

CENTRE FOR LABOUR RESEARCH AND ACTION

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UNDER
CLOTH

WORKING CONDITIONS OF
TEXTILE MARKET WORKERS IN SURAT
DECEMBER 2020

A STUDY BY
JAGDISH PATEL



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S u m m a r y

For the purpose of this study, the workers in the Textile market in the city of Surat were contacted and questionnaires administered to them. Among them, there emerged four categories of the workers - loading workers, cutting workers, folding workers and box making workers. Even though the team did not find any child labor during the period of the study yet 12% of the respondents reported that adolescent workers were employed across the market. 95% respondents mapped were migrant workers from different Indian states. Over the years 80% of these workers have settled in Surat with their family. Majority of the households were nuclear families with extended families in the source of migration. 55% respondents were in 26-35 age group. Account, sales and supervisors of the shops were excluded in this study. It was found that the sampled workers do not get any benefits of social security schemes like Provident Fund, Employee State Insurance, Bonus or Gratuity, with no paid weekly off. The respondents were found to be working for extended hours and did not receive the stipulated rate for overtime. Minimum wages act was found to be applicable but the minimum wages have not been revised and were thus found to be irrelevant here, even though the market has capacity to pay fair wages. Accidents at work have not been reported but work environment is laden with dust and noise and high temperatures. 66% workers have reported body pain at the end of the day.

Covid-19 lockdown caused heavy economic losses to these workers. 44% of the respondents reported that they had to borrow money; while 67% claimed they did not receive any Government help. 93% of the respondents claimed that they did not receive any help from civil society organizations as well. At the moment the major problem that the workers who were part of the study reported was the irregularity of on a daily basis.



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Chapter 1: CONTEXT

Surat is a city in the Indian state of Gujarat. It is the administrative capital of the Surat district. The city is located 284 kilometres south of the state capital, Gandhinagar.

Census 2011 indicates that Surat had a population of 6 million in the 2011, making it the second largest city in the state of Gujarat, after Ahmadabad. It is the eighth largest city and ninth largest urban agglomeration in India. Surat is the 34th-largest city by area and 4th-fastest developing city according to a study conducted by the City Mayors Foundation, an international think tank on urban affairs. The density of population in Surat in 2001 was 652 per sq. km and it rose to 1376 in 2011. This is the highest population density recorded in Gujarat.

Surat is one of the most important cities on the industrial map of the country and many large industries have been developed over here. The economic base of Surat consists of textile manufacturing, trade,

diamond cutting and polishing industries, intricate *Zari* (or *jari*) works, chemical industries and the petrochemical and natural gas based industries at Hazira established by leading companies such as ONGC, Reliance, ESSAR, and Shell. The medium and large-scale industries are mostly located at the five industrial estates in and around the city, while a significant proportion of the small industries are located within the city limits.

There are 0.7 million looms, 150 multi-storied textile markets and trade is routed through 50-55,000 merchant manufacturers (traders). The textile markets employ about 1.2 million textile workers in the city (Patel, n.d., p 13).

Surat deals primarily in man-made fibre. Katakam (2020) notes that there are 185 towers located on a 1.5 km stretch of ring road. Each building has average 5-7,000 shops with 65,000 registered traders. Surat produces 4 crore meters of fabric a day. Daily turnover is estimated to be Rs. 150 Crore. Shops are small usually measuring 10 ft. X 10

ft. Workers work crowded together in the corridor sorting and packing material. ¹

Aajeevika Bureau report states that in Surat textile market over 60,000 labourers from South Rajasthan are employed. Workers receive dyed and printed cloth from mills, check it, cut it to the required size, stitch and fold it to convert it into a product destined for retail and wholesale market throughout the country (Aajeevika Bureau 2007). The report further observed that workers are initiated into the trade at a very young age, often less than 14 years. More than 10,000 of the estimated 60,000 workers from Rajasthan are below 14 years of age. It notes further that workers work long hours in cramped, dim-lit surroundings, often in the basements of shops (to escape legal action for hiring child labour). Labourers on the shop floor in the open have better working condition. They face heavy on-the-job pressure. Working hours range from 10 to 12 hours a day; those engaged in sari folding have to spend this time standing. Each saree shop employs about 4-5 workers who cut, measure, fold, stitch and pack 2000 to 2500 sarees daily. In absence of written agreement between the contractor or trader and the workers - underpayment, delayed or irregular wage payment is the norm.

In October 2020 Federation of Surat textile Traders Association (FOSTTA) survey indicated that around 26000 textile shops are yet to re-open. FOSTTA office bearers stated that Surat is the largest supplier of ladies garment including sarees, dress material, lehenga, kurtis etc. made from manmade fibre in the country. There are about 180 textile markets located on Ring road, Slatapura, Saroli and Sahara Darwaja housing 80,000 shops. Many traders own more than 2 shops which they get on rent to use as godowns. President of the Federation said that majority of the traders in JJ A/c market in ring road are from Rajasthan (Times of India, 2020b).

Major fire broke out at Raghuveer Cilium textile market on 9 June 2020. Earlier on 8 January and again on 21 January fire took place in this market. No human casualties reported (Thomas 2020).

Survey carried out by FOSTTA revealed that nearly one lakh workers have been laid off in Surat in August and September 2020 (Times of India, 2020a). The findings of the survey as reported by Times of India details that the majority of the job losses were in wholesale textile markets especially those engaged in salesmen, folding sarees and fabric and accounting. Estimated 2.5 lakh people are directly employed in the textile shops for various jobs. In last 2 months about 25% traders have shifted their shops from one market to another to save on monthly rents. 95% textile traders stated their revenue have dropped to about 70% compared to pre-Covid period, an estimated Rs. 15000 crore worth of capital is Surat's traders is stuck in various wholesale markets across the country since July 2019. Without money traders are not able to process fresh stock sale of fabrics is less than 30% or Rs. 40 crore per day (ibid).

As per Government figures there are 5000 child laborers in Surat (Khare 2013). But civil society estimates are closer to 50,000. Of these 68% are between age of 15 and 18. In Surat there are over 60,000 shops in the textile market. Cloth is sold from here to all parts of the world. Children pack sarees, bundle the thread, carry bundles in the market. The greatest number of children are found in these markets because they get paid between Rs. 50 to Rs. 80/- a day. The textile market runs along the Ring Road and children who work here live in the areas over the 2-5 kilometres stretch (Khare 2013).

Provisions of Shops & Establishment Act:²

The Act provides for following provisions:

- 1) Act applied to shops employing 10 or more workers
- 2) Those employing less than 10 should give intimation of commencement of business to the inspector online
- 3) Sec. 16 (2) "every worker shall be allowed weekly holiday of at least 24 consecutive hours of rest.

1. For more details see <https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/silence-of-the-looms/article32033354.ece> . Accessed on December 7th, 2020

2. For more details see <https://labour.gov.in/sites/default/files/model%20bill%20englsih%20.pdf> . Accessed on December 7th, 2020.



- 4) May be kept open except 11 PM to 6 AM
- 5) Sec. 29 general violations attract penalty up to Rs. 40,000. Total fine capped to Rs. 2,000/- per worker.
- 6) Sec. 30 Penalty for the contravention of provisions of the Act which results in accident – imprisonment only if contravention resulted in accident causing serious bodily injury or death of a worker.
- 7) Sec. 32 Penalty for obstruction or refusal to provide register - fine which may extent to Rs. 50,000/-
- 8) Sec. 15. Total number of overtime hours should not exceed 125 hours in a period of 3 months.
- 9) Sec. 18(2&3) A worker shall be entitled to 7 days casual leave
- 10) Sec. 18(7) A workers shall be entitled to 8 paid holidays
- 11) Sec. 12 No adult worker shall be required or allowed to work in any shop or

establishment for more than 9 hours in any day and 48 hours in a week.

- 12) Sec. 17. The employer shall furnish to every worker an identity card which shall be produced by the worker on demand by Inspector.

Field team observed the presence of child labour in the textile market – who were found to be working within and outside the immediate premises of the textile market. Children were observed carrying the goods to the market. Child labourers who were found to be making boxes right at the entrance of the shops where the footwear is dropped before entering and the ventilation and illumination are poor. Children working as loaders workers on the other hand are exposed to vehicular pollution and dust. Furthermore, the children carrying heavy loads were found to be crossing roads with heavy vehicular traffic. Thus the team encountered children of adolescent age working in the textile markets in dangerous conditions. However, the research team had no opportunity to interact with the child labourers.

Chapter 2: OBJECTIVES

- To document textile value chain in Surat noting the different processes, workers employed in each process, and work conditions
- To explore in greater depth zari and textile market sub sectors – different work processes, number of workers in each process, work conditions, wages, enforcement of labour laws
- Impact of Covid 19 on textile industry in general and on the subsectors studied (zari and textile markets) in greater depth
- Recommendations

Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

Keeping the above objectives as the compass for the study, the data was collected through administering questionnaires that focused on the conditions of work and working arrangements of the migrant workers. Towards this purposive sampling was used to identify the respondents. Questionnaire was prepared and field tested. Specific questions were added after initial visits to the market and having preliminary discussion with some of the workers. CLRA project team in Surat collected the data from textile market workers from October to the first week of December 2020. The small set of questions related to Covid situation were also added.

Chapter 4: LIMITATIONS

Undertaking the mapping exercise in the ongoing pandemic posed numerable challenges to the team of investigators. This entailed reduction in access to the respondents in their place of work. Further more the fear induced due to constant surveillance by the employer also added greatly to the anxiety of the workers and many thus refused to become respondents for the study.

Since loading workers are working on open road and under no direct control of any contractor or employer it was easier to contact them and engage with them. On the other hand since the folding workers are employed directly under shopkeepers, it was difficult to access the workers while they worked during the day. Their employers kept close watch on the activities of their workers through their supervisors and close circuit cameras which made it difficult for the field team to

interact with them more freely and openly . Even when the team attempted to contact the workers after work, many workers refused to engage with the team – since they were afraid that they might be reported to their employers by other workers.

The omnipresent gaze of the employer hindered the interviewing and data mapping process – since the workers are always wary of being under surveillance as they interacted with the team.

Sample size (n=83) is too small compared to the estimated employment in the markets. Even though this sample may not be representative, it still offers a glimpse into the working conditions of the workers in the textile market in Surat.



Chapter 5: PRILIMINARY FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

The section below discusses the findings that emerged from the data mapping exercise that was conducted with the workers in the textile market.

1. State of origin

Table 1: Source of migration of the sampled respondents			
State	District		No of respondents
Bihar			12
Gujarat	Surat	04	04
Jharkhand	Giridih	05	05
Maharashtra	Dhule	07	21
	Jalgaon	08	
	Nandurbar	05	
	Akola	01	
Madhya Pradesh	Badvani	01	03
	Sagar	01	
	Katni	01	
Rajasthan	Udaipur	04	11
	Rajsamand	01	
	Kumbhalgadh	01	
	Nagaur	01	
	Pali	01	
	Pratapgarh	01	
Uttar Pradesh	Azamgadh	04	25
	Banda	01	
	Balrampur	09	
	Chitrakut	03	
	Gazipur	03	
	Gonda	02	
Workers did not wish to share the information about their source			02
Total			83

Out of 83 respondents, 79 are migrant workers speaks volumes on the presence of migrant workers in the Surat Textile markets. The sample indicated that most workers are from Uttar Pradesh (UP) while Maharashtra stands second in this sector of the industry.

2. Year of migration

Table 2: Time spent in the city as migrants		
Years spent as a Migrant	No. of respondents	Remarks
20-22 years	05	All from Maharashtra
15-20 years	17	7 from Maharashtra, 4 from Bihar, 3 from UP, MP, Rajasthan, Jharkhand – each 1
10-15 years	18	4 from Maharashtra, 10 from UP, MP -1, Rajasthan -3,
6-10 years	23	Bihar-4, Jharkhand-2, Maharashtra-4, UP-9, Rajasthan-4
1-5 years	15	Bihar-4, Jharkhand-2, Maharashtra-1, MP-1, Rajasthan-4, UP-3
Local	04	
No Information	01	
Total	83	

Discussions with the respondents revealed that before 22-25 years workers from neighboring state of Maharashtra were only the only ones migrating to Surat. Exodus from northern states like UP, Bihar or Western State of Rajasthan started before 15-20 years when speed was still slow. 38 respondents (45.78%) have migrated in last 10 years or less.

3. Staying with family in Surat: 81 percent of the workers reported to have migrated with their families to Surat, while the rest of the respondents stayed with other single male migrants and had family in the source of their destination.

4. Respondents with family in Surat: Tables 3 gives an impression of the 67 respondents who live with their families in Surat. The table further indicates the sources of the respondents to indicate the tendency of the workers who migrate with their family members in the destination of migration.

Table 3: State-wise distribution of Respondents who live with their families in Surat		
State	No. of respondents	Total migrants from the state in this study
Bihar	10	12
Jharkhand	04	05
Maharashtra	21	21
Rajasthan	07	11
Madhya Pradesh	02	03
Uttar Pradesh	18	25
Local	04	04
No Information	01	
Total	67	

5. Age distribution of the respondents :

The tables below depict the spread of workers according to their ages across various types of work that were mapped in the textile markets. The tables help in forming a preliminary understanding about the age clustering in various kinds of work and if there emerged a trend in the workers engaged in various types of work according to their age. For instance it emerged that 55% workers are in the age group 26-35 years.

Age	Total
18-20	04
21-25	11
26-30	29
31-35	17
36-40	08
41-45	08
46-50	04
51-55	01
56-60	01
Total	83

Age (in years)	Cutting	Loading	Folding	Box Making	Total
18-20	01	00	03	00	04
21- 35	13	19	07	18	57
36- 50	02	12	05	01	20
Above 50	00	02	00	00	02
Total	16	33	15	19	83

73% workers were 35 years or younger . Those older than 35 are only 26%. It can be inferred that the nature of the work was strenuous which could be the reason that we see only young workers in this sector.

Type of work	Total no of workers in the group	No of workers in 26-35 age group	Percentage
Cutting	16	10	62.5
Loading	33	17	51.51
Folding	15	06	40
Box Making	19	13	68.42

6. Type of work:

Type of work	Raja- sthan	Uttar Pra- desh	Bihar	Madhya Pradesh	Jhar- khand	Maha- rashtra	Gujarat	No information	Total
Loading	01	06	06	02	00	18	00	00	33
Folding	04	04	02	01	03	01	00	00	15
Cutting	07	08	00	00	01	00	00	00	16
Box making	00	07	04	00	01	02	04	01	19
Total	12	25	12	03	05	21	04	01	83

he reader may note that 39.75% workers are loading workers in this study. They work on the road and easier to contact which may be the reason. Rest of the work is done by the workers who are under direct control of the shop keeper and the shop keeper and the supervisor keep eye on these workers through close circuit camera and frequent visits. Hence it was difficult for the field staff to contact them and get the data.

If we look at the pattern, we find that workers from Maharashtra are largely engaged in loading work. Out of 33 loading workers, 18 (54.5%) are from Maharashtra. In cutting we find workers from Rajasthan (43.75%) and UP (50%). In box making out of 19, 11 (57.8%) are from UP-Bihar. In folding 52% workers are from Rajasthan and UP. Rests are from Jharkhand, Bihar and MP.

7. Nature of employment:

The table below indicates the nature of employment in the work arrangement of the respondents.

Table 8: Nature of employment					
Nature of employment	Cutting	Loading	Folding	Box making	Total
Casual Worker	04	33	07	18	62
Contract	00	00	02	00	02
Permanent	12	00	06	01	19
Total	16	33	15	19	83

When enquired of the workers about the status of their employment – they explained to what they meant as being a casual worker, a worker on contract and a permanent employee. The respondents explained that when they identify as casual workers, it meant that they have no permanent employer- daily morning they went to the market to sold their labor. Every day they will be engaged by some new employer. The respondents who identified as being on ‘contract’ - meant they worked for only one dedicated employer even though they did not have any written contract between them defining the terms of agreement – which the respondents affirmed to in the latter part of the questionnaire. When the respondents reported as being ‘permanent’ – it meant that they have been working with the same employer for the past three to four years. The respondents clarified that being permanent did not entail that they were covered under laws of social security like PF or ESI nor did they receive any bonus nor were they members of any trade union or had any collective bargaining. They did not enjoy earned leaves or festival holidays though they were entitled to weekly holiday however without any wages. All workers reported that they did not receive paid weekly leaves.



8. Skillset and the nature of work:

Table 9: Distribution of workers according to the type of work and their skills			
Nature	Category	No. of respondents	Remarks
Unskilled	Casual	23	22 are loading workers. Bihar-4, UP-5, MP-1, Maharashtra-12, Rajasthan-1
			8 are below age of 30. 6 are in age group 31-40. 7 are in 41-50 age group.
Semi-skilled	Casual	23	11 loading workers, 4 cutting workers, 8 box making workers 8 from Maharashtra 3 from Bihar, 3 from Rajasthan 7 from UP 1 each from MP and Gujarat
			Age group 5 are in 18-25 7 in 26-30 9 in 31-40 2 in 41-50
Skilled	16 Casual 17 Permanent 02 Contract	37	10 Box making, 12- Cutting, 15- Folding. No loaders here. 5 – Bihar 5 – Jharkhand 3- Gujarat 1- MP 1-Maharashtra 13- UP 08-Rajasthan 1-NO information

9. Place of Employment

34 respondents did not share the information regarding their place of employment. Of the total sample, as the reader may recall, 33 are loaders who are casual workers and do not have fixed employment with one employer. The rest of the workers were employed in shops or within the market premises.

10. Work site or location of employment:

Table 10 indicates the location of markets where the respondents were working. It was found that the markets were found to be situated on the ring roads across the city – which are also known to be busy and crowded intersections in Surat.

Area	No. of respondents (%)
Kamela Darwaja Ring Road	14.45
Ring Road	35
Sahara Darwaja	2.4
STM	1.2
TT Market Ring Road	3.65
No information	43.3
Total (n=83)	100

11. Number of workers employed in the shop

The question was posed to bring forth information regarding the number of co-workers at the respondents place of employment. For the workers who load the material, the question was not relevant due to the nature of their work.

No of workers employed in the shop	Total
5 or less numbers of workers	22
More than 5 but less than or equal to 10	26
15 or less but more than 10	02
Total	50

This question becomes critical to know if the Provisions of Shops & Establishment Act are applicable for the workers that were mapped in the study.

Only two respondents have replied that the shop employs 15 workers. 7 shops were reported as having 10 workers. 10 respondents have reported that their shop employs 8 workers. 15 respondents have replied that their shop employs 5 workers. In all 22 have said that the shop employs 5 or less while 28 employs more than 5 but less than 15.

12-A. Presence of Family members (Children) in the destination of migration

52 respondents who have children are staying in Surat with family. It is interesting to note that out of 83 only 10 (12.04%) have children more than 2. Against this, 12 (14.45%) have no children as of today. Many of them are still very young and may get children in future. But 5 (6.02%) are above 30 and may indicate fertility issue.

Number of children living in the city with the respondent	No of respondents (percentage)
Zero	21.69 ³
1	20.48
2	45.78
3	8.43
4	2.41
5	1.20
Total n=83	100

3. Out of 18 respondents, 6 are unmarried, rest are married. Among 12 married 6 are loaders, 5 cutters and one box maker. They are in wide age range 19-57 years. However, 7 workers are below 30 years

12-B. Presence of Family members in the destination of migration

The table below indicates the number of the dependents in family of the respondents. As the reader can observe there is clustering around family members for workers with two to four dependents within the city of Surat.

Table 13: Number of family members at the destination of migration		
No. of family members	No of respondents (percentage)	Remarks
1	8.43	All married
2	42.17	2 unmarried
3	25.30	
4	14.46	3 unmarried
5	4.82	1 unmarried
6	2.41	1 unmarried
7	2.41	
Total (n=83)	100.00	

13. Working hours

The reader can observe that the 59% of worker respondents were found to be working for 12 hours or more in the textile market. There were only six workers who reported working for 8 hours. The rest of the respondents were clearly working more than eight hours and they received no additional wages for overtime.

Table 14: Hours of work put in by the respondents					
Hours of work	Cutters	Loaders	Folding	Box mak-ers	Total
Upto 8 hours	02	02	00	02	06
10 Hours	05	03	07	07	22 (26.5%)
12 Hours	09	22	08	10	49 (59 %)
More than 14 Hours	0	06	0	0	06
Total	16	33	15	19	83

In the table above it can be observed that 66% workers work for more than 12 hours a day.

14. Presence of adolescent or child labour in the textile markets:

The respondents were enquired if children or adolescents were being employed across various types of work the respondents were employed in within the premises of the textile markets. 10 workers responded that they had observed presence of child labour, while 19 had no idea if the children were being employed or not. 65% workers responded that they were no children employed in the textile markets.

15. Women workers employed in the shop: The workers responded that there were no women who were employed in the shops for box cutting, saree cutting and folding at least in the shops that they worked in. However, they shared they could not comment on how many women workers were employed in the market premises.

16. Behaviour of Management or security: 4% of respondents reported that they often found that the management or security personnel of the textile premises and shops were are intimidating or abusive.

17. Basic Monthly salary:

The table below indicates that 83% of all respondents received salaries from Rs. 10000 to Rs.15000. The workers received no other allowances or bonuses or gifts. All the workers unanimously stated that they were not paid any overtime – even though they worked for more than eight hours on a frequent basis.

60% did not know what are the minimum wages fixed for them by the State Government. The rest of the workers who were aware of the stipulated minimum wages, shared that they knew they were being paid less than the minimum wages.

76% want to get covered under ESI Act. All respondents stated that they were neither covered by social security schemes like Provident Fund nor were they entitled to gratuity.

Amount (Rs)	Cutting	Loading	Folding	Box Making	Total
7000	01	0	0	0	01
8000	00	03	0	0	03
9000	00	02	01	0	03
10,000	02	05	02	02	11
11,000	00	00	01	02	03
12,000	05	08	05	04	22
13,000	01	01	02	04	08
14,000	01	02	00	01	04
15,000	04	09	03	05	21
16,000	01	00	00	00	01
17,000	01	00	01	00	02
8,000-10,000	00	01	00	00	01
10,000-12,000	00	01	00	01	02
12,000-13,000	00	01	00	00	01
Total	16	33	15	19	83

Effective from Date: 1st Apr, 2020 Updated As On: 23rd Apr, 2020					
Class of Employment	Zone	Basic Per Day (Rs)	VDA Per Day (Rs)	Total Per Day (Rs)	Total Per Month (Rs)
Unskilled	Zone I	276.00	56.50	332.50	8645.00
Unskilled	Zone II	268.00	56.50	324.50	8437.00
Semi-Skilled	Zone I	284.00	56.50	340.50	8853.00
Semi-Skilled	Zone II	276.00	56.50	332.50	8645.00
Skilled	Zone I	293.00	56.50	349.50	9087.00
Skilled	Zone II	284.00	56.50	340.50	8853.00

Surat falls in Zone 1. Accordingly, for unskilled workers monthly wages is Rs. 8645/-, for semi-skilled it is Rs. 8853/- and for skilled it is Rs. 9087/-. These wages are for 8 hours and when converted for 12 hours calculating at double the rate for 4 hours it would be Rs. 12967.5 for unskilled, Rs. 13279.5 for semi-skilled and Rs. 13630.5 for skilled. As seen above 51 (61.44%) respondents earn Rs. 13,000/- or less.

About 83% of respondents shared that they received their salaries on time, while the 17 % experienced some kind of delay every month in their payments.

43% respondents also shared that they need Rs. 20000 every month to adequately cover for their expenses for living in the city of Surat. 20% workers stated that they needed more than Rs. 20000 to sustain a dignified living in the city.

18. Weekly off and paid leaves:

The predominant nature of casual work in unregulated places of work such as the textile markets often entails that the workers receive no paid leaves, weekly leaves or are even required to work on holidays. In case of failure to do so – the workers often face salary cut. The table 17 details how often the workers were able to have weekly off. All the workers reported that the weekly leaves were unpaid.

Responses	Cutting	Loading	Folding	Box Making	Total
Yes	09	22	04	06	41
No	07 (43.75%)	11 (33.33%)	11 (73.33%)	13 (68.42%)	42
Total	16	33	15	19	83

The data revealed that 50% of the respondents get regularly their weekly off while 50% not. Sector wise there was a wide variation. Loading workers were found to be taking their weekly off rather more regularly. Folding workers are at the other end. 73.33% do not get their weekly off. The workers further reported that they did not receive any paid weekly leaves.

95 % of the workers reported that they were not required to work on holidays.

19. Health and Safety at the workplace :

All the respondents informed that there was no facility for medical services, treatments, check-ups in or around the textile market premises. The respondents also shared that in their experience of working in the markets- they had also not come across any case of accidents or mishaps, barring one respondent from Barwani, Madhya Pradesh - who witnessed a co-worker get hit by a vehicle when he was loading the material.

All 33 loading workers reported as being exposed to high environmental temperature, dust due to vehicles and high noise – since they worked on the crowded roads always. For loading workers, intensity of temperature was reported as being 'normal' (meaning not excessive), dust particle 'High', and high noise levels.

For rest 50, intensity for heat was not excessive. They have not responded on dust or noise which can mean that it is not a problem for them – since they were working inside shop. While cutting the cloth all the day they must be exposed to the cloth dust/fibers. For them why it is not a problem is a question.

For rest of the 50 respondents it is heat and poor ventilation are the problems.

14 respondents also clearly stated that they were concerned that the dismal quality of environment at their respective work spaces posed a threat to their health and were concerned about the same.

66 % of workers further shared that they experienced regular pain in back, arms, shoulder or headache. 51 % of workers stated that they experienced regular aches in arms and hands, while 20% shared that encountered back pain, aches in hands and legs every day.

Workers who were loading and unloading were prone to such aches than the other workers. Intuitively so, these workers were often found to be carrying at least 50 kgs to 80 kgs across distances varying from 500 mts to sometimes 2 to 3 kms. One of the respondents said they have to climb 3-4 floors with the weight when lift is in maintenance or not in operation. All 33 loading workers have expressed need to have equipment to carry the load.

Only one loading worker has complained of knee pain since last one year and had trouble walking.

He did not respond to the question if that had developed any disability or if he was being treated for that.

All the respondents expressed that they had not developed any occupational disease. However, 76% respondents also shared that they would like to be part of the ESI scheme.

20. Basic amenities (clean drinking water and toilets):

Except 9 workers, all the other respondents stated that they had access to clean and drinking water. Similarly, 95% of respondents shared that they also had access to clean toilets. The workers shared that they faced no restrictions on how many times they visited the toilets.

Impact of Covid 19 on the workers:

The section below elaborates on the impact that was felt by respondents of our study due to the economic lockdown as induced by the pandemic.

1. Days of employment lost due to Covid

As evident from the table below Covid affected employment only of 17 (20.48%) workers though most workers are migrant workers.

Table 18: Number days employment was lost due to Covid					
Duration	Cutting	Loading	Folding	Box Making	Total
Up to week	12	33	15	06	66
1.5 Months	00	00	00	01	01
3 months	01	00	00	04	05
4 months	03	00	00	07	10
5 months	00	00	00	01	01
Total	16	33	15	19	33

2. Economic loss due to the pandemic

Lockdown due to Covid 1 entailed economic loss for the respondents. The table below attempts to indicate the losses that the workers had to bear due to the pandemics induced loss of regular work and income.

Table 19: Extent of economic loss incurred during the lockdown		
Amount	No. of respondents	Days lost
Up to Rs. 20,000	04	2 days to 45 days
21,000-30,000	07	2.5 days to 120 days
31,000-40,000	26	3 days to 120 days
41,000 – 50,000	18	3 days to 120 days
51,000 – 60,000	17	4 days to 120 days
61,000 – 70,000	06	4 days to 120 days
71,000 – 90,000	05	5 days to 150 days

65.06% of the respondents shared that did not face any problems. However, 35 % of workers had to face hardships such as police atrocity, no income, lack of ration and food scarcity.

68% of the respondents stated that they received no assistance from Government. 5 respondents stated that they were able tide over and get food with help from an NGO.

55.42% respondents did not have to borrow money while 45% had to make borrowings to tide over challenges due to the pandemic. 6 among the 37 who borrowed money had someone sick in the family and thus required medical attention.

However, with the unlocking of the economy the workers are still reeling with the aftermath of the pandemic. The respondents shared that one of the biggest concerns for 33% of them was to find regular work on a daily basis. Coupled with this, 8 workers reported that they have been facing extreme difficulty in paying the house rent in the city.

Chapter 6: ANALYTICAL INFERENCES

- 1) It is clear from this study that most workers working in textile markets are migrant workers. Most workers are from Uttar Pradesh while Maharashtra stands second in this sector of the industry. Balarampur district in Uttar Pradesh and Jalgaon in Maharashtra stands out as a source area where many migrant workers hail from.
- 2) Workers from Maharashtra migrated before 25 years while workers from states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar or Rajasthan migrated 15 to 20 years ago to work in the textile market.
- 3) 81% workers are staying in Surat with their families and are not seasonal migrants. Only 19% have not settled in Surat with their families. Among them most are from Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.
- 4) 55% workers are in 26-35 age group. Only 7 % workers are elder than 46.
- 5) Youngest workers are in box making while eldest are in loading work which is more strenuous but where there is no fixed employment so workers of any age can find work as long as one can deliver. In cutting, folding and box making shop keeper or the employer has a choice to select employee or worker – and often , as it was reported, they preferred younger workers.
- 6) In loading work one finds more workers from Maharashtra while in cutting there are more from Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. In box making you find more workers from Uttar Pradesh while in folding there is presence from all states. In cutting one does not find any worker from Maharashtra or Bihar or Madhya Pradesh or Gujarat. Workers from Gujarat are only seen in



- box making.
- 7) 75% of the respondents are casual workers. 19 respondents have replied that they are permanent but it is in a sense that they work with particular employer for a long time and they do not need to look for work daily. It does not mean that they are covered under any law for social security like PF, ESI, bonus, gratuity etc. Only 2 respondents replied that they are contract workers but again that does not mean any written contract between them and the employer.
 - 8) Though the terms like Unskilled, semi-skilled or skilled have no meaning in this market, it is important as far as minimum wages law is concerned. May be the workers themselves may not have good understanding of these terms. When asked 37 believed they are skilled, 23 unskilled and 23 semi-skilled. Most workers from Maharashtra believed they are either unskilled or semi-skilled while most from Rajasthan believed they are skilled.
 - 9) 92% respondents were married. 12 married have no children but 7 among them are below age of 30 and may get children in future. 72% respondents have 2 or less numbers of children. 14% have children 3 or more. 48% respondents have 1 or 2 other family members. It again indicates smaller families among migrant workers. 25% have 3 family members who were dependent on them in the city other than children.
 - 10) 33 loading workers have no fixed employment while among rest 50, majority work in the markets situated on ring road, Surat
 - 11) 50 respondents were asked about the number of workers employed in the shop. Only two worked in a shop employing 15 workers. 7 shops have 10 workers. 10 respondents have said their shop employs 8 workers. 15 respondents have replied that their shop employs 5 workers. In all 22 have said that the shop employs 5 or less while 28 employs more than 5 but less than 15. This entails that at least 9 shops covered in this study fall under provision of Shops and Establishment Act and the workers of such shops are entitled to paid weekly off, overtime rate at double the rate, cap on overtime to 125 hours in 3 months, 7 casual and 8 festival holidays in a year and 48 hours in a week. It seems that these provisions are violated and no action is being taken against the violators.
 - 12) 66% respondents stated that they work for more than 12 hours. The findings of the study reveal that this is a normal practice.
 - 13) Respondents did not know anyone below the age of 15 years being hired by their employer. This may not be fully true this study has failed in locating child labor in Surat textile market which is one of the limitations of the study. One of the major reasons is fear and restrictions due to Covid.
 - 14) 12% respondents reported that workers in the age group 15-18 are employed in the market. There is need for more inquiry and study their working conditions. They need better protection than adult workers.
 - 15) Existence of trade unions has not been reported in this study. it is not known how conflicts/ disputes are resolved.
 - 16) All respondents reported that they are not given salary slip. No one was paid any allowances other than wages nor did they receive any bonus or gift in lieu of the bonus. They are not paid overtime wages at double the rate
 - 17) 92% respondents reported that they earned Rs. 15,000/- or less per month. But 43 among them earn Rs. 12,000/- or less.
 - 18) When asked if their wages are less than minimum wages, 22% responded affirmatively, 18% responded negatively, while 60% stated that were not aware of minimum wages. May be workers know little about the minimum wages decided by the Government or the law. However, to ensure that workers can sustain a dignified life in the city, the present minimum wages fixed by the Government are not inadequate and hence need to be revised urgently. 43.37% respondents expressed their need earn Rs. 20,000/- while 20.48% need more than that. This indicate that more than 60% are not satisfied with the wages they earned.
 - 19) Wages are paid in time and respondents have no complaint about it
 - 20) In reply to our question if the workers received overtime if they were working more than 8 hours, 88% of respondents stated that they did not receive any overtime. In fact, it was part of the work arrangement that the workers work for 12 hours a day. The workers shared during a discussion that since 12 hours working day has become a norm, the question of receiving over-





time becomes irrelevant. 70% respondents work for 72 or more hours. There is not a single respondent who is working for 48 hours in a week. 6 respondents said they work for 56 hours and that is least numbers of hours they work for.

21) No one in the sample was getting paid weekly holiday. Half of them do not get the weekly off at all is a matter of great concern. 73.33% of folding workers do not get weekly off. But in festival holidays

they do get off as the markets would also remain closed.

- 22) Pre-employment or periodical medical check-ups are not carried out. Only one respondent reported witnessing an accident at workplace. More in depth study is required to find out accidents at work in textile markets in Surat.
- 23) Workers are not imparted any training for safety. Nor are they provided any information on hazards
- 24) Loading workers work in open and are exposed to noise, dust and temperature. Rest 50 respondents work under a shed and they have reported heat and poor ventilation as the problems they face. However, impact on their health is not reported. In cutting work they could be exposed to fine cloth dust but that has not been reported.
- 25) 66% of the sampled workers reported that they experienced body ache at the end of the day. Hand pain is most common followed by multiple organ pain – hand, back and leg. Loading workers are prey to body aches due to the nature of work that requires them to walk long distances with heavy weight on their backs.
- 26) 16 respondents among the loading workers reported that they lift 50 kg or less. 8 respondents lift weight more than that which is up to 90 kg. Factory Act has fixed limit on lifting the weight but Shops and Establishment Act do not have any such provision. There is no legal provision for the protection of safety & health of these workers. There is urgent need to fix standards for lifting of weight, noise and other pollutants. An in depth study on the impact of lifting weight can help develop standards in Indian situation.
- 27) Out of 33, 24 respondents replied that they have to walk up to 1 km with the weight. Some have to even climb the height up to 3-4 floors where the shop may be located.
- 28) All loading workers have expressed need to have some equipment to carry the load. Again, a study on their needs and how best they can be satisfied will be helpful.
- 29) All these were active workers and they have not reported any sickness. Sick workers usually are out of the work and are not found. This is known as healthy worker effect in a study.
- 30) The workers are not covered by ESI Act even though the Act is applicable to the shops employing 10 or more workers. We have not found any of them being covered. ESI Act is not enforced well in Surat. 63 respondents have expressed their wish to be covered under the Act.
- 31) Availability of drinking water and toilets is not a problem for majority of the sampled workers. They also have no complaints about maintenance of the toilets. No one has reported any restriction over taking toilet breaks.
- 32) No one has reported any written contract with the contractor or employer, in addition to no coverage under PF Act or Gratuity Act.
- 33) During Covid lockdown 80% respondents reported loss of one week of work. 5 respondents lost 3 months, 10 respondents lost 4 months, one lost 5 months. They have reported huge economic loss. However, during lockdown 65% respondents also reported that were able to eventually tide over the challenges that were put forth due to the closing down of the economy.
- 34) 67% respondents reported that they did not receive any assistance from Government. It shatters the hollow claims by the Government. Neither did they receive any help from civil society also. 12 respondents reported that they had some family member sick during lock down but no one has reported Covid. 55% did not have to borrow money while rest had to borrow money. 6 among the 37 who borrowed money had someone sick in the family.
- 35) Major problem they face now is regularity in finding the work. 33% respondents reported that they find difficulty in finding work regularly or daily is alarming.

Chapter 7: RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Detailed study of accidents at work and occupational health - exposure to dust and its impact need to be carried out. How much and what kind of dust they are exposed to and its impact on their health should be studied. 66% respondents have reported hand, back and leg pain and they need protection.
- 2) There is a need to study the conflict/dispute resolution system in textile markets in Surat. How often workers need to go to labor lawyer or labor department with their complaints? Nature of complaints, intensity of the complaints and losses they face - should be studied. What is the available social support system for these workers? Who are their leaders?
- 3) Shop & Establishment Act should provide some limits and standards for lifting of weight, noise and other pollutants. There should be prohibition on carrying and climbing several floors. Mechanical lift and elevators should be provided in the markets.
- 4) Minimum wages need to be revised urgently.
- 5) Limit on overtime should be provided and enforced by the law and its functionaries. Long working hours is a major concern. It needs to be studied how it impacts their family life as well as their well-being.
- 6) These workers need to be brought under coverage of laws for social security.
- 7) Enforcement of ESI Act needs to be improved.
- 8) Enforcement of Shops and Establishment Act
- 9) Workers should be encouraged to get organized.
- 10) Climate change is going to impact the workers all over. Rising temperature would impact these workers as well. This should be discussed nationally to find out the probable solutions and ways in which workers can be protected.
- 11) They should be compensated for the losses they may have incurred during Covid.

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Appendix: Questionnaire

Study of Workers in the Textile Markets in Surat By Centre for Labour Research and Action

The study seeks to document and map the working conditions of migrant workers in the textile markets across the city of Surat. The questionnaire seeks to dwell in the nuances of the profile of the workers, the nature of the work and the working arrangement, the condition of the work place, the impact of Covid -19 on the workers.

1. Name of the respondents -
2. Destination Address -
3. Source Address-
4. What Year did you come to Surat?
5. Are you living with your family in Surat?
6. Age -
7. Designation -
8. When did you start working ?
9. Nature of employment - Permanent / Contractual / Casual Worker
10. Are you a Skilled/ Unskilled/ Semi skilled worker?
11. Marital Status:
12. Market's/Shop's name or place of employment:
13. Address:
14. What is the nature of product that is produced or sold at your work place ?
15. Number of Workers that are employed at your work place:
16. How Many Other Members of the family live
17. What is the length of your daily shift? 8 hours/ 10 hours/ 12 hours/ 14 hours/ More than 14 hours
18. Is someone under the age of 15 years hired? Yes/ No/ Don't Know
19. How many workers between the ages of 15 to 18 years are employed in your department of work?
20. How many female workers are employed in your department?
21. Is management or security use intimidation or is abusive to you? Yes/ No
22. Have your co-workers in the shop/market formed a union? Yes/ No/ Don't Know
23. Are you given a salary receipt? Yes/ No
24. What is your monthly basic salary ?
25. Are you paid other allowances? Yes/ No/ Don't Know
26. If yes, how much?
27. Is your salary lower than the minimum wage announced by the government? Yes/ No/ Don't Know
28. Do you get paid on time? Yes/ No
29. How much do you think you salary should be?
30. Do you get a bonus? Yes/ No
31. How much money do receive in your hand ?

32. How much do you think you should receive with a bonus?.
33. Are you given a gift in the form of an item on Diwali
34. Do you get paid overtime as per the law?
35. How many Hours a week do you work with overtime?
36. Do you get paid leaves every week?
37. Do you get regular weekly leaves?
38. Do you have to go to work on holidays?
39. Are medical services offered to you in your site of work?
40. Whether a medical examination is done before hiring? Yes /No
41. Are medical check-ups performed at regular intervals? Yes/ No/ Don't Know
42. If Yes, then how frequently are these check ups conducted?
43. Do you receive a medical report for the above check ups? Yes/ No
44. Have you met with an accident while working? Yes / No
45. If yes, kindly share the incident?
46. Have you ever witnessed an accident ?
47. If yes, kindly share the incident?
48. Do you feel your workplace environment is polluted? Yes/ No
49. What is the Ratio of Pollution? Heat _____ Smoke _____ ;
Noise _____ ; Chemicals _____ ; Dust _____ ; Others _____
50. How would you describe the pollution levels at your site of work?
Heat – Normal/ High/ Very High
Smoke - Normal/ High/ Very High
Noise - Normal/ High/ Very High
Chemical - Normal/ High/ Very High
Dust - Normal/ High/ Very High
51. Do you feel like someone might get sick because of the environment in your workplace?
52. Do you experience body ache? Back pain/headache/ Hand-leg pain ?
53. How much weight do you lift?
54. How far do you walk with weights?
55. Do you feel you need equipment to carry the goods?
56. Who is your Boss? Shopkeeper/ Tempo or vehicle driver/ No one
57. Do you have an illness? Yes/ No/ Don't Know
58. If yes, can you describe your illness?
59. Since when have you been experiencing the symptoms of the illness?
60. Do you feel restricted in your work capacity due to the illness? Yes/ No
61. Has it caused or formed in to a disability? Yes/ No
62. Have you received any treatment for the disease? Yes/ No
63. Do you know any of your co-workers who is suffering from occupational disease? Yes/
No/ Don't Know
64. How many of your workers are suffering from occupational disease?

65. What is the nature of the disease?
66. Do you want the ESI contribution to be deducted from your salary? Yes/ No/ Non-applicable
67. How far is the ESI Hospital from your home?
68. Do you access the medical services offered at the ESI hospital? Yes/ No
69. Do you get clean drinking water in the site of your work? Yes/ No
70. Are there enough toilets in the market premises? Yes/ No
71. Is the toilet clean? Yes/ No/ Sometimes
72. How often do you use the bathroom during the shift? Once/ Twice/Thrice/ No restrictions
73. Is there a separate toilet for women? Yes/ No/ Don't Know
74. Have you been trained for safety? Yes/ No
75. Have you been given any information regarding risks at work? Yes/ No
76. If yes, then what kind of information as shared with you?
77. Do you have a written agreement detailing the work arrangement? Yes/ No
78. Do you get Provident Fund deducted from your salary? Yes/ No/ Non- applicable
79. Would you receive Gratuity as per labour laws in the state at the end of your work life ? Yes/ No/ Don't know

Section 2 : Impact of Covid 19 on the workers

1. How many days did you lose employment for during the lockdown?
2. How much economic loss did you suffer during the lockdown?
3. What kind of challenges did you face to access the necessities of daily life?
4. How much assistance did you receive from the government?
5. What help was received from other organizations?
6. Was someone unwell or fell sick during lockdown in your house ?
7. Did you have to borrow money during the lockdown? How much did you have to borrow? What was this borrowing used for?
8. What are the challenges that you still face due to Covid- 19 ?

Name of the enumerator:

Date :

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