling due to language barriers (PCLRA, 2010)

The findings of a survey conducted by ANANDI which has been working with tribal migrant wage sharecroppers in the Morbi district of Saurashtra resonate with the findings of the study by PCLRA. The survey documented 227 wage sharecropper families in 15 project villages, out of which 70% were from Madhya Pradesh. When it enumerated the children between the ages of 6 to 14, it was revealed that only 29 percent were attending school while the rest were engaged in child labour, especially in cotton fields. It has been noted:

Typically, cotton's child labourers – some as young as five – rise in the early morning to face a day of demanding work, manually picking the cotton, and carrying the harvest in heavy loads on their backs. They sow; weed the fields; remove cotton pests; and in some cases, spray the crops with hazardous pesticides (ANANDI nd).

SSA Rajkot had reported 3000 migrant children in agriculture fields of Rajkot district during the multi-stakeholder consultation at Rajkot held a few years back.

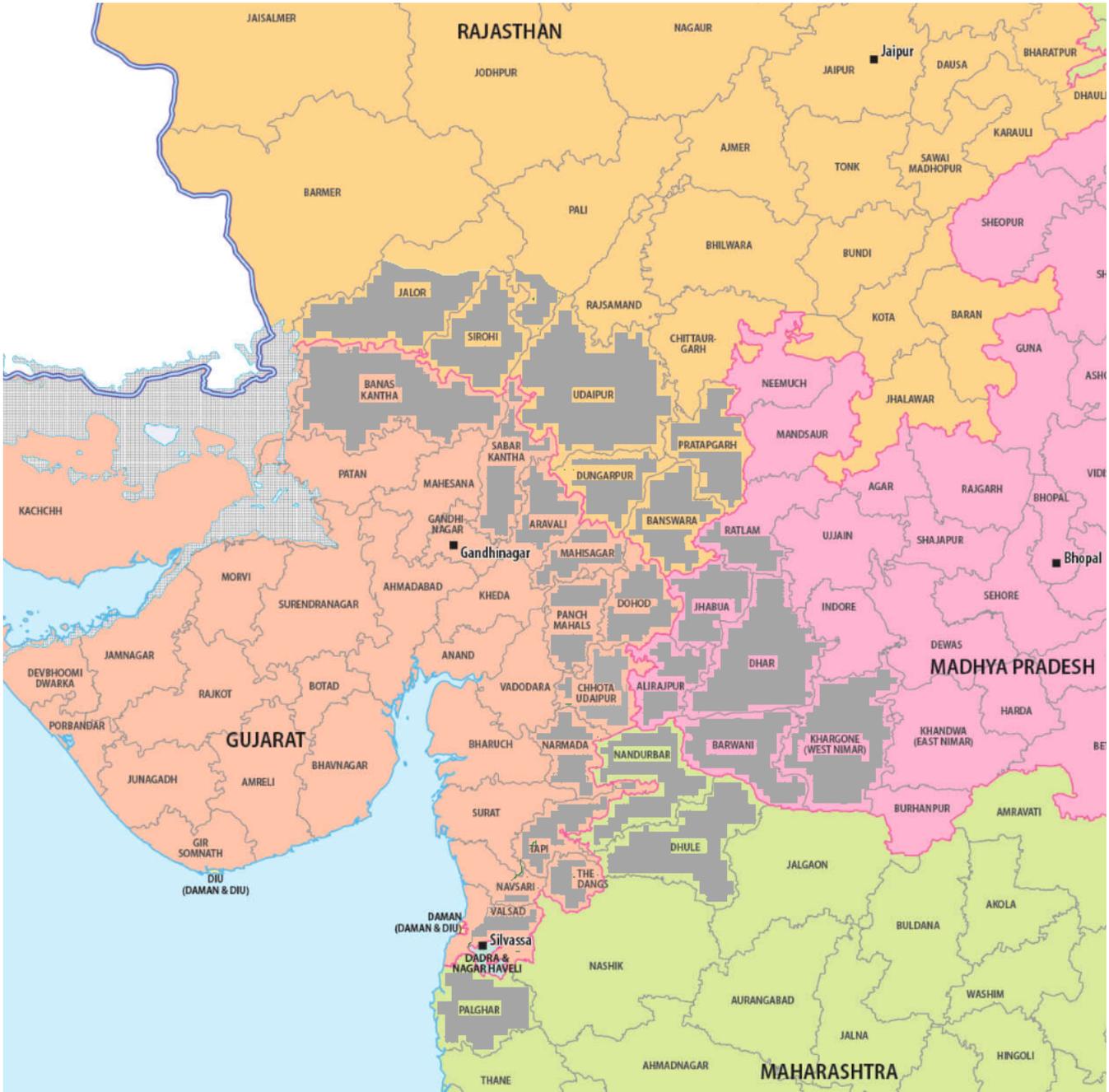
It is important to note, however, that the available figures are derived from the studies undertaken at the micro level by academics and civil society agencies engaging with the workers for various development objectives. These cannot substitute the officially enumerated data. A news report in India Today (2018) rightly points out this gap by stating that one of the key barriers is there being no effective system at the community/school level to maintain data on seasonal migrant children. In 2021, the Supreme Court directed the state governments to provide information on migrant children, but since then there has been little progress (*Writ Petition (CIVIL): The Child Rights Trust vs Union Of India, 2021*). Further, the schools at the native (source) locations never consider these children as out-of-school children since they join back a few months later. However, the continuity of education for

seasonal migrant children gets adversely affected during this period, leading to them repeating the same standard for many years and dropping out of school.

The issues faced by seasonal migrant children have been highlighted and brought to the government's attention by various CSOs and academicians for a long time. In response to that, the Education Department of Gujarat launched an innovative scheme called the migration card initiative in 2001 for tracking inter and intra-state children, ensuring continuity in education during the migration and a reduced dropout ratio. When difficulties were encountered in the tracking part, an online monitoring system (MMS) was introduced in 2009. This also included the provisioning of seasonal hostels for intra-state migrant children and Tent Special Training Programmes for interstate children where temporary schools were to be set up at the worksites. As per the rapid assessment in 2021 by the Centre for Policy Research, these measures have resulted in at least 50% improvement in children's school attendance (CPR & UNICEF, 2021). However, some studies have also noted that despite it being a well-designed scheme, the coverage is low for several reasons, including low awareness, leakages, pressure on the schools to show high enrolment rates, etc. (CLRA, 2019). There are no recent large-scale surveys enumerating the seasonal migrant children, assessing their education level as well as the impact of the SSA schemes on the ground.

In the initial stages of conceptualising the research study, while engaging with community-based organisations, several instances came to light where children of sharecroppers were seen working at the farms and taking care of household chores instead of attending school. These discussions, combined with a review of existing literature, underscored the need to conduct a survey aimed at assessing the educational attainment of children of migrant agricultural workers and identifying barriers to the continuity of their education.

The report is divided into five chapters. Following this overview and brief review of the literature, the second chapter discusses the methodological framework of the study. The third chapter presents the major findings and observations regarding the enrolment status at source and destination schools, the reasons cited by the respondents for dropping out of school, and the district-wise performance for both source and destination sites. The fourth chapter presents a number of case studies that offer in-depth insights into the barriers confronted by migrant wage-sharecropper families. The concluding chapter offers a discussion regarding the impact of existing government schemes targeted at migrant children, gaps in their implementation, and examples of innovative measures by CSOs to address the barriers along with recommendations.



Map 1: The Central India Bhil Tribal Belt (Marked in Grey)

Chapter 2

Methodology



This chapter describes the methodological framework and tools that have been used for the study.

This study has been designed keeping the following research objectives in mind:

- To assess the access to schooling for the children of migrant agricultural workers (especially wage sharecroppers) who migrate seasonally to Gujarat with their parents.
- To understand the reasons behind the phenomenon of non-enrolment or dropping out at the destination area and use the findings for advocacy with the state government
- To examine the effectiveness of the existing policies aimed at curbing the dropout ratio of migrant children in Gujarat and propose policy measures to address the implementation gaps.

The paucity of scholarly literature on the status of education for migrant children of agricultural workers necessitated the study team to employ primary data collection methodologies in conjunction with secondary desk research. The study aims to obtain a holistic picture by employing both quantitative and qualitative methods, utilising tools such as case studies and household surveys.

For the primary data collection, keeping the research objectives at the centre of the study, the population for the study includes households that undertook seasonal migration in the agricultural sector along with their children. Based on the literature review, it was decided to conduct the study in Western Gujarat (Saurashtra), where a large number of tribals migrate to work in the agricultural sector. The findings of a baseline survey of 3548 short-term migrant agricultural workers conducted by CLRA in 2020 reaffirmed that Saurashtra received the highest influx (more than 45% of the total) of migrant agricultural labour, and among its

districts, Junagadh, Jamnagar, Rajkot, Amreli, Morbi, and Kutch were identified as popular destinations (CLRA, 2020).

The sample population comprises wage sharecroppers (Bhagiya) who migrate to Saurashtra. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents for data collection to produce a sample that can be logically assumed to be representative of the population of tribal wage sharecroppers who migrate seasonally across Gujarat with their children.

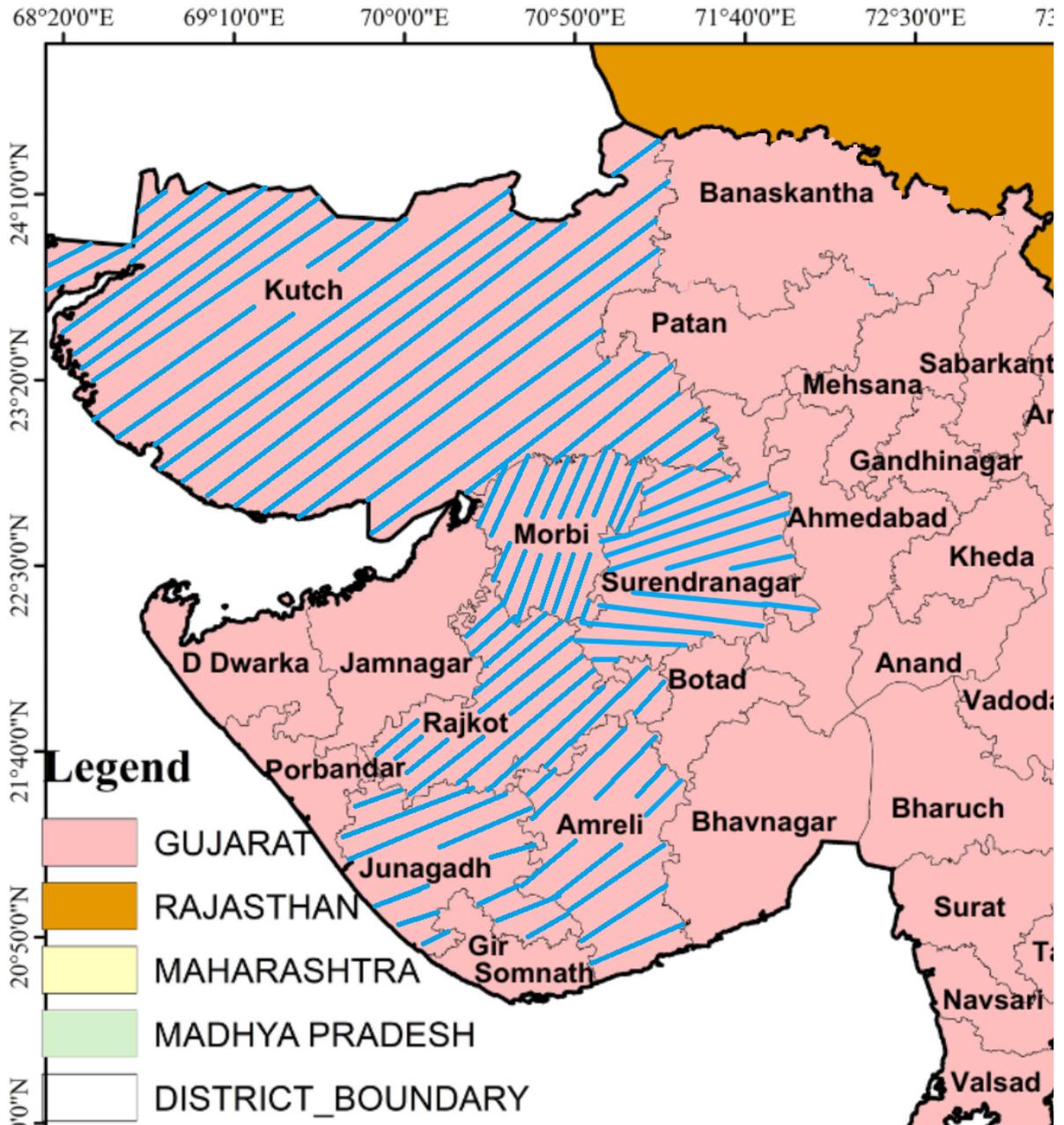
A number of civil society organisations that have experience working on the rights of migrant workers and other marginalised communities, led by the Centre for Labour Research and Action, were actively involved in collecting data and contributing field studies to this exercise. The partner organisations are listed below:

Name of the organisation	Districts
Saurashtra Dalit Sanghatan	Junagadh, Amreli
Sangharsh Sewa Santha	Surendranagar, Kutch
Samajik Parivartan Mandal	Rajkot
Majur Adhikar Manch	Rajkot, Morbi

In each district, a block or cluster was selected for data collection and subsequently, 10 villages were chosen from within the selected block. The selection of the block was done using a convenient sampling method based on the presence of an organisation in the network. Drawing from the existing literature and insights from grassroots organisations actively engaged with seasonal agricultural workers, an estimated average of 25 migrant households per village was ascertained. Accordingly, a total of 250 migrant households were targeted for data collection in each district, resulting in a cumulative coverage of 1,500 migrant households across six destination districts. However, following a meticulous process of data cleaning, the dataset was ultimately reduced to 1476 migrant households. Only those migrant households that had migrated to the destination site with their children were considered for the survey.

Data collection spanned a period of three months (December to February) when the presence of migrant households at the destination sites was assured due to the ongoing Rabi season. The survey tool was designed to create a migration profile of the seasonal migrant agricultural workers and evaluate the status of education of their children who accompany them at the worksite. A special emphasis was placed on acquiring gender-disaggregated data. The detailed survey questionnaire is enclosed in the 'Annexures' section.

Map 1 depicts the field locations in Saurashtra - the destination of migration—that were selected for the survey.



Map 2: Destination districts selected for data collection

Chapter 3

Findings and Observations



This chapter discusses the key findings from the survey of 1476 migrant families in Gujarat engaged in sharecropping agriculture. The chart below has been extracted from the survey conducted in the 6 destination districts mentioned in Chapter 2.

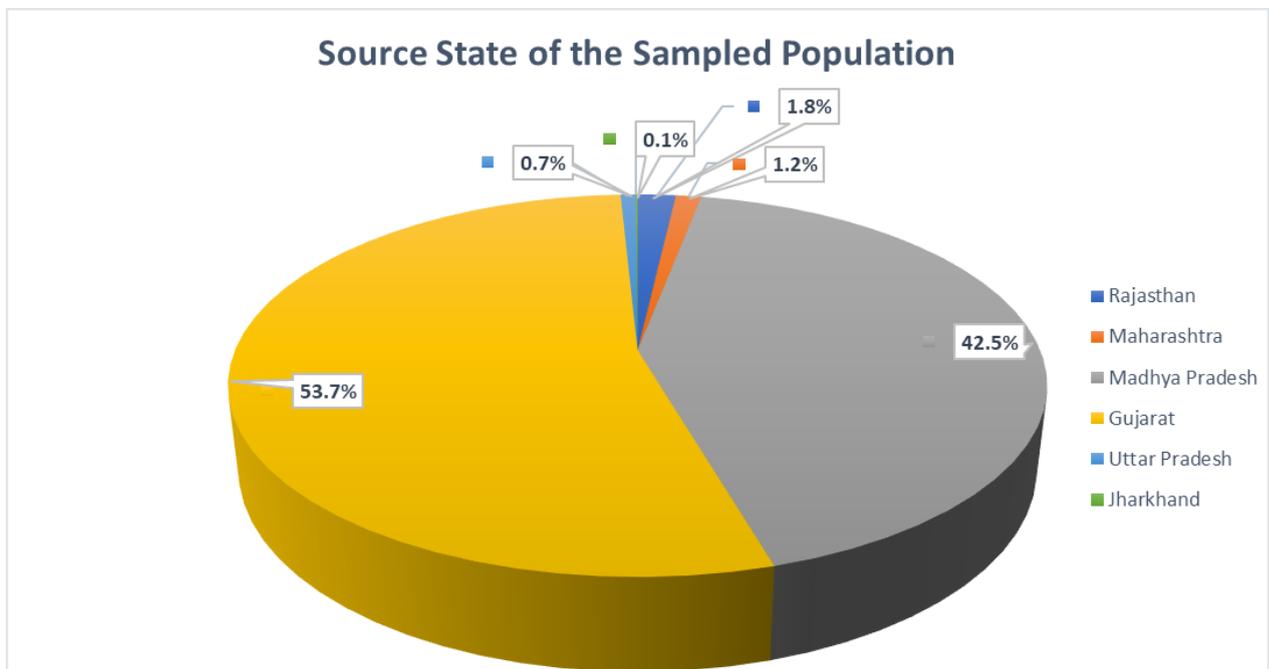


Chart 1

It can be observed that more than half of the migration undertaken as agricultural labour in the selected region of Gujarat is intra-state migration. Most of these migrants come from

tribal regions in Gujarat (53.7%), while a significant number also come from Madhya Pradesh (42.5%). A nominal share has been recorded by the border areas of Maharashtra (1.2%), Rajasthan (1.8%), parts of Uttar Pradesh (0.7%), and Jharkhand (0.1%).

The table below shows the flow of migrant labourers (inter- and intra-state) as the number of households moving from a source district and state to a destination district and state.

Table 1: Distribution of sample population Across its Source and Destination of Migration									
Source state	Source district	Surendra nagar	Rajkot	Morbi	Kutch	Junagadh	Amreli	Sub Total	Total
Maharashtra	Nandurbar	0	12	0	0	0	5	17	17
Rajasthan	Banswara	2	0	2	0	0	12	16	26
	Pali	0	0	0	0	6	0	6	
	Others	0		2	2	0	0	4	
Uttar Pradesh	(Kasganj, Hardoi, Jalaun, Aligarh)	8	0	2	0	0	0	10	10
Jharkhand	Palamu	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	2
Madhya Pradesh	Jhabua	17	48	88	0	40	17	210	627
	Barwani	2	19	6	0	66	65	158	
	Dhar	0	24	7	0		11	42	
	Alirajpur	4	61	60	0	13	17	155	
	Khargone	0	2	0	0	5	13	20	
	Dindori	0	0	0	0	16	0	16	
	Others	13	3	10	0	0	0	26	
Gujarat	Dahod	36	129	33	18	23	14	253	794
	Mahisagar	0	14	0	142	0	0	156	
	Chota Udaipur	33	17	38	18	0	0	106	
	Panchmahal	5	2	0	63	0	1	71	
	Bharuch	0	0	0	0	28	5	33	
	Surendranagar	0	1	3	10	0	0	14	
	Ahmedabad	4	0	0	0	15	0	19	
	Banaskantha	0	0	0	2	8	14	24	
	Intra district	79	5	2	5	1	0	92	
Others	8	7	6	1	0	4	26		
	Total	211	344	259	261	223	178	1476	1476

Taking a look merely at the totals for each state tells us that the majority of the households (794) migrating to districts within Gujarat are coming from within the state. The second highest count of households migrating to the selected districts in Gujarat is from Madhya Pradesh (627).

It can be observed that the highest share, with just over 30% of the intra-migration in Gujarat, originates in Dahod, the majority of whom moved towards Rajkot (~51%). Along similar lines, it can be observed that among labourers migrating from the source state of Madhya Pradesh, a little over a third of the households left from Jhabua, out of which over 40% went to Morbi.

Among those surveyed, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh have the lowest share of interstate migration for agricultural purposes.

From the point of view of destination districts, Kutch presents a special case, as other than 2 households from Rajasthan, migration in Kutch is primarily intra-state migration.

Most of these agricultural migrants employed as Bhagiyas, engage in the cultivation of a variety of crops within the same fields. Over 75% of the surveyed households engage in the cultivation of cotton. Nearly 50% cultivate groundnuts, and just over 40% also cultivate spices. Many also contribute to the production of flowers, vegetables, and other crops.

Children accompanying their parents to the destination site

Table 2: Age bifurcation

Age group	No of children
0-5	859
6-10	1418
11-14	567
Total	2844

Among the 1476 migrant agricultural households surveyed, a total of 2844 children accompanied their families to the destination site. These children were grouped by age as 0-5, 6-10 and 11-14 years old. Only those children who had migrated along with their parents were counted as part of the survey. There were 1418 children aged 6-10 years, almost 50% of the total. The trend shows that workers typically opt to leave their older school-going children behind at their native place, often in hostels or with relatives (mainly grandparents) and bring younger siblings along with their infants - primarily to attend to the infants when they are working on the field at

the destination site.

As seen from Table 3, out of 859 children between the ages of 0 and 5, less than one-tenth of the children (~6%) are going to Anganwadi in their destination. The enrolment rate in the source is slightly higher, at around 7%. This shows that around 94% of children are not enrolled in Anganwadis, hence missing out on the various schemes applicable to them. While comparing the percentages for the differences among male and female 0-5-year-old children, it can be seen that boys and girls are almost as likely not to be going to Anganwadis at the destination.

Table 3: enrolment status in Anganwadi for 0-5 years of children

Category	Total	Male	Female
Go to Anganwadi at destination	5.9%	6.2%	5.5%
Go to Anganwadi at source	6.9%	7.9%	5.8%
N	859	479	380

Our primary focus, however, is on school-going children aged between 6 and 14 years. Children ages 6-10 and 11-14 are grouped together henceforth.

The total number of children surveyed, aged between 6 and 14, is 1985. The reader will observe from Table 4 that only slightly more than one-third of the children (37%) are going to

schools in the destination. The enrolment rate at the source is slightly higher, at 44%. This shows that almost two-thirds of children have dropped out of the schooling system.

While analysing the data for differences in experience for boys and girls among children aged 6-14, a few observations have emerged. Though the dropout ratio for girls is higher than that for boys, the difference is not significant. There is a slight difference between the enrolment rates of boys and girls at the destination. While 38% of boys are enrolled in school at the destination, the percentage of girls enrolled is only about 36. The difference increases slightly to five percent at the source.

Table 4: enrolment status in school for 6-14 years of children

Category	Total	Male	Female
Go to school at destination	37%	37.9%	35.8%
Go to school at source	44%	46.2%	41.2%
N	1985	1137	848

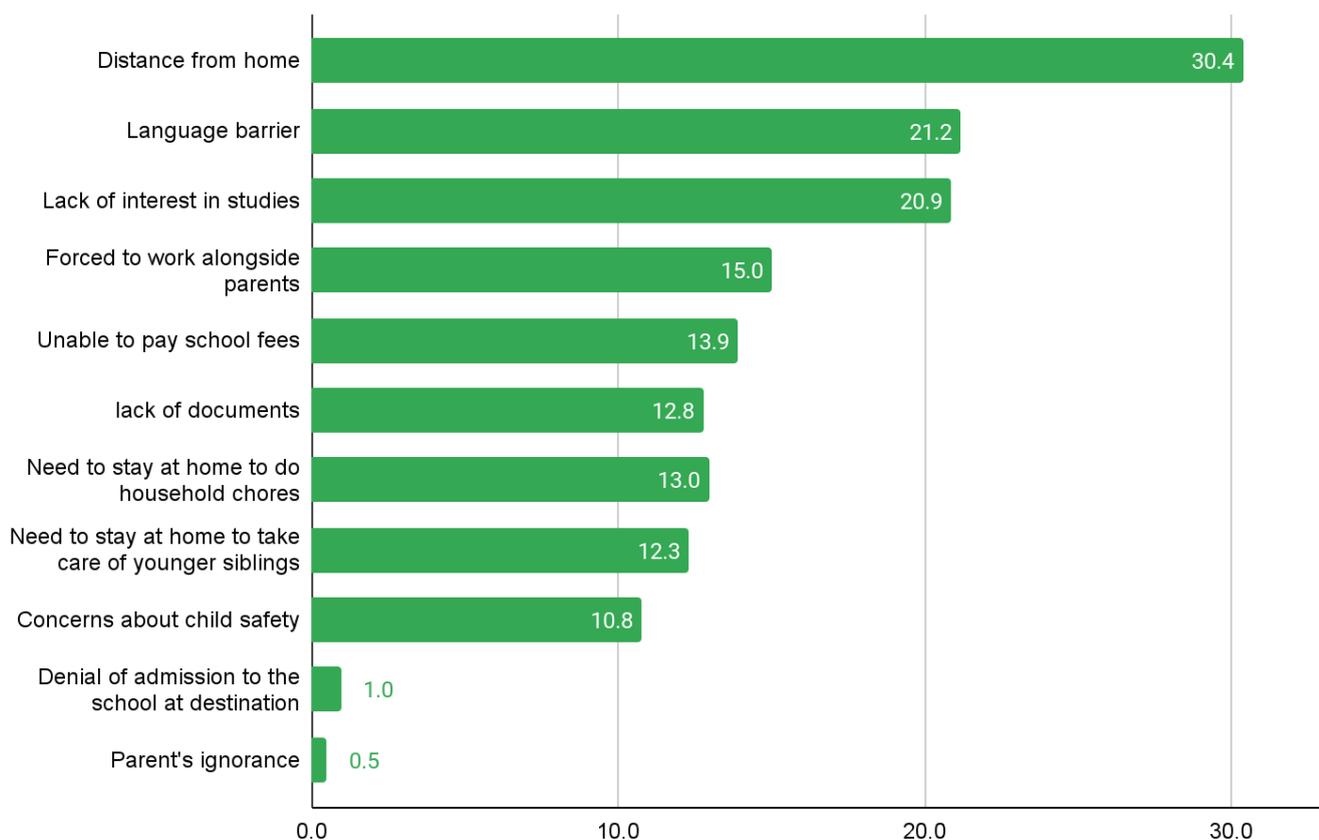
Reasons for dropping out

During the survey, respondents were allowed to select multiple options when answering questions about their reasons for not going to school in the destination districts. Above 30% of respondents cited the distance of schools from their homes or farms as a primary issue. Around 21% of the respondents shared that the difference in the medium of teaching at the destination area was also one of the reasons behind discontinuing schooling. Apart from the interstate migrants, certain intra-state migrants, particularly those from tribal areas, have also identified language barriers as a challenge. This could stem from the variations in dialects, making it challenging to adapt and comprehend. Roughly, the same percentage (21%) chose the 'lack of interest in education' option, which could also be influenced by parents' beliefs that schooling might not guarantee future job prospects, as illustrated in the following chapter. Additionally, concerns were raised about the practicality of education in a different language, with the view that it might not lead to employment opportunities in their home state, such as in Madhya Pradesh.

More than often, the workers do not bring along their official documents, such as their Aadhar cards, while migrating. Around 13% of respondents claim that they have faced difficulties in admitting their children because of a lack of official documents. 'Safety concerns' accounted for around 11% of the responses. The main reason behind this might be that Bhagiya usually live on isolated farms far from village settlements and amidst wild animals. This geographical isolation, combined with the distance from schools, results in parents being hesitant to send their children to school alone.

Barring a small fraction, the majority of migrant children have not encountered refusal of admission at the destination schools. However, this is also because they have not approached the school in the first place.

Chart 2: Reasons behind non-enrollment at destination (%)



New insights regarding gender disparities emerge if we analyse the data separately for girls and boys. As observed from Table 54, both boys and girls commonly cite reasons such as language barriers, distance of school from home, and lack of documents for not going to school at their destination. However, a striking difference is noted in the responses regarding household responsibilities, where more than one-third of the dropout girls cannot continue schooling because they are expected to look after their siblings and do housework. Significantly more girls—over three times the percentage of girls compared to boys—explain their inability to attend school due to household chores, and more than double the percentage of girls note that they must stay home to look after their younger siblings. enrolment of girls is affected more also because of safety concerns in the minds of parents compared to the boys. Whereas, a slightly higher percentage (~7%) of boys than girls express a ‘lack of interest in studies’ as one of the main reasons behind dropping out.

Table 5: Reasons behind non-enrolment at destination for male and female (6-14 yrs)

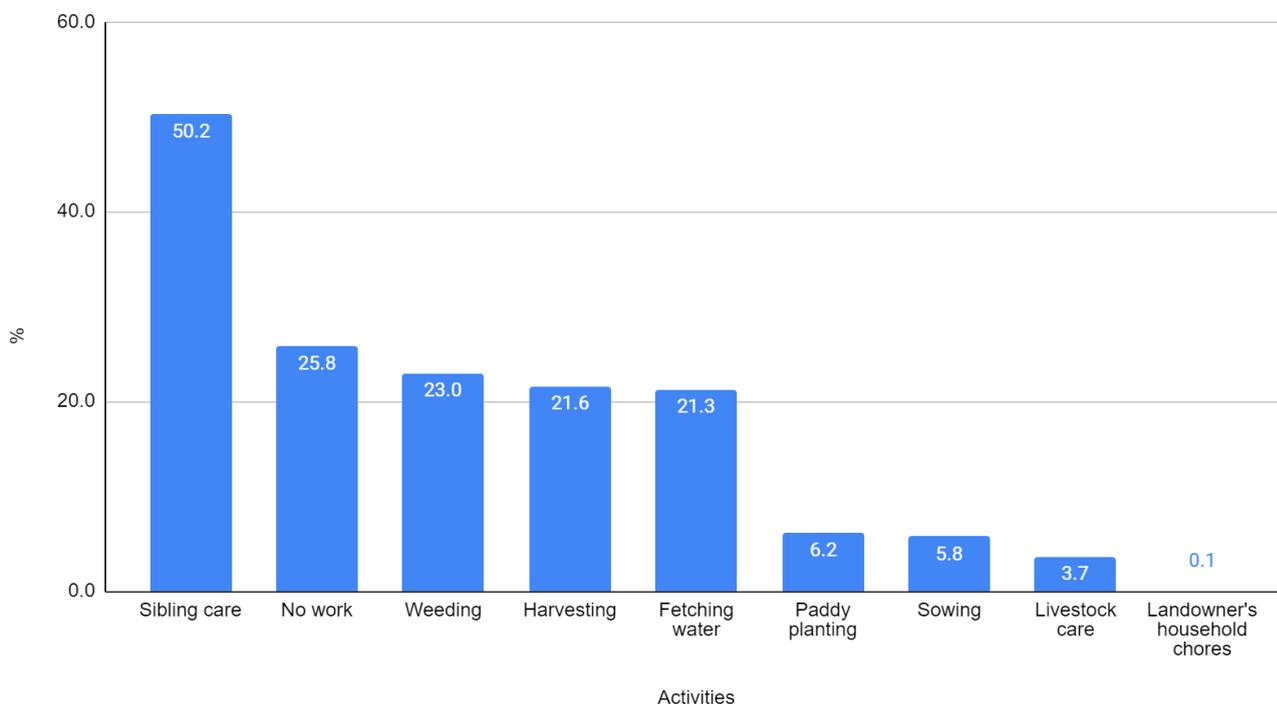
Reasons	Total	Male	Female
Distance from home	30.4%	30.3%	30.5%
Language barrier	21.2%	21.7%	20.6%
Lack of interest in studies	20.9%	23.9%	16.9%
Forced to work alongside parents	15.0%	16.4%	13.2%
Unable to pay school fees	13.9%	12.7%	15.4%
Need to stay at home to do household chores	13.0%	6.2%	21.7%
lack of documents	12.8%	13.3%	12.1%
Need to stay at home to take care of younger siblings	12.3%	8.6%	17.1%
Concerns about child safety	10.8%	9.3%	12.7%
Denial of admission to the school at destination	1.0%	1.1%	0.7%
Parent's ignorance	0.5%	0.4%	0.6%
N	1250	706	544

While being allowed to answer by selecting more than one option, 50% of the children who don't go to school at the destination responded that they have to look after their younger siblings. A small portion is engaged in tasks like tending to livestock or household chores. Around 23% of respondents shared that they assist in weeding. About 21% shared that they participate in harvesting alongside their parents and a similar proportion listed fetching water as one of the major tasks performed.

Male children who don't go to school at their destination are more likely to work on farms alongside their parents, while female children are more expected to perform household work. Over one-third of dropout boys work on the farm alongside their parents, while one-third of dropout girls look after the house.

A tiny fraction (0.1%) of the total dropout children stated that they have to work at the landowner's household. Only around 26% of children are known to do no work at all when not going to school.

Chart 3: What work are the dropout children engaged in? (%)



District-specific analysis

The dropout ratio for all districts is worrisome. Merely 37% of the children accompanying their parents go to school at the destination. Barring just two districts, all four districts have less than 50% of the kids enrolled in school. The lowest enrolment rate is in Amreli, with only a little over one-tenth of the children enrolled in school. Rajkot, Morbi, and Surendranagar have also recorded extremely low rates of enrollment, with only one-third of the total children in the districts attending school.

Kutch has fewer dropouts, possibly due to its limited interstate migration, as corroborated by the data in Table 1 depicting migration streams. Surprisingly, Junagadh has a significant amount of interstate migration, yet it has the lowest dropout rate, highlighting the complex and multifaceted nature of the issue.

Another worrisome fact that has come to light, as reflected in the previous tables, is the low enrolment ratio among children of agricultural labourers, predominantly hailing from tribal regions, within their respective source districts. The enrolment ratio at the source stands at a mere forty-four percent.

In the six main districts of Madhya Pradesh, the enrolment rate at source is just a little over one-third of the children (37%).

If we compare Gujarat with other neighbouring states, there is a small difference with Gujarat faring better, but the difference is not huge. The enrolment ratio at the source area is approximately 4% higher in Gujarat compared to other source states. In other words, a greater

number of children who migrate within the state have enrolled in schools, at least in their source area, as compared to children who migrate across state borders.

Considering the overall picture, schooling is abysmal throughout the entire Bhil tribal belt.

The tables below (5 & 6) depict the district-wise performance regarding the enrolment of children in schools at source and destination.

Table 6: Analysis of destination districts

Destination district	Surveyed children	enrolment ratio at destination schools
Amreli	11.1%	13.2%
Kutch	22.1%	52.3%
Rajkot	26.9%	31.1%
Junagadh	15.0%	53.2%
Morbi	14.7%	32.0%
Surendranagar	10.4%	29.1%
N	1985	735

Table 7: Analysis of source districts

Source state	Source district	Surveyed children (N)	Surveyed children enrolled in school at source	Surveyed children enrolled in school at destination
MP	Interstate			
	Alirajpur	25%	31%	31%
	Barwani	21%	35%	19%
	Jhabua	28%	41%	37%
	Dhar	6%	18%	12%
	Khargone	3%	38%	38%
	Dindori	3%	100%	4%
Rj	Banswara	3%	43%	0%

MH	Nandurbar	3%	12%	4%
	Others	7%	39%	46%
	N (Interstate)	836	306	231
Gj	Intra State			
	Mahisagar	21%	44%	48%
	Chota Udaipur	13%	37%	30%
	Dahod	31%	36%	31%
	Panchmahal	11%	48%	52%
	Bharuch	5%	63%	98%
	Banaskantha	3%	20%	23%
	Ahmedabad	3%	82%	74%
	Surendranagar	9%	28%	46%
	Others	4%	49%	34%
	N (Intra state)	1149	476	493
	Total (N)	1985	782	724

‘The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act’ enacted in 2009 was the first Act to explicitly address 'children of migrant workers aged 6-14 years.' Subsequent years have seen the emergence of additional schemes and initiatives targeting migrant children. Yet, such a high number of out-of-school migrant children raises questions about the implementation of these Acts and schemes. This shall be explored further in the next chapters.

Chapter 4

Case Studies

A family from Alirajpur has been working for the past year as Bhagiya in Dhoraji tehsil of Rajkot with an agreement to receive 1/4th share of the profits. During the survey, the oldest girl child in that family told the team that she finished her 9th standard in Alirajpur before migrating to Rajkot, but didn't continue her studies. When asked for the reason, her family rushed to answer that when they got a good deal for Bhag-kheti, they needed as many people as possible to work. Her mother added "Bacchi ko Gujarati mein padha ke hamare yaha (Madhya Pradesh) mein thodi na koi naukri dega. Aur iske padhe likhe mama ko koi naukri nahi mil payi, toh isko padha ke kya karein? "

(Roughly translated as if she learns in Gujarati, who will employ her in Madhya Pradesh and the ones who are already educated are not getting jobs, then what's the use of sending our children to schools?)

A tribal family from Panchmahal district has been working for four years as a Bhagiya in Bhachau tehsil of Kutch with an agreement to receive 1/5th share of profits. None of their four children who migrate with their parents go to the school there. Their oldest - 13 years old son works on the field alongside parents. Two daughters who are couple of years younger than him, look after the housework and also do the farm work.

When the team questioned the couple about not sending their children to school, the man responded:

"Baccho ko padhai mein rakhne se naukri kaha milti hai; ulta bacche kamchor ho jate hai"

(schooling doesn't produce jobs, it just makes children slackers).

A couple from the Barwani district of Madhya Pradesh has been working as a Bhagiya at Visavadar block in Junagadh for the past one year. The landowner has made an agreement to give 1/4th share of the profits to the family. Their three children, two boys and a girl aged 12, 10 and 8 years respectively have also migrated with them. Children used to go to school back in Barwani, but they don't go to school in Junagadh. When the parents were asked about this, they responded: "we were so busy with agricultural work the whole time that we couldn't make time to visit the school to get our children enrolled. By the time our work in the day time gets over, the school time is also over. Anyways, our children won't be able to understand and learn in Gujarati."

For the last three years, a Bhagiya family from Rajpur Tehsil of Panchmahal district has been working at different places in Saurashtra. Currently, they are working in Vadia tehsil of Amreli as a Bhagiya with an agreement to receive 1/4th share of the profits. The couple has brought along their three children aged 5.5, 4 and 3 years. When the team asked why they hadn't enrolled their children at a nearby Anganwadi, the man shared:

“Hamare vatan thane mein Aadhar card aur Janma pramanpatra nikalvane mein bahut dikkat hoti hai. Abhi hamari aadhar card ki process toh ho chuki hai, jab wo nikal ke ayega, tab dalwane ki koshish karenge. Ek dikkat ye bhi hai ki hamara khet gaon se kafi door hai”.

(Roughly translated as there is a lot of difficulty in getting the Aadhaar card and Birth certificate issued at my native place. But now that I have finally managed to complete all the formalities for Aadhar, I will try to get my children admitted once the card is issued. Our farm is far away from the village, that too is a matter of concern”.

A family from Sanjeli tehsil in Dahod has been working for the last three years as a Bhagiya in Dhrangadhra tehsil of Surendranagar with an agreement to receive 1/4th share of profits. The couple has brought along their three children aged 11, 9 and 6 years. All the three kids used to go to school in Dahod, but none go to a school in Surendranagar. When the team asked their parent if the children used to go to the school at source, why don't they go to the school here, the parent responded with a slight irritation, “shala wadi se door hai aur teen bacchon ko school bhejana mushkil hai. Ab hum kheti karenin ya baccho ko school mein chhodne aur lene jane baithe?”

(Roughly translated as - the school is far away from the place of residence (farm) and it is difficult to send 3 children to school; should we do farming or spend our time in dropping children off to school?)

For the past eight years, a Bhagiya family hailing from Dhanpur Tehsil of Dahod district has been working as a Bhagiya in Tankara tehsil of Morbi with an agreement to receive 1/4th share of the profits. The family has brought along five of their six kids. They have left one of their sons, currently studying in second standard, back in Dahod with his grandparents so that his education remains uninterrupted. Their eldest, a 13-year-old girl, does not go to school as she has to look after three of her younger siblings aged 5, 3 and 1.5 years. She and her younger sister who is 7 years old look after the household work and work on farms alongside their parents too. The couple told that they intended to enroll their 7-year-old daughter in school back in Dahod, but her deep attachment to her younger siblings made it impossible for her to stay back. When asked by the team why don't they send them to a school here in Morbi, the man of the household replied:

“School, Anganwadi sabhi door hai aur akele jane mein khatra hai kyun ki durgam vistaar hai. Hame kaam se fursat nahi milti ki baccho ko school chhodne-lene jaa sake. Hamare mahilao ke sath kharab ghatana banane ka dar bana rehta hai kyun ki aaspas ke malik hamari mahila-bacchion ko galat nazar se ghoorate hai aur mauke ki talash mein rehte hai.”

(Roughly translated as: Where we live is a dangerous and inaccessible area. School, Anganwadi are far away. We don't have time from work to drop off children to school and we can't let them go alone, especially given the unsettling behavior of some landowners who cast inappropriate gazes upon our women and daughters.)

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Way Forward



The previous chapters clearly elucidate that a large number of children who accompany their parents while migrating seasonally as agricultural labourers get dropped out of the education system. Sixty-three percent of the children who accompanied their parents to Saurashtra did not go to the school in the destination district. On the other hand, only forty-four percent of the children of migrant agricultural workers were enrolled in schools at their source area (native place). It is also important to note here that the enrolment rate does not represent the holistic picture regarding the education of migrant children. Bhagiyas often change their employers (landowners) and, subsequently, villages within the same district every two to three years. In this case, the name of the child remains enrolled with the school at the first village they migrated to, but the child does not attend that school as they keep migrating elsewhere. Therefore, the actual number of out-of-school children can be even higher. While conducting the survey, our field team received several responses that indicate the difficulties faced by migrant families in continuing the education of their children. In multiple instances, it was observed that, upon closer examination, the true reason behind children expressing disinterest in studying could be traced to the constraints that arise from the quality of education, which fail to translate into any material returns and safety concerns in parents' minds about leaving their children alone for the continuity of schooling.

Most of the seasonal migrants are forced to take younger kids with them to look after the infants at the destination. So initiatives launched by both the central and state governments that are directed at the source area, such as the seasonal hostels, could potentially benefit the older children who are left behind by the family; but this approach might not cater to children below the age of 10, who constitute a significant portion of the population. In fact, the current survey highlights that the majority of children (1418) fall within the 6 to 10-year age range.

Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has several provisions targeted at migrant children, such as Tent Special Training classes, provisioning of teachers and learning material in the native

language of migrant children. However, implementation and coverage of these schemes remain an issue. For instance, it has been reported that the school for the children of Oriya migrants in Surat working in the power loom sector neither had books in Oriya nor did they have teachers who could speak Oriya, resulting in more dropouts (CLRA, 2019). The migrant card initiative launched by the Gujarat government under SSA contains data regarding the educational level and grades of children enabling them to sit for their exams either in their hometowns or at their destination sites, thus resolving certain issues children face during seasonal migration. However, the migration card scheme requires the migrating family to proactively seek migration cards. Most migrant families belong to the lowest socio-economic strata and are illiterate, leading to lower levels of awareness about the programme. Our data collection team reported that several respondents of the current survey did not know about migration cards. Another gap is that the interstate seasonal migrants, who also form a significant part of the agricultural labour in Gujarat, are left out of the purview of this scheme as it applies only to the residents of Gujarat.

A major issue in the implementation part is funding. A report by UNICEF released in 2021 says, “In Gujarat, the increasing privatisation of education and a decline in public schools have created an additional divide, wherein permanent and well-off long-term migrants are able to avail private education in urban areas, but seasonal and circular migrants are increasingly left out due to accessibility and language barriers in public schools. Despite the active participation of CSOs in the state, working towards increasing migrant children’s access to education, these efforts remain fragmented due to limited support from the state (CPR & UNICEF, 2021).” A recent article in Scroll (Bashir, 2023) also acknowledges how non-governmental organisations in the sector are operating small-scale programmes, but in the absence of a systematic policy and adequate funding, there are no large-scale programmes to address this issue.

Gujarat’s annual budget for 2023–24 is ₹3,01,022 crores, around an 18% increase over the revised estimates for 2022-23. The state has allocated Rs. 36,435 crores, 12.10% of its total expenditure and 1.42% of its GSDP for education in 2023-24. This is lower than the average allocation (14.8% of the total expenditure) for education by all states. As per the answer given by the minister of education in Lokasabha in July 2023, around 20,000 positions of primary teachers remain vacant in Gujarat. One of the highest numbers of vacant positions is in tribal areas of Gujarat, especially Dahod and Banaskantha, as declared in the 15th Gujarat assembly session. The state government has only provisioned Rs 30 crore for teachers’ training. “Schools in hilly tribal areas often remain closed in the absence of teachers. The appointed teachers are often expected to conduct multiple classes along with other administrative work, which leaves them overworked. They also lack the skills and capacity to teach the tribal children,” report Jagrit Adivasi Dalit Sanghatan and Parivartan Education and Charitable Trust, collectives working in Barwani and Chhota Udaipur, respectively. Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, which has several provisions targeted at migrant children, has been allocated merely Rs 1,247 crores – 3.5% of the total budget for education.

Gujarat, given its economic growth, can afford to allocate greater funds to these initiatives. If we refer to our survey findings, ‘distance from school’ and ‘language barrier’ are the top two

reasons behind the high non-enrollment/drop-out ratio at the destination. The provision of free transport to the children of schoolless habitation is one of the brilliant interventions of SSA; however, no children of agricultural workers have been able to avail of this service to date, as per the field observation. Provision of funding for teachers and resources in the languages of source states, as well as arrangements in terms of transport facilities for children staying on farms, can help in ensuring the continuation of education for these children. Similarly, increasing the funding for Anganwadis and Anganwadi workers to ensure their proper running is equally important so that infants get all the benefits under ICDS and the younger ones don't have to stay at home to look after them. However, the fact that the government is reluctant to increase the budget allocated to education and schemes such as SSA shows the priority the state government gives to this issue.

As stated earlier, an awareness campaign is vital given the low levels of enrolment at both source and destination sites among short-term migrant workers. It is also essential for the government to build a reliable database of migrant workers and children accompanying them to inform programmatic decisions at various levels. For this, the government can sponsor an enumeration of migrant children across sectors and across the state. It can also use certain existing SSA provisions, such as Baal Panchayats. As put forth in CLRA's earlier reports, the Baal Panchayat can be a very good means of monitoring child migration since children immediately come to know when their friends and colleagues migrate. They can report on impending migration and even be helpful in stopping it (CLRA, 2019). The government can collaborate with CSOs who are already doing this kind of work, such as Pratham, who releases the annual nationwide survey ASER that provides representative estimates of the enrolment status of children aged 3-16 at the national, state, and district levels.

Lack of identity documents is another issue faced by these children. The state has made Aadhar mandatory for many public services and seasonal migrants do not carry the original documents with them while migrating because of the fear of losing them. One major reason for the non-enrolment of migrant children at destination schools is that these children remain invisible to the local school that is responsible for their schooling under the RTE Act. The cycle of agricultural migration, like other seasonal migration, begins in October and lasts till the next monsoon (that is 6-8 months) when the families return to their villages. As this overlaps with the academic calendar, migrant children only get to attend school at the source between June and September. These children do not get enumerated in the survey of out-of-school children which is usually carried out at the beginning of the new academic year, in the months of July-August, by the local school. On the other hand, they continue to be shown as enrolled in the schools at their source villages (Smita, 2008). Because of the low awareness level about schemes like migration card, the child who is still enrolled on the records of the school at source fails to secure admission at the destination school. Those who successfully get admission to the destination school are often made to repeat the same classes multiple times (UNESCO 2016). This can also prove to be a reason behind children losing their interest in schooling and joining the workforce instead. Hence, streamlining the admission process and ensuring quality education at government schools, both at source and at destination, is the need of the hour.

There have been some examples where the state governments and the CSOs have launched innovative measures to address the barriers faced by migrant children. In Kerala, educational volunteers who speak the mother tongues of migrant children have been appointed through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Peter, Sanghvi and Narendra, 2020). Through a memorandum of understanding between Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, volunteers trained in Odisha were hired to help bridge the language gap among children of brick kiln workers (Mukhopadhyay and Naik, 2017). Another example is Kutch in Gujarat. After the Gujarat earthquake, the CSOs and the state government joined forces to form the Agariya Hit Rakshak Manch—Salt Workers Protection Front. Because of the constant advocacy efforts by the front to address the barrier of distance faced by the children of salt workers in Rann, a large number of buses were released by the government.

To reiterate, despite acts like RTE, children of seasonal migrants, who form a significant portion of the demographic, are deprived of quality education. The ICDS coverage for these children is extremely low, as seen from the data, where 94% of the children below the age of 6 do not go to Anganwadis. 63% of the children between the ages of 6 and 14 are dropouts, and many are engaged in working alongside their parents or looking after the household as well as the younger siblings. The prevalence of issues such as distance from schools, language barriers, hidden child labour and concerns about safety highlights the need for targeted interventions. At the same time, the diverse range of responsibilities undertaken by these children, from caring for siblings to engaging in various household tasks, emphasises the intricate interplay between education and socio-economic factors.

Targeted interventions are needed to increase the enrolment rate as well as the quality of education. Education is not only a source of livelihood for migrant children but also a tool for upward mobility and breaking out of the cycle of distress migration. Prioritising the effective implementation and increased budgetary support for existing government schemes is required to ensure the uninterrupted education of children who accompany their parents. Collaborative initiatives between the state and civil society organisations (CSOs), including awareness campaigns, database establishment, operation of out-of-school support centres, and issuance of migration cards, can be significant in upholding every child's right to education.

Bibliography

Understanding the contours of child labour among migrant communities working as cotton farm labour in Morbi and Maliya, Gujarat. (N.d.) Area Networking and Development Initiatives (ANANDI).

Bashir, S. (2023, February 11). How education remains out of reach for India's invisible migrant children. *Scroll*.

<https://scroll.in/article/1041923/how-education-remains-out-of-reach-for-indias-invisible-migrant-children>.

Centre for Policy Research & UNICEF India (2021) Improving social protection portability for migration affected children: Spotlight on Gujarat. *Social policy and inclusion*. UNICEF.

Centre for Labour Research and Action. (2020). Footloose in farms. CLRA.

<http://clra.in/files/documents/5ff6e6d8-3246-482c-839d-d269e4ac26c4.pdf>

Centre for Labour Research and Action. (2019) Ensuring Rights of Migrant Children in Gujarat. CLRA (2019)

<http://clra.in/files/documents/28b19044-d3b9-46cd-8887-526f1c2348dc.pdf>

Chandrasekhar, S. & Bhattacharya, L. (2018). Education of children from migrant rural households in India: Moving towards a coherent policy framework. *UNESCO*.

<https://doi.org/ark:48223/pf0000266057>.

Comptroller and Auditor General of India (2014). Report of the comptroller and auditor general of India on general and social sector. Government of Gujarat.

https://cag.gov.in/sites/default/files/audit_report_files/Gujarat_Report_2_2014.pdf

Gujarat budget analysis 2023-24. (2023). PRS Legislative Research.

<https://prsindia.org/budgets/states/gujarat-budget-analysis-2023-24>.

Kuttikrishnan, A. P. (2019). State Interventions for promoting inclusive education for children of migrant workers in Kerala. Thiruvananthapuram, India: Presentation made at the Consultation on Inclusion of Migrant Children held on June 24, 2019.

Status of Teachers for Class I to VIII. (2023, February 11). Gol. Ministry of Education.

Mukhopadhyay, P. & Naik, M. (2017). Giving migrants their due. *Shelter* 18(2): 60-64.

Benoy P., Sanghvi, S., Narendran, V. "Inclusion of Interstate Migrant Workers in Kerala and Lessons for India." *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics* 63 (4): 1065-1086.

Prayas Centre for Labor Research and Action (n.d). Wage sharecroppers in Saurashtra. PCLRA. (unpublished study of 2010).

Rajput, S. (2018, December 11). How seasonal migration of Indians is destroying educational opportunities for children. *India Today*.

<https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/featurephilia/story/how-seasonal-migration-of-indians-is-destroying-educational-opportunities-for-children-1406369-2018-12-11>.

Shah, V. D. & Makwana, M. (2012). Impact of NREGA on wage rates, food security and rural-urban migration in Gujarat state. *Artha- Vikas*. 48(2). 19-36.

Smita. (2008). Distress seasonal migration and its impact on children's education. *Falmer, UK: Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity*.
http://www.create-rpc.org/pdf_documents/PTA28.pdf.

Tarankit Prashonotri. (2023, 29th March) *15th Gujarat Assembly, 2nd Session*.

UNESCO. (2016, September 6). Global education monitoring report, education for people and planet: Creating sustainable futures for all. *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*.
<https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/report/2016/education-people-and-planet-creating-sustainable-futures-all>

Writ Petition (CIVIL): The Child Rights Trust vs Union Of India. (2021, April 31) *Government of India*.

Annexure - Questionnaire

प्रवासी बालकों के शिक्षा स्तर का सर्वे

1. सर्वेकर्ता का नाम:
2. मोबाईल नंबर:
3. मजदूर का नाम:
4. गंतव्य क्षेत्र का पता (गाँव, ब्लॉक, जिला, राज्य):
5. सोर्स क्षेत्र का पता (गाँव, ब्लॉक, जिला, राज्य):
6. मालिक का नाम:
7. आप किन फसलों की खेती करते हो: कपास, मूंगफली, सब्जियां, मसाले, फूल, अन्य
8. 14 साल से कम उम्र के बच्चों की जानकारी:

क्र. सं.	नाम	लिंग	उम्र	स्कूल जाता है, हाँ तो कक्षा	क्या प्रवासी बच्चा गंतव्य स्थान के स्कूल में जाता है? अगर हाँ तो कक्षा

9. अगर नहीं तो, स्कूल न जाने की वजह क्या हैं?
 - पढ़ाई में रुचि की कमी
 - घर से दूरी
 - घर के काम करने के लिए घर पर रहना आवश्यक
 - छोटे भाई-बहन की देखभाल के लिए घर रहना आवश्यक
 - गंतव्य स्कूल में प्रवेश न मिलना
 - प्रवेश के लिए जरूरी कागजाद (आधार कार्ड, स्कूल लिविंग सर्टिफिकेट आदी) की कमी
 - बच्चे की सुरक्षा के बारे में चिंताएं
 - अलग भाषा में पढ़ने में तकलीफ
 - आर्थिक दिक्कतों के कारण, स्कूल फीस भरने में असक्षम
 - आर्थिक दिक्कतों के कारण, मजदूरी करने के लिये बाधित
 - कोविड के बाद पढ़ाई छूट गयी है
 - अन्य
10. गंतव्य क्षेत्र में बच्चे अगर स्कूल नहीं जाते तो, वो कौन कौन से काम में मदद करते हैं?
 - बुवाई
 - धान रोपन
 - फसल काटना
 - निराई

- जानवरों/मवेशी की देखरेख में रहना
- खेडुत (जर्मीदार) के लिए घरेलू काम
- पानी लाना
- घर के काम
- अन्य

11. अन्य जानकारी: गंतव्य स्कूल में प्रवेश कराने के बारे में माता-पिता द्वारा क्या बताया गया (जैसे गंतव्य स्कूल के प्रवेश प्रक्रिया के बारे में सही जानकारी का अभाव, गंतव्य क्षेत्र के स्कूल में प्रवेश कराने की कोशिश नहीं की, आदी)