



**Consortium for Research on
Educational Access,
Transitions and Equity**

**Distress Seasonal Migration
and its Impact on Children's Education**

Smita

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List of Acronyms

AIE	Alternative & Innovative Education Scheme
AIF	American India Foundation
BRCs	Block Resource Centres
CRCs	Cluster Resource Centres
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme
EGS	Education Guarantee Scheme
LJ	Lok Jumbish
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development
NCRL	National Council for Rural Labour
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NPE	National Policy on Education
NSS	National Sample Survey
OBC	Other Backward Castes
SC	Scheduled Castes
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
ST	Scheduled Tribes
UEE	Universalisation of Elementary Education
VPSS	Vedchi Pradesh Sewa Samiti

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Preface

This review paper by Smita forms a part of the larger exercise of developing a comprehensive Country Analytical Review for India as part of CREATE. The paper reviews the available information base regarding the children of seasonal migrants, who are one the most vulnerable sections of society. The review identifies the different sectors in which these children are involved, the nature and patterns of migration, their effects on the children in general, and on their participation in schooling in particular. The paper is a comprehensive reference document about the schooling problems faced by migrant children, and the efforts made by the government and NGOs through policies and programmes for the education of these children.

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Summary

There are still many categories of children in India for whom adequate and appropriate strategies are not in place for their effective education. One such substantive category is children of seasonal migrants – a group which has not been on the radar screen of the government or development agencies. Distress seasonal migration is a growing phenomenon in almost all arid parts of India. Drought and lack of work in villages forces entire families to migrate for several months every year in search of work merely to survive. Children accompany their parents, and as a result drop-out rates go up. Migrants comprise the most vulnerable sections of society, and especially those that also belong to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe groups.

There is no official data available on the scale of distress seasonal migration, but estimates put the numbers of migrants between 1 and 3 crore (10 to 30 million). The number of children involved in these migrations may range between 40 and 60 lakhs (4 to 6 million). Migration takes place to a range of industrial and agro-industrial sectors such as brick manufacture, salt making, sugar cane harvesting, stone quarrying, construction, plantations and fishing.

This paper identifies major sectors and geographies with a high incidence of seasonal migration, and gives broad estimates of the numbers involved, especially the number of children between 0-14 years. It also outlines the nature and patterns of seasonal migration in different sectors, and how these annual migration cycles overlap with the annual school calendar. The discussion focuses on the difficulties that children face with schooling both in villages and at migration sites, and the conditions under which children drop out of schools, as well as the response or lack of response of local school systems to the education of migrant children in some areas. The paper also outlines the efforts made so far by government and NGOs to address these problems through alternative schooling, and provides recommendations for state and central governments in terms of policy and program interventions.

Distress Seasonal Migration and its Impact on Children's Education

1. An Overview of Distress Seasonal Migration

1.1 Background

Over the last one and a half decades following the formulation of the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986, there has been a serious move towards Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) in India. For the first time since Independence, there has been a perspective shift in policy, and instead of expecting all children to come to regular government schools, intensive efforts have been made to 'take the school to the left-out child' by creating flexible schooling options. This approach has seen institutionalization in the form of the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative & Innovative Education Scheme (AIE) under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), the national umbrella programme for universalisation of elementary education. A number of reasons have been identified to explain why many children are out of education, and a range of alternative and innovative options have been created for their coverage and mainstreaming. Many complementary strategies with provision of lateral entry into schools have also been initiated to cover the existing backlog. Thus the traditional reasons for exclusion, such as caste, gender, remoteness of location, and so on, are now at least well investigated and the possible remedies, to a great extent, reasonably clear.

There is, however, another class of deprivation related to 'distress seasonal migration' which has so far received such little attention that even basic features – including the number of children involved, the direct and indirect correlates and consequences of the problem, and the nature of policy instruments that could make a real and effective difference – are shrouded in confusion. With the collapse of rural livelihoods in many parts of the country, hundreds of thousands of families are being forced out of their homes and villages in search of work for several months every year. These migrations force adults to take their children along, making them drop out of school and closing the only opportunity available to them for an alternate future. Evidence indicates that such migrations are large and growing, and the number of children below 14 years involved may be close to 9 million (Smita, 2007: 13). Before dwelling on children's education, however, it is important to reflect on the complex phenomenon of distress seasonal migration itself.

1.2 Causes of Distress Seasonal Migration

Seasonal migration has long been a practice for improving livelihoods in rural areas, with some male members of the family leaving the village for part of the year to look for paid work. In the last few decades, however, there has been growing incidence of 'distress seasonal migration'. This occurs due to the lack of livelihood options after the harvest of the monsoon crop (*kharif*) in most rain fed parts of the country, which gives rise to indebtedness and food insecurity. This forces the entire family to leave home in search of

work in order to survive. Persistent drought and environmental degradation have led to the escalation of this trend. Children, who have no choice but to accompany their parents, drop out of schools and are forced into hard labour.

There are also a number of pull factors for distress migration, including the high seasonal demand for manual labour in agriculturally rich areas and labour intensive industries.

1.3 Migration Sectors and Geographies

The incidence of migrant labour is high in industrial sectors such as brick making, salt manufacture, sugar cane harvesting, stone quarrying, construction, fisheries, plantations and rice mills. Agriculturally rich areas also attract a large number of migrant labourers for sowing, harvesting and other operations. While migration for industrial work often extends for long periods of between six to eight months once a year, migration for agricultural work tends to be of short duration and take place several times a year.

Distress migration appears to be a reality in almost all states, although to varying degrees. Some states/regions attract labour, while others send it. The agriculturally and industrially developed states are likely to be the net receiving states for migrant labour, while the less developed states are the net sending ones. Likewise, there is substantial migration taking place within states, from one district to another. There is also evidence of a complicated circulation of labour which defies the surplus–deficit argument: employers prefer to use migrant labour instead of local labour that comes cheaper and is more amenable to control.

1.4 The Seasonal Migration Cycle

Labour contractors provide cash advances to poor families in villages during the lean post-monsoon months, in return for which families pledge their labour for the coming season. Migrations begin around October–November with migrant families spending the next six to eight months at the work sites, and then returning to their villages before the next monsoon. Once the rains are over, they again prepare to leave their villages. This cycle is typical of the lives of hundreds of thousands of the poorest rural families in many parts of India (see Figure 1). This type of labour mobility is seasonal for two reasons: (i) because of the uneven rhythm of the economic activities over the year – peak periods alternating with slack periods, and (ii) because of the open air character of production processes, which makes it necessary for work to stop with the onset of the monsoon. This seasonal migration cycle overlaps with six to seven months of the school calendar, which means that children who are enrolled can go to school only from June until November, after which point they usually drop out (see Figure 2).

Figure 1 Migration Cycle

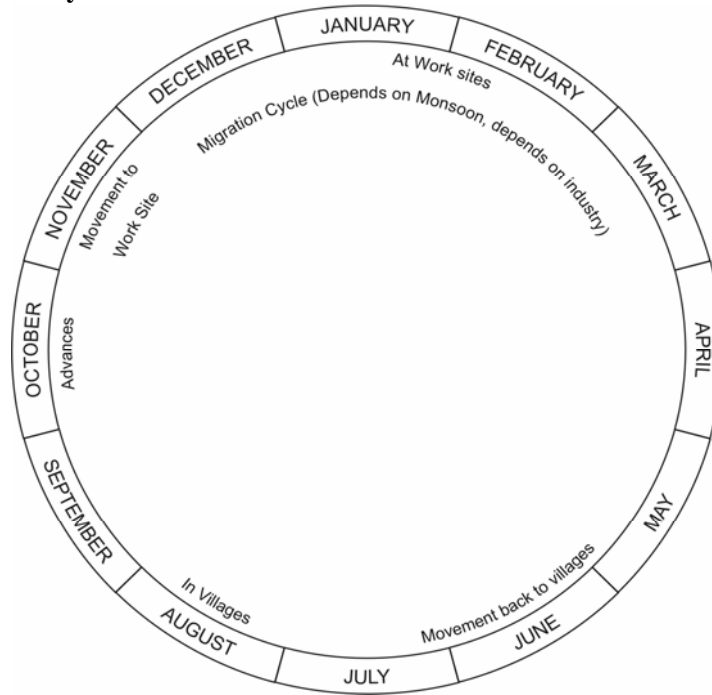
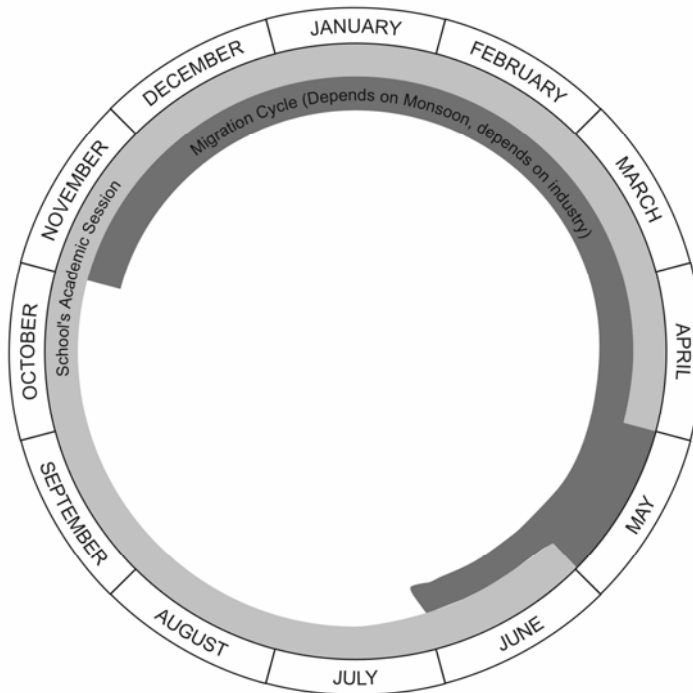


Figure 2 Overlap of the Migration Cycle with the School Calendar



1.5 Child Labour at Work Sites

Living and working conditions of migrant labour at work sites are of a poor standard in every respect, including shelter, nutrition, health and security. The work required from labourers is excessively high, and wages are well below the legal minimum. Women and children are also forced to take up physically arduous and exploitative work. Children get drawn into labour from the early age of 6 to 7 years old, and are usually full-fledged labourers by the age of 11 or 12. Women and girls must additionally cope with home responsibilities as well as the psychological insecurity of living in unprotected environments. There are, for example, no mechanisms to address grievances. The basic clauses of all legal acts related to labour and child rights are flouted, raising exploitation levels to the extreme. Employers maximize their profits by keeping producers at barely survival level. The legislation governing migration is grossly inadequate and poorly implemented.

1.6 Who Migrates?

Migrant populations overwhelmingly belong to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Castes (OBC), and comprise the landless and land poor, and those possessing the least amount of assets, skills or education. Studies show that a majority of migrants to stone quarries in Rajasthan and Karnataka, salt pans in Gujarat, brick kilns in Andhra Pradesh, rice mills in Tamil Nadu, and sugarcane fields in Maharashtra are found to be from the most marginalized sections of society (cf. Srivastava, 2003). Distress seasonal migration is becoming the last coping strategy in the precarious lives of the rural poor. It has manifested as an inter-generational phenomenon, and it is common to come across fourth and even fifth generation migrants in many sectors.

1.7 Data and Policy Gaps

There is a stark absence of policy debate on the peculiar situation of migrant labourers, who belong neither to their villages nor to destination areas. They forego the government welfare benefits in their villages, and cannot access these at the migration sites either. Migrant labourers often cannot participate in elections and census data collection, thus resulting in their thorough disenfranchisement. This labour force is also largely 'invisible' as migration sites are located in remote areas, far away from habitations and the general public view. Research on this subject is highly limited as is any reference to this category of the population in media and development discourse.

Although evidence throughout the country shows that the numbers involved in distress seasonal migrations are large and growing, there is little systematic data available. The two main secondary sources of data on population mobility in India are the Census and the National Sample Survey (NSS; see GoI, 2001), but they do not adequately capture seasonal and circular migration due to empirical and conceptual difficulties¹. The

¹ Firstly, definitions of migrants used in both surveys (change from birthplace and change in last usual place of residence), are not related to employment. Secondly, migration surveys give only the main reason

National Council for Rural Labour (NCRL) has estimated, based on their numbers in industries employing migrant workers, that the number of seasonal and circular migrants is 10 million in rural areas alone. Of these, an estimated 4.5 million are inter-state migrants. Other informal estimates put the total number close to 30 million². Small scale studies provide some regional and sector wise estimates, but the larger picture is far from clear (see Nayak, 2005; Venkateswarlu, 2005; Breman and Das, 2000; Ganguly, 1999; Katiyar, 2005; SETU, 2005; Hatekar, 2003). With regard to child population in distress family migrations, some small-scale studies and limited field evidence suggests that children accompanying their parents in the 0-14 year age-group may constitute about one-third of the total migrant population, while those in the elementary school age group (6-14 years of age) total approximately 20%, or nearly 6 million³. These are conservative estimates, however, and the reality may well surpass this.

Such gaps in available data lead to corresponding gaps in policy. In the absence of a proper database regarding the extent and scale of distress seasonal migration, and a better understanding on its impact on both families and communities, the issue is unlikely to find a place in the policy discourse or, therefore, in national or state planning frameworks. Unlike SC, ST or OBC groups, 'seasonal migrants' are not recognised as a category to be addressed in the country's development planning, despite the fact that they come from the poorest sections of the population and represent the major and growing phenomenon of labour mobility driven by a livelihood collapse in rural areas. This challenge needs to be recognised by government, but as of yet, seasonal migrants are not reflected in the national Five Year Plans, nor are they the focus of any special schemes, thus they remain without any vehicle for change.

1.8 Migrant Children and Education

Distress migration is an insidious promoter of child labour. The NCRL notes a high incidence of child labour in a number of sectors. Poor families with no additional support in their villages have little recourse but to take their children along when they migrate for work. At work sites, little hands and feet are invariably drawn into the labour process by the employer, by contractors and by parents, because wages are based on piece rates, rather than time spent. The vulnerability of children is aggravated because they do not have access to the kinds of support which non-migrant children automatically have. Even where migrant children have access to schooling, the status of government schools in the migration prone regions is dismal. Even progressive states such as Maharashtra and Gujarat have areas of high-migration where schools are less than satisfactory. Poor education possibilities push children further into migration. As a result of large-scale enrolment drives the names of most migrant children are now on school rolls, but in reality they are often out of school, being drawn into labour at work sites, and falling irreversibly into the annual cycle of migration.

for migration, and that only at the time of migration. Another problem is that migration data relate to stocks of migrants and not to flows, although different policy concerns relate to stocks (of different ages) and flows.

²Discussions in 'National Consultation on Social Security for Migrant Workers in the Informal Sector' organised by DFID and ILO, New Delhi, August 2005.

³ Based on informal discussion with Professor Jan Breman and Professor Ravi Srivastava.

Education is critical to the issue of distress seasonal migration because the window of opportunity that children of migrant families have is very small. As stated earlier, they often begin working by the age of 6 or 7 years old, and are working like adults within a few years. They therefore face a life of hardship from a very young age. They are subjected to hazardous travel between villages and work sites, and a life of severe deprivation at work sites. Girl children endure even more deprivations than boys. In the villages, these children find acceptance neither in school nor in the larger community, and are constantly viewed as outsiders. Furthermore, because of the nature of their parents' labour patterns, these children are difficult to trace, and are therefore easily left out of the standard systemic interventions of the education system. Their mobility also means that even alternative schools – in other words, the variety of innovative and flexible schooling options created under the EGS & AIE – may not help.

India recognized the Right to Education as a fundamental right in 2005. The country is also striving to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), of which the second goal is to achieve universal primary education by 2015. However, through the more ambitious Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) programme, the Indian government is working to achieve Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) by 2010. India is also a signatory of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Amidst this positive scenario, there is little attention to the plight of the children of migrant labour, although year after year their ranks are swelling. In India, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and the state education departments do not even have data with respect to this category of children, let alone a strategic plan in place to address related concerns. Urgent steps are thus needed for their education and development if the UEE targets and the MDGs are to be achieved.

It is also relevant to add here that while this paper focuses on seasonal family migration, male migration (i.e. adult males who migrate for long durations and leave their families behind) also creates grave challenges for the regular and continued schooling of children, because children are often compelled to support their mothers in both household and income generating activities. Furthermore, while this paper focuses on rural to rural migration, the issue of rural to urban seasonal migration also deserves greater attention.

2. The Migration Scenario

Seasonal family migration is widespread, but is not well understood or documented. Any attempt to grasp the reality of this phenomenon leads to a complicated set of inter-related issues, making it impossible to focus on children alone. Thus it is necessary to look at the wide range of issues that relate to distress seasonal migration, such as the spread and scale of its occurrence, its differing geographical and sectoral contexts, and issues of seasonality and employer-labour relationships. This holistic understanding is required in order to make effective interventions in policy and practice. The following chapter therefore addresses some critical aspects of seasonal migration.

2.1 Types and Patterns of Migration

Migration takes many forms, and there is significant diversity in migratory patterns. Migration for agricultural work, for example, is often of short duration (see Figure 4), and may take place several times each year, with families making trips of between four to eight weeks for sowing, harvest or transplantation activities. This type of migration commonly features small family groups travelling over short distances and working in highly scattered areas, making them difficult to trace. Migration for industrial and agro-industrial work, such as brick making, salt manufacture, tile making, fishing, stone quarrying, construction, charcoal making, sugar cane harvesting, and work at rice mills, on the other hand, tend to have a single cycle (see Figure 3) lasting six to eight months per year. This work typically begins after the monsoons (October-November) and runs until the following spring or summer (April-June). Families settle in camps or bivouacs near the work sites during the migration period. Upon return to their villages, if there is adequate rain, those with some land try to eke out a crop, while the landless will try to find work on the farms of others. If there is no rain, the families must try to make ends meet until the next round of migration begins.

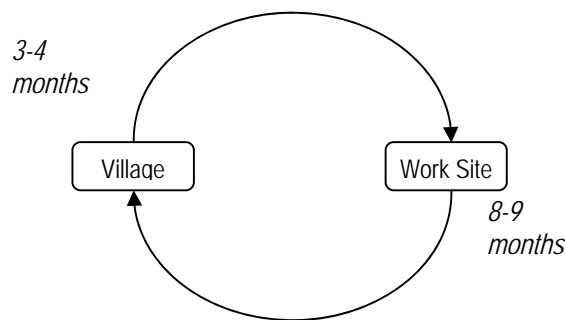
There are, however, many variations to these broad patterns. Migration periods for many impoverished families may become elongated as they move from one type of work to another to clear their accumulated debt (see Figure 5). Some families may become completely de-linked from their villages as they are on the move throughout the year (see Figure 6). The stone quarry sector, which used to operate on a seasonal basis, is also now losing its seasonal character – stone quarries in Maharashtra⁴ and Uttar Pradesh, for example, have begun to operate round the year. Migrant families in these cases have become completely uprooted from their villages, and live in slum-like settlements at the quarries. They may also have to shift from one quarry to another, increasing their insecurity. These varied situations throw up their own set of challenges for planning and implementing interventions.

The most insidious type of migration is that of unaccompanied children, which is prevalent in the cottonseed production sector in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Karnataka. This sector employs children, and mainly girls, from as early as 8 years of age. A

⁴ This is according to Santulan, a Maharashtra based NGO working with stone quarry migrants.

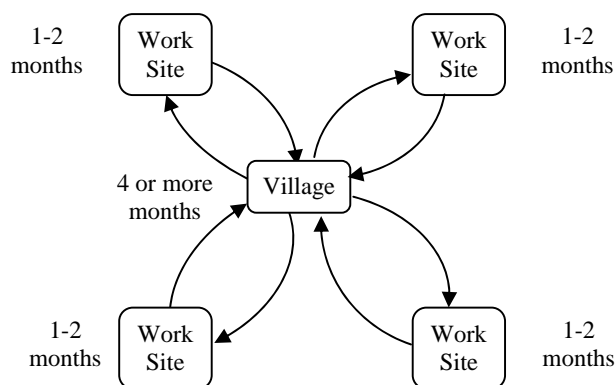
substantial number of children leave their homes and are taken by agents for cotton pollination for three to four months every year (July-October). While this type of migration is common in Andhra Pradesh, and from South Rajasthan to North Gujarat, similar trends are surfacing in other places. In the city of Hyderabad, for example, agents bring only children from neighbouring districts to perform certain functions at construction sites (see Figure 7). The textile industry of Surat also attracts a significant amount of migrant child labour. Pastoral migration is also common in western parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat, and among some hill communities such as the Van Gujars of Uttarakhand who move with their animals between the upper and lower reaches of the mountains.

Figure 3 Long Duration Migration (Single Work Site)



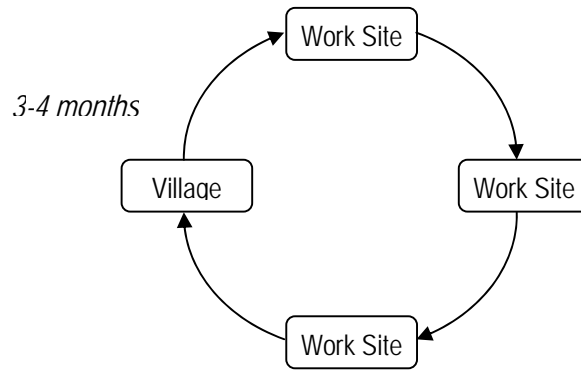
Long Duration Migration
• Single Work Site

Figure 4 Short Duration Migration



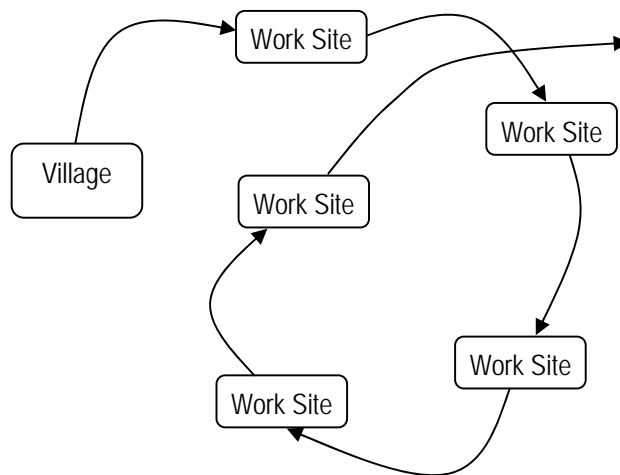
Short Duration Migration
Two or More Times a Year

Figure 5 Long Duration Migration (Shifting Work Sites)



Long Duration Migration
• Shifting Work Sites

Figure 6 Year Round Migration



Year Round Migration
• De-linked from Village

Figure 7 Migration Circuits



Source: Smita (2007)

2.2 Mapping Migration Flows

Data suggests that distress seasonal migration is likely to be a reality in a large number of states. The National Human Rights Commission Expert Group (2000), for example, found a high incidence of migrant bonded labour in the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Punjab and Haryana. Various other information sources also show a high incidence of it in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and other states (Srivastava, 2003).

Migration takes place within states as well as between them. The poorer states such as Orissa tend to send labour, while the industrialized, agriculturally rich ones such as Gujarat and Punjab tend to receive labour. Gujarat alone receives labourers from about nine states (Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala) for work in over a dozen sectors, including salt pans, sugarcane cutting, roof tiles, construction, fish processing, brick kilns, loading-unloading, power loom, diamond polishing, cotton pollination, ginning mills, sari folding and small scale industries. A similar picture manifests within states, with poorer areas sending labour to more affluent areas. For instance, within Gujarat large scale migration takes place from tribal districts of Dahod and Panchmahal to a dozen other districts of the state.

Tribal areas are the hubs for employers seeking cheap labour. Employers often cross state boundaries and arrange to transport tens of thousands of labourers across long distances for work. A classic case is brick kiln migration from Western Orissa to Andhra Pradesh,

in which tens of thousands of labourers travel 600 to 800 km by train from tribal districts (Bolangir, Kalahandi, Bargarh, Sonepur and Koraput) to find work.

This complicated circulation of labour among and within states is not clearly understood. There is therefore an urgent need to map these migration flows and study the prevailing patterns and trends in order to develop a better understanding of the phenomenon.

2.3 Magnitude of Migration and Extent of Child Migration

Estimates of the magnitude of migration in key sectors have been calculated based on studies and field interactions. These are presented below.

2.3.1 Sugarcane Migration, Maharashtra

Maharashtra has a total of 172 cooperative sugar factories and produces about 70% of the sugar in India. Seven districts in western Maharashtra – Nasik, Ahmadnagar, Pune, Satara, Sangli, Kolhapur and Sholapur – comprise the sugar belt which extends into Surat (Gujarat) in the north and Belgaum (Karnataka) in the south. Five districts of the arid Marathwada region – Beed, Jalgaon, Ahmadnagar, Nasik and Jalna – send labour to this sugar belt for six months every year during the sugarcane harvest. A study commissioned by Janarth, an Aurangabad based NGO, estimates that about 650,000 labourers migrate from central to western Maharashtra for sugarcane cutting each year (Hatekar, 2003). Of these, around 200,000 are children in the elementary school age group (6-14 years old). According to SETU, an NGO based in Ahmedabad, an estimated 150,000 additional labourers are received in Surat district of Gujarat for sugarcane cutting every season, of which 75% are from the Khandesh region of Maharashtra, and the rest from the tribal district of Dangs in Gujarat. Janarth also estimates that migration into Belgaum is in the range of 25,000 labourers per season. (See map of Maharashtra in the Annex)

2.3.2 Brick Kiln Migration, Western Orissa to Andhra Pradesh

ActionAid estimates that approximately 2 million people migrate from the predominantly tribal districts of Western Orissa (Bolangir, Nuapada, Kalahandi, Bargarh, and Sonepur) to brick kilns surrounding major cities of Andhra Pradesh (ActionAid, 2005). From Bolangir district alone, between 100,000 to 150,000 people migrate every year to the peripheries of Hyderabad. Children are an essential part of the work units that contractors hire for brick work in Orissa. A recent unpublished study of 300 brick kilns around Hyderabad revealed that as many as 35% of the total migrants were children, of which 22% were of elementary school age. While the bulk of this migration is to Andhra Pradesh, some migrants also go to Mumbai, Surat, Varanasi, Raipur and other cities to work in construction sites, in weaving units and hotels, and as rickshaw pullers.

In the brick kiln sector specifically, according to the All India Brick Kilns and Tile Manufacturer's Federation, there are around 50,000 brick kilns in India, each employing on an average 100 permanent workers (ActionAid, 2004). This alone amounts to a total of 5 million workers on the kilns. However, only the male heads of the family are registered on the rolls. Using a conservative estimate of five members per family, a

staggering 25 million people are estimated to be dependent on the brick sector for their livelihoods, a third of whom are likely to be children. (See map of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh in the Annex.)

2.3.3 Salt Pan and Other Migration, Gujarat

Gujarat produces 66% of the salt in India in inland and marine salt pans. Marine salt pans dot a quarter of the 1600 km coastline of the state, and include the operations of four major companies (Tata Salt, Gujarat Heavy Chemicals, Reliance and Nirma). Kutchh is the major salt district, producing 60% of the total salt yield of the state. Salt is produced by drawing out saline ground water in inland salt pans in the Little Rann of Kutchh, and using salty sea water in marine salt pans along the coastline. According to SETU, an estimated 200,000 to 225,000 people migrate to Kutchh alone every year for salt making. Salt is also produced in twelve other districts of the state, and together these are home to over 1600 salt producing units.

Apart from the salt sector, labour migration is also found in a number of other sectors in Gujarat and all its 25 districts are prone to it. Over 100,000 families, or an estimated 500,000 individuals, migrate out of tribal districts of Dahod, Panchmahal, and neighbouring Jhabua (in Madhya Pradesh) to seek agriculture and construction work in 13 other districts in Gujarat. Overall, an estimated 1.2 to 1.4 million people migrate or circulate within the state for work in the informal sector. This includes an influx of approximately 150,000 people from the tribal districts of Nandurbar and Dhule in Maharashtra and significant numbers from tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and other states (SETU, 2005). (See map of Gujarat in the Annex.)

2.4 Other Migration

A number of other sectors are significant in terms of migrant labour. This includes stone quarrying, cotton seed production, general agriculture and construction. For instance, in Maharashtra approximately 30 out of its 45 districts are home to intensive stone quarrying. This includes Vidarbha and Western Maharashtra, which are important stone rich regions. According to Santulan, a Pune-based NGO, there are 4 to 5 million workers in this sector in Maharashtra, of which 800,000 to 1,000,000 are likely to be children.

The cotton seed production sector runs mostly on child labour, and predominantly on girls' labour. An estimated 450,000 children from 6 to 14 years of age work in cottonseed production in the country, of which 250,000 are in Andhra Pradesh and the rest in Gujarat and Karnataka (Venkateswarlu, 2005). Almost a third of all child labourers in Andhra Pradesh are migrants, and girls constitute 85% of the work force in the state. Girls are often preferred in cotton pollination work over boys because it has traditionally been viewed as women's work. As labour requirements have increased, the burden has been transferred to girls. In the cotton pollination migrations from Rajasthan to North Gujarat 44% are girls, although in some areas girls outnumber boys. Children are recruited from a large arc of tribal blocks on the border of South Rajasthan, spanning Sirohi, Udaipur and Dungarpur districts. The total requirement of labour for the pollination season has been

estimated at three lakhs (30,000) and recruitment is often extended further inwards in Rajasthan as well as into tribal areas of Gujarat.

Agriculture in general also attracts huge numbers of migrant labour all over the country. Because these migrations are diverse and dispersed, it is difficult to assess the overall magnitude, but some of the available studies give a sense of localized estimates. In Dang district in Gujarat, for instance, most of the migration involves children, and is related to sugarcane cutting, agriculture and grape picking; in the Palamu district of Bihar, 70% of migration is for agricultural work and involves children; in Chamrajnagar, 15-20% of migration involves children working in coffee plantations and farms (Jha and Jhingran, 2005).

Construction is another major sector which is dependent on migrant labour. This can be divided into two types: (i) roads and other infrastructure construction, and (ii) building construction, with the former being largely rural to rural, and the latter rural to urban. In this sector, operations are increasingly becoming mechanized and now involve only skilled male labour. A large part of the work, especially to do with building construction, remains unskilled, and this draws family labour. As this migration is directed to urban centres, however, it is not the focus of this paper.

2.5 Socio Economic and Age Profile of Migrants

The socio-economic background of migrants is similar across states: they come from the most marginalized and impoverished sections of society – SC, ST and OBC. The dominant age profile of migrant labour is between 21 and 50 years of age, but older and younger people also accompany, and contribute to, family labour. Among children in the 0-5 year old age group, 85% migrate with their families. Significantly, migration is nearly equal among boys and girls up to the age of 10, but as age increases more girls migrate than boys (Desai, 2005). According to many parents, this is because they do not want to risk leaving girls in the village without male protection. In most cases, it is the old, ill and disabled that are left behind in the villages.

2.6 Labour Recruitment and Terms of Contract

In some types of migration, labourers move from their villages to work sites on their own, while in others employers hire contractors to recruit labour from source villages. In some cases, a work unit is usually comprised of a man and a woman. However, in brick kiln work in Orissa, a work unit is comprised of a man, a woman *and a child* (who is more or less unpaid). These work units go by different names – the sugarcane unit is called a '*koyata*' (the sickle used to cut cane), while an Orissa brick unit is a '*pathari*'. In these units, it is common to find that only adult males are registered on the muster rolls, while women are not. Children are also forced into work, but remain invisible and unaccounted for. Furthermore, the choice of work sites depends not on the choice of migrants themselves, but on the contractors. Migrant families may therefore be taken to a different work site each year.

2.7 Labour Movement from Villages to Work Sites

Travel conditions between villages and work sites are often hazardous, especially over long distances. Migrants generally carry with them an initial supply of grains and provisions, utensils, and other household items. Agricultural migrations are usually short distance, within migrants' home districts or adjoining ones. Sugarcane migrants, however, may cross several districts and cover 200 to 500 km on trucks or bullock carts over a week to ten days. Orissa brick migrants also often cross state boundaries and go into Andhra Pradesh. They are moved by agents on trains to Hyderabad on a 36-hour long journey. Women and children suffer the most in this process. While short distance migrants have the advantage of being able to visit their homes in between periods of work, long distance migrants are often cut off from their villages for the entire migration period.

2.8 The Economic Basis of Child Labour

Employers advance money to labour contractors, who in turn recruit labour by advancing money to poor families in the post-monsoon period when their need for cash is the greatest. With this money they are able to fulfil their urgent family needs and then prepare to migrate for the ensuing six to eight months. Advance amounts are small, in the range of a few thousand rupees per work unit. ActionAid, for example, cites a rate of Rs 5,000-10,000 for brickwork in Orissa; SETU cites a rate of Rs 3,500 – 5,000 for work in the salt pans in Gujarat; and Janarth quotes a rate of Rs 10,000 – 20,000 for sugar cane work in Maharashtra. Because payment is on a piece rate, greater levels of production, lead to higher earnings. Therefore the whole family is often involved in production. The employer therefore does not 'employ children' as such, but the economic arrangements coerce families to putting all available hands to work in order to increase production.

3. Plight of Families and Children in Migration

3.1 Nature of Work Sites

The nature of work sites varies widely from sector to sector, although there are underlying common elements. Work sites are usually far from habitation, often without even a road nearby. As a consequence, these locations are usually bereft of any basic facilities such as access to water, markets, schools or health centres. In some cases, even when there is a habitation nearby, migrant labourers are shunned by the local population, who tend to regard them unfavourably. Local residents may even erect extra fences around their homes to keep migrants away.

There is also typically no enforcement of labour laws at work sites. Working hours are long and difficult – labourers, including children, work for 14-16 hours daily and some are required to remain on call around the clock. Work norms are set according to physical capability, but everyone – including women, children and weaker, older men have to struggle to meet them. Contractors retain control of labourers, not only financially but also physically, forcing them to work even when sick or injured. Women are also expected to work during pregnancy and immediately following childbirth.

Although working conditions are very difficult, living conditions are often even worse. Living spaces are tiny and unhygienic. Most members of the family sleep under the open sky in weather conditions ranging from extreme heat to bitter cold. The available food is nutritionally inadequate. Each type of work site also has its own set of health hazards, ranging from infections and fevers, contamination and toxicity-related diseases, respiratory and gynaecological problems, injuries and accidents, gradual loss of hearing, unwanted abortions among women, and malnourishment, especially among children. There are often no facilities for medical treatment and no compensation or insurance, and workers are not paid when they are unable to work even on medical grounds.

3.2 Descriptions of Some Specific Work Sites

The information in this section is based on extensive field observations made by the author, as well as by NGO functionaries in different places.

3.2.1 Sugarcane Cutting Sites in Maharashtra

Sugar cane cutters usually camp in clearings earmarked by sugar factories in the vicinity of sugar cane fields. Each family lives in a small conical hut or *kopi* made of a bamboo mat and poles, and measuring approximately 8 feet in diameter. Settlements or '*addas*' may consist of between 50 to 500 kopis. The kopis are often cramped together, with humans and livestock living in close proximity. The *koyatas* or work units begin their work in the dark hours of the morning and cut cane throughout the day. Adults cut the cane, remove its top and throw it on the ground. Children then put the cane into a pile, and collect and bundle the sugarcane tops. The heavy bundles of cane are then tied up and carried by men and women to a cart for transport. At a work site of 7-10 *koyatas*, for

example, it is usual to find 15 to 20 adults, and 12 to 15 children of all ages. Infants can usually be found tied in a cloth hammock or simply lying on the scrub. Children of 4 to 6 years of age often run around their parents, and are constantly in danger of being hit by a sickle. Older children are part of the assembly line with their parents.

3.2.2 Brick Kilns Near Hyderabad

Although brick kilns can be seen scattered all over the country side, their major concentration is found on the peripheries of large urban centres. A typical brick kiln may have 100 to 200 labourers, including men, women and children. Brick kilns in the northern part India are larger and equipped with better technology, and may have 500 to 600 people (100 to 125 families) working in them. The brick making process runs like an assembly line, and involves mixing clay, making mud balls, moulding them into bricks, carrying wet bricks to the field for drying, flipping them as they dry, carrying dried bricks in head loads to the kiln for firing, and finally carrying fired bricks in head loads to the trucks for transportation to the market. In migrations from Orissa to Andhra Pradesh, a work unit or *pathuria* is typically comprised of a man, a woman and a child (of 11 to 12 years of age). If a family has no child of that age, they must 'borrow' a child from a neighbour, otherwise they are unlikely to get work at a kiln (although any younger children in the family will also migrate). Child labour is therefore entrenched in the brick industry.

Job 'assignments' start from an early age. Four-year olds, for example, have been observed sorting coal and sieving coal dust⁵. '*Children work according to their strength,*' observed a parent at a Hyderabad kiln. Pointing to a four-year old girl carrying a brick, she added, '*after some time she will start carrying two!*' Older children may carry up to ten or twelve bricks as head loads. Injuries are common and many children become knock-kneed as a result. Children between the ages of 9 to 11 are fully integrated into the assembly line of brick production. Many of the operations have even been specifically designated for children due to their small hands and light bodies (for example, walking over semi dried bricks to flip them). Parents often also believe that this work cannot be done without the work of children.

Families working at the kilns usually live right next to the work space in tiny, dingy, makeshift huts with low ceilings (3.5 feet high), which they erect out of broken bricks and roofing material collected from the surrounding area. Weekly markets arrive to sell to migrant labourers, although they usually offer the poorest quality food items (broken rice or chicken feed, dried or rotting vegetables and discarded portions of meat) at exorbitant prices. Broken rice or chicken feed which sells at Rs 3 to 4 per kilogram in a regular market, for example, will be sold to migrants for Rs 7 to 8 per kilogram. The drinking water available to them is the same as that used for mixing the clay for bricks. It is in these circumstances that families survive for eight months every year. The result of such poor conditions is that 7 or 8 year old children often look no more than 4 years old. Adults also suffer from rapidly deteriorating health. In Orissa, for example, it is

⁵ Authors own observations

commonly said that after four or five years on the brick kilns, a young man starts looking heavily aged.

Terrible scenes of abuse have also been witnessed (see Breman and Das, 2000). In one instance, a girl was seen trying to make her younger brother – who was shivering with fever – get up to work, because she was unable to carry all the bricks to the kiln, and had been threatened by the supervisor. Children commonly suffer from respiratory, stomach, eye and skin problems, as well as with water-borne diseases. Accidents due to burns are very common and cause disability and even death, but are often completely ignored by employers.

3.2.3 Marine Salt Pans in Gujarat

The marine salt pans or *agars* provide by far the harshest living and working conditions. A typical *agar* is spread over a 10 acre area, and is serviced by one family of two adults and between two to four children. The job is to concentrate saline sea water by exposing it to the sun as it circulates over large areas, and finally to crystallize it into salt. The workers must face the tough natural conditions at the pans day after day – including strong sea winds, the glare of the sun reflecting off the salt, and the strong mid-day heat and chilly temperatures at night. Although there are no specific tasks for children to perform, they help their parents in all parts of the operation. Girls also take on many of the household responsibilities in order to free their mothers to work at the pan.

Families typically live in shacks made of wood and plastic sheets, and which are open to the cold and wind. Supplies of water and food are uncertain and usually meagre. Salt workers also face the additional deprivation of social isolation. A family of four or five may live a lonesome existence on their pan, with the next pan and its workers at least a mile or two away.

3.3 The Plight of Women and Girls at Work Sites

The gender aspects of distress migration also need to be given much greater attention. Migrant women fight on two battlefronts – dealing with arduous labour throughout the day, and home and children at night, often while getting far less rest than men. Pregnant women also have no respite from work. They commonly receive no additional nutritional support or medical help (leading to frequent unwanted abortions), and are given no time to rest even after childbirth. Lactating mothers often do not even get breaks for feeding.

Women and adolescent girls are also frequently exposed to sexual abuse, especially from contractors and truck drivers. They sleep, defecate and bathe in the open, and must travel on trucks and trains along with men at odd hours of the day and night.

3.4 Child Labour at Work Sites

From young ages, children are drawn into the labour process by employers and contractors and also by their parents. So while children are not officially 'employed' and employers do not acknowledge their presence at work sites, employers nevertheless

benefit from this free labour, which is significant in volume but is subsumed under the category of 'family labour'⁶. In almost every sector, sets of tasks are specifically delineated for children to perform. Additionally, girls must often manage household chores and mind younger siblings, in order to release their parents for paid work. Many parents make their older daughters accompany them simply for this purpose.

Migrant children face a life of hardship and insecurity from their infancy. Many children are born at work sites to overworked, undernourished mothers, in dingy, unhygienic dwellings with no medical assistance. Mothers are forced back into work soon after childbirth, and have little opportunity to rest or care for their infants. Babies are often left by themselves or in the care of an older sibling. A distressing lack of nutrition, clean water, mother's care, hygiene, medical assistance, basic comfort and security characterize the lives of children at work sites. Babies and toddlers frequently use their parents' work implements as playthings. Crawling close to furnaces, cutting themselves on sickles, and getting bitten by insects are everyday occurrences for these children. They receive no immunization, and their illnesses remain untreated. As they grow older, children are subjected to hazardous travel between villages and work sites each year. At work sites they are rapidly 'apprenticed' to conduct adult tasks. Children with physical and mental disabilities are also often brought along by parents due to a lack of support in their home villages, and they are often simply left by themselves at the settlements all day while their parents work⁷.

3.5 The Disrupted Lives of Migrants in Villages

Being away from their homes and villages and leading uprooted lives, the first thing that migrants lose is their identity as citizens. In their villages, migrants forego all of their basic entitlements including access to schooling facilities for their children, free services in public health centres, and Public Distribution System (PDS) / Below Poverty Line (BPL) grains. They have to buy grain, kerosene and other basic commodities at market prices. Their infants are often not reached by immunization drives. They also lose the opportunity to participate in *panchayat* (village council) activities, and are often unable to vote or participate in the census, as these usually take place during the first half of the year and coincide with the migration period. As work sites are away from habitations, there are no government health centres or schools nearby, nor are they eligible to make use of them. Even when children are enrolled in schools, they often find no acceptance there, and are viewed as outsiders by both teachers and other children. The vulnerability of people who cross state boundaries is even greater, as they find themselves in alien language and cultural environments, and therefore even more at the mercy of contractors.

In addition to such problems at work sites, migrants may also increasingly lose acceptance in their own villages. They are cut off from their community, culture and traditions, and are not able to take part in the festivals and other religious and social

⁶ This insight comes from conversation with Jean Dreze.

⁷ Janarth's annual survey (2005-06) to collect basic data on migrant children at all the worksites where it runs its educational interventions has shown 96 children with different types of disabilities at the project work sites.

functions which are such an important part of their lives. While migrating families face hardships, the elderly, ailing family members or children left behind in villages may also have a rough time fending for themselves. They often do not know where the family has gone, or how to contact them. This can make it especially difficult for migrants and their families to deal with emergencies.

Villages with largely SC and/or ST populations often experience migration levels of up to 80% or even 100%. These settlements will remain more or less empty for most of the year, except for those left behind, including the elderly and ill. This can have a significant effect on the social life of the village, with no one present to celebrate festivals, to observe religious events, or to maintain village assets. Furthermore, with limited *panchayat* activity, even the local health centre and school are likely to wither away. Further research enquiry is needed to understand the impacts that these circumstances can have on communities, especially in the long term.

Policy and planning in India focuses on a fixed framework – the village, the block, the district, and the state. Migration, however, means that large sections of population, which are also the most vulnerable, do not fit easily within this fixed framework. For them, frequent changes of location and unpredictable patterns of movement are a way of life. This is not to say that this phenomenon is restricted only to the poor and the marginalized – the upper strata of society also continuously migrates and changes locations, but their rights and entitlements tend to move with them. Poorer segments of the population, however, commonly *leave their rights and entitlements behind*, becoming even further disenfranchised.

4. The Challenges of Providing Schooling for Migrant Children and the Response of the State

4.1 Lack of Data and Information

After a decade of intensive efforts for UEE under the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), the central and state governments still do not have data with respect to children of seasonal migrants. Nor is there any understanding about migration sectors or the flow of migrant labour within and among states. The basic source of this information should be the village and the local school, but local bodies, village education committees and *panchayats* do not keep track of migration.

As noted above, although schools could be a primary source of this information, they keep no records of children who remain absent for several months every year or who have dropped out due to migration. Unfortunately, data collection on this issue has been neglected, ignored or suppressed until quite recently. In the future there is need to collect information on when and where children go and for what work, as well as about how long they stay away and when they return. School level data consolidated with other levels of data will help to explain what is happening in different clusters, blocks and districts with respect to migration.

Surveys on out-of-school children by education department could be another important source of data on migration. Currently, these surveys are targeted at villages, and usually take place during the migration period (December-January). Thus the hundreds of thousands of children who have migrated for work are not counted. Further, these surveys do not count drop-out due to migration within their definitions of 'out-of-school'. These departmental surveys should be extended to cover migration sites, as well as the individual children who drop-out. They should also re-examine their definitions to incorporate drop-out that occurs due to migration.

4.2 Overview of School Systems in 'Sending Areas'

The 'sending areas' of most states are typically the remote and poorest regions, and districts in these areas are likely to have weaker governance as compared to other areas. As a result, the functioning of school systems in these areas also tends to be inferior. Field observations by the author and colleagues in migration-prone districts and blocks in several states have revealed poorer school infrastructure, lower levels of maintenance, more adverse pupil-teacher ratios, less frequent monitoring and greater delays in supply of text books and materials than in other areas. This is therefore a key issue to be addressed in high-migration areas, particularly as these conditions affect all children in these areas, and not just those that migrate. It is also possible that these circumstances of poor infrastructure and governance actually push more children into migration, rather than motivating them to stay in their home villages to study.

4.3 Planning and Providing for Children 'On the Move'

Migrant children typically spend part of the year in their home district and the remainder in their work district/state. However, since educational planning is organised separately by individual districts and states, these children become external to both systems and neither the home nor the work district takes responsibility for their education. This often leads to discrepancies in school registers, and this in turn gives rise to malpractices and corruption of various kinds (particularly where state funding allocations for these children disappear or are misappropriated). In districts which have a huge out-migration of labour – Bolangir district in Western Orissa, for example, sends out 100,000 labourers every year, one-third of whom are likely to be children – this issue can be a major concern. Due to the neglect of the state, not only do these children and their families lose what is rightfully theirs, but state expenditures made on their behalf often go unaccounted for.

4.3.1 Schooling Issues in Sending Areas

For the children of industrial migrants, the window of opportunity for study in village schools is usually about four months (from July to October). After that time they will move with their families, and return the following April or May. For agricultural migration, however, the pattern is less predictable as the movement of families is attuned to the crop cycles in their areas. These children may therefore leave the village several times each year for short durations of 4-6 weeks, or they may remain away for longer periods if their parents simply shift from one work site to another without returning home. Due to recent enrolment drives, most children's names are now on school rolls, but no records are kept regarding the large numbers who leave school mid-session and stay out for long periods. Their names remain on the registers, despite the fact that attendance plummets. This issue is neglected even at the upper levels of monitoring, including cluster resource centres (CRCs) and block resource centres (BRCs).

No one really knows how many children return to school following a period of migration. This may partly depend on when the migration season ends. Sugarcane migrants, for example, start returning to their home communities from the end of March, when some weeks remain in the school year. Often parents' first concern, however, is to put their homes back in order. Those with *kutcha* houses find them in a state of disrepair after months of neglect, and there may be other pressing needs such as medical treatment or care for elderly parents who were left behind. Thus the schooling of the child is often low on the list of priorities. Field enquiries by NGOs in Maharashtra, for example, have revealed that it may take days or weeks before a parent approaches the school. Many parents do not see school attendance as worthwhile, and children therefore simply do not go back to school. Work in other sectors, such as the brick and salt making industries, on the other hand, ends after the school session is over, so these children must simply wait until the next academic session begins.

For their part, schools often also make it difficult for migrant children to become reintegrated into the classroom. Firstly, they usually make no effort to encourage migrant children to come back to school when they return. Instead, this is left to the parents. Secondly, they require attendance and exam records for enrolment, which migrant

children usually do not have. Even if children are allowed to join, a majority of them end up repeating the same class. Discussions with NGO field functionaries, parents, children and teachers in Maharashtra reveal that this is a common occurrence. Thirdly, the schools do not see it as their responsibility to provide any extra academic support to children who have missed many weeks or months of studies. On the contrary, they are often discriminated against, and blamed for falling behind in their learning. This lack of sensitivity and support from teachers and school administration leads to the large scale drop-out of migrant children.

4.3.2 Schooling Issues in Receiving Areas

Work sites in most sectors of intra-rural migration are located in remote areas, away from habitations and major roads. As mentioned above, salt pans are located along the sea coast (or in the Little Rann of Kutch in Gujarat); fishing sites are along the coast line or on small islands in the sea, brick kilns, plantations, charcoal sites and sugar cane fields are also usually in isolated locations. The majority of work sites, therefore, do not provide access to schools. Schools can sometimes be found near brick kilns and sugarcane sites as these are more likely to be located near villages or municipal areas, but local authorities are not generally aware of the needs of migrant children and do not believe it is their job to ensure they are in school. For their part, parents have no mental space to think or act on these concerns, at least partly due to the poor conditions of the work site, so the most logical thing to do is to put their children to work. In the absence of any systemic mechanism to bridge this gap, the disconnect remains between migrant children and schools around work sites.

Migrants in many sectors, however, do not have access to schools at all. This includes, for example, migrants who shift constantly from one work site to another (charcoal makers, a section of sugar cane cutters, etc) or short duration agricultural migrants who may move several times a year. There are also work sites (i.e. salt pans) which have only a few families and a handful of children, and therefore a school may not be feasible. For such children there is no possibility of schooling during periods of migration. The situation is also different for pastoral migrants, who are continuously on the move. Although it is said that the solution for these children is mobile teachers, the limitations of this are clear and as of yet there are no examples of this having been carried out successfully anywhere in the country. In the case of inter-state migrations, differences of language and curriculum further compounds the problems faced by children and parents.

4.4 Care of Children of the Pre-primary Age Group

The percentage of children in the pre-primary age group is significantly higher at work sites, because while older children may be left behind in the villages to care for themselves, the youngest must be taken along. A study of sugarcane migrations shows that among the 0-5 year age group, 85% of children are taken along by parents (Desai, 2005). Pregnancy and child birth is also not uncommon at work sites, so children of all ages can be found there living under the harshest conditions. It is not enough, therefore, to look only at the school-going age group. It is also critical to address the needs of the 0 to 5 year old age group through crèches and pre-primary centres.

4.5 Employers Tacitly Promote Child Labour

Employers, who promote child labour at work sites by openly flouting the Child Labour Act (1986), must be brought to book. While education is the responsibility of the government, it is also the responsibility of the employers to respect the law of the land by not only avoiding child labour at work sites, but also by providing proper care and education of the children of their labour force. However, the main resistance encountered by NGOs/agencies for opening schools at work sites is from employers who do not want to lose out on child labour, and also wish to prevent the outside world from knowing the many illegal and exploitative practices going on at work sites.

5. Educational Interventions

The information in this section is based on author's own experience in the field as well as from discussions with people based in the field in different regions.

5.1 Initial Experimental Efforts

It is evident from surveys and field interactions that there are not many examples of NGOs dealing with seasonal migration as an issue. Most NGOs located in migration-prone geographies focus on livelihoods, and their work has indirectly impacted distress migration. The generation of alternate livelihood options has resulted in mitigating migration out of distress, but very few NGOs have worked on migration directly. Of late, as this phenomenon is gaining some visibility, however, and some NGOs have taken up work related to labour rights and empowerment of migrant workers through information and legal aid. Unfortunately, as far as education specifically is concerned, efforts are few and far between.

Initiatives in the past with respect to education for the children of seasonal migrants usually arose more as an off shoot of other activities, rather than with a specific focus on this problem. A Gujarat-based group called Vedchi Pradesh Sewa Samiti (VPSS), for example, is a Gandhian organization working for integrated rural development. The organization is based in Surat district, which attracts between 1 lakh (10,000) and 2 lakh (20,000) migrant labourers for sugarcane cutting every year. VPSS started an education intervention project for the children of sugarcane migrants by setting up *balwadis* (nurseries), learning centres and hostels. Approximately 2,000 children up to the age of 10 years received support through the project. Unfortunately, due to a number of constraints, the program had to be abandoned in the year 2000.

Under Lok Jumbish (LJ) in Rajasthan, it was the focus on UEE and the drive to identify all categories of out-of-school children that brought to light, for the first time, migrant children and their specific circumstances. This gave rise to some innovative efforts to deal with the educational needs of these children. One such initiative was taken by an NGO called Sankalp, in Baran district, an area which faces huge seasonal out-migration. It set up seasonal hostels for children of migrant families in some villages. These hostels ran during the migration months, and children were encouraged to stay back while their parents migrated. These hostels ran quite successfully, and many processes were evolved around them. Another effort under LJ was made in the tribal Bicchiwada block of Pratapgarh district, from which children are commonly taken by contractors to Gujarat for cotton pollination. Since this was a case of child-only migration, the issue was more of social mobilization. The parents, community and the tribal heads were mobilized to stop children from migrating and to send them to school. A decision was also taken by the community to boycott families that continued to let their children migrate. The campaign was quite successful, and several schools in that area which had previously closed down, were opened again. These efforts, unfortunately, did not last, although they served the important purpose of focusing attention on the issue of child migration and giving some direction in terms of how best to intervene.

Later, under the DPEP, a number of further efforts were made to address the issue. In Maharashtra, alternate schools called *sakharshalas* were run in some districts at sugarcane cutting sites. The scale of these interventions remained small, and the scope limited. However, migrant children were finally recognized as a category of out-of-school children 'living under the most difficult circumstances' and were included in the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative & Innovative Education (AIE) Scheme. This was the first important step in terms of policy-making for migrant children. There are also several other NGO-based efforts in different migration sectors in Maharashtra: An NGO called Vidhayak Sansad, for example, runs alternate schools called *bhongashalas* at brick kilns in Thane district, an area near Bombay with a huge concentration of brick kilns. Similarly, the NGO Janarth runs *sakharshalas* at sugarcane cutting sites, and the NGO Santulan runs *pashanshalas* at stone quarries.

ActionAid has also done work to address brick kiln migrations between the states of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. They run site schools at Hyderabad brick kilns, and also organize mobile Oriya teachers and transport text books from Orissa in order to teach migrant Oriya children (ActionAid, 2005). ActionAid has also facilitated dialogue between the governments of Andhra Pradesh and Orissa so that they can work together on the issue of inter-state brick kiln migration.

Efforts have also been made under SSA. For the past few years in the western districts of Orissa (i.e. Bolangir and Nuapada), seasonal hostels have been run for children of migrant labour. In November 2005, the Rajiv Gandhi Prathamik Shiksha Mission in Madhya Pradesh recognized the important issue of migration in the state, and opened over 700 seasonal hostels in all its districts in order to prevent the migration of children. The government of Gujarat has also put mechanisms in place such as child tracking cards and making provision for migrant children to be admitted to schools located near work sites.

5.2 Current Efforts Towards Strategy/Model Building

Interventions for children of seasonal migrants over the last decade have generally dealt with only one end of the migration cycle – either the sending end (seasonal hostels) or the receiving end (work site schools). Since 2003, however, work enabled by the American India Foundation (AIF) has attempted to address migration at both ends of the cycle. Together with eight NGO partners, AIF has helped build a strategy to address the issue of mobility of migrant populations, and to evolve a model for comprehensive coverage and continuity of schooling of these children⁸. Their projects are in three major sectors and four states – sugarcane cutting in Maharashtra, salt pan, brick kilns, charcoal making, fisheries and other mixed migrations in Gujarat, and brick kiln migrations from Orissa to Andhra Pradesh.

⁸ Partners include Janarth in Maharashtra; SETU – Centre for Social Knowledge & Action, Cohesion Trust, and the Yusuf Mehrally Centre in Gujarat; Vikalpa, Lok Drishti, Adhikar and Jan Mukti Anushthan in Western Orissa.

The model that is being evolved has taken the individual components of seasonal hostels and site schools and strung them together into a continuum, linking work in sending areas with work in receiving areas. An additional component of bridge courses has also been included for children who do not receive support either in hostels or at work sites. The model gives primary importance to interventions in villages, and secondary importance to those at work sites. It has also stressed the critical importance of revamping government schools in migration-prone areas in order to (i) motivate children and parents to participate in education, and (ii) make schools and the different levels of administration responsible for meeting the needs of migrant children. The following pages present the emerging model for the education of migrant children, as well as short descriptions of the work of four of the NGOs which gave rise to this model.

5.3 The Emerging Model for the Education of Migrant Children

The model emerging from the experience of the four NGOs for comprehensive coverage of migrant children involves interventions simultaneously in sending and receiving areas, and multiple options of schooling spanning both villages and work sites. The mainstay of the model is the local government school; and all alternative measures lead the child back to the government school. The four dimensions of the model are as follows:

Seasonal hostels in villages

Given the hazardous nature of the work sites, and the lack of any facilities of proper care and education there, it is imperative that parents have the option of leaving their school-age children behind in the villages. The model envisages setting up seasonal hostels in villages which run through the migration period. These enable children to stay in the village and attend the local school. While separating children from their parents is not desirable, given the unacceptable levels of distress at work sites, this is an option that many migrant families prefer. Parents who can make their own arrangements to keep their children in villages have already been doing so. In NGO project areas demand for hostels has been rising every year.

Schools/centres at worksites

For children who do not stay in a seasonal hostel and continue to migrate with their parents, the model envisages the provision of work site schools /centres. The objective is to prevent child labour, ensure that children are in adult care in a safe and clean environment, and have the opportunity to learn and play. The nature of the school/centre, however, will depend on the nature of the work site. At the relatively better organized work sites, such as sugarcane 'tyre centres', which have proper space and physical facilities and a sufficient number of children available, a more formal school set-up is possible. At sites such as brick kilns where settlements are smaller and the physical facilities rudimentary, less formal activity centres may be a better choice. Currently, SSA provides for a centre in a site with at least five children. The third category of work sites where mobile migrants work and continuously shift their location every few weeks (e.g. charcoal making, sugarcane doki centres, etc.), schooling interventions are quite difficult. Short duration agricultural migrations which take place several times a year also cannot be addressed through site schools. Thus emerging thinking suggests that more and more

children should opt to stay in a seasonal hostel in their home village. However, the final choice should always be left with the parents.

Summer Bridge Courses in villages

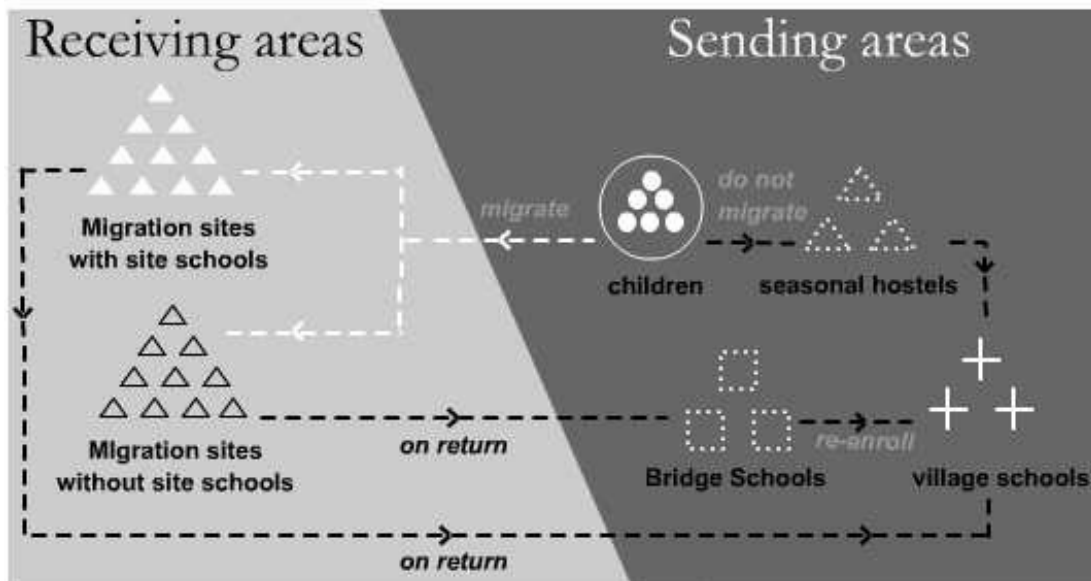
For children who do not stay in a seasonal hostel, and who migrate to a work site where there is no school, the model provides the option of a bridge course in the village after their return (i.e. during the monsoon months). This course can effectively link them back to their local government school.

Bridge courses and work site schools/ centres are transient measures by nature, whereas seasonal hostels are a longer term solution for migration-prone geographies. While initially all three options need to run simultaneously to ensure every child has access, over time the need for bridge courses and site schools should reduce, and more children should have the option of staying in hostels and going to the school in their home village.

Strengthening local government schools

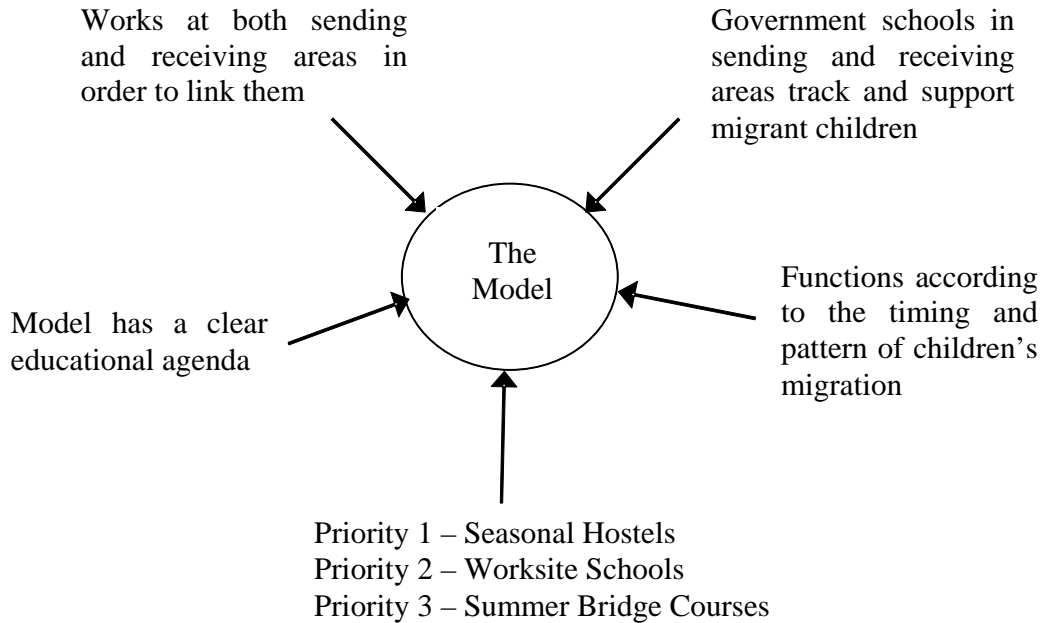
Another important dimension of the model is the need to address issues in local schools themselves. Inadequacies in school functioning, including teacher and text book shortages, low levels of teacher and administrative accountability, low levels of performance, lack of supervision, and above all, low learning levels, lead to drop out not just of migrants, but of all children. Unless the school itself is improved, efforts to retain migrant children are unlikely to yield results. Thus the strengthening of local schools and ensuring coverage and retention of all children, migrant and non migrant, is an essential part of the scheme. Improvements in classroom pedagogy in order to improve learning levels, and building greater sensitivity among teachers and officials towards migrant children are particularly critical. This needs to be done through mobilizing the community and effective engagement with teachers as well as block and district officials.

Figure 8 Receiving Areas and Sending Areas



Source: Smita (2007)

Figure 9 Features of the Model



5.4 The Experiences of Janarth, Maharashtra

Janarth started a pilot project in 2002-2003 by setting up schools for children of sugarcane migrants at two sugar factory work sites. The schools were called *sakharshalas* and provided services to 600 children. By 2005-2006 the program has been scaled up to include 30 factories in the seven sugar districts of Western Maharashtra, and is now catering to 12,000 children.

Despite the success of the programme, however, Janarth found that at the end of the migration season it was difficult to get children re-admitted to their home schools because they came from hundreds of different villages spread over several districts. Furthermore, each year the *sakharshalas* received a new group of children because families working for contract agents did not return to the same factory every season. Continuity of schooling for these children was therefore a real challenge. It became clear that eventually all migration sites would need to have a school – a task that only the state is capable of accomplishing – and that there was also a need for interventions in villages in order to sustain existing efforts.

In 2005-2006, Janarth set up seasonal hostels in 9 high-migration villages in one block in Beed district in order to try to prevent the migration of children. As a result, over 450 children were retained. In addition, for children who migrate to work sites without *sakharshalas*, Janarth runs bridge courses in the summer/monsoon months when they return, and then tries to link them back to local schools.

A major component of Janarth's work is to strengthen government schools in project villages in terms of functioning, proper provisioning, and improved learning outcomes. The project is ensuring enrolment and retention of all out-of-school children in the villages including non-migrants, in an effort to move towards UEE in these villages.

Janarth has also engaged in successful advocacy work with factory management in an attempt to provide support to the children attending the *sakharshalas*. Every year this support is increasing. Janarth's advocacy work with the state has also enabled this model to be accepted by state SSA agencies.

5.5 The Experiences of SETU, Gujarat

SETU's education interventions are centered around the prevention of migration of children in Gujarat. According to SETU, salt pan, brick kiln, charcoal and roof tile work sites are not amenable to schooling interventions because of the tough living conditions and rudimentary facilities (if any) available. In addition, charcoal migrants frequently shift from one work site to another, making provision more difficult. As a result, preventing the migration of children is seen as the only option. SETU therefore runs seasonal hostels in villages so that children to stay in their home communities and go to school while their parents migrate for work.

A pilot phase was started in 2004 in 12 high-migration villages of a block in Jamnagar district. SETU retained 174 children in the first year, and linked them to government schools. In 2005-2006 the program expanded to include 17 villages. SETU is also working to strengthen government schools in these sending villages by increasing enrolment, filling teacher vacancies, providing library books, and improving mid-day meals. Evening tutorial classes in the hostels are also open to all children of the village, and SETU plans to begin providing bridge courses for children who return from periods of migration.

Despite the availability of these hostels, many children still migrate. While the NGO originally planned to work only at the sending end of the migration cycle, the need to reach migrant children at the work sites was also felt, even if on a temporary basis. The purpose is not just to provide schooling (as in case of Janarth), but also to prevent child labour and to provide children with a safe, clean place and a learning environment. Therefore from 2005-2006 SETU began activity centres for the 6-14 year age group as well as pre-primary centres for younger children at brick kilns. It was found that interventions at salt pans and charcoal sites were not viable.

SETU's work has received prominent attention within the media and from SSA. The government of Gujarat has invited SETU to design a scheme for hostels and site schools, and have asked for their help in setting up 50 hostels and 50 site schools to cover two major migration sectors – salt pans and sugarcane cutting.

5.6 The Experiences of Vikalpa and Lok Drishti, Orissa

In 2004-2005, interventions focused on the sending end of the migration cycle were started by the NGOs Vikalpa and Lok Drishti. Approximately 400 children were retained in 16 hostels in 8 villages each in Bolangir and Nuapada districts. In 2005-2006, the coverage in sending areas was scaled up to include 60 villages and approximately 1,700 children. This included programmes from Vikalpa and Lok Drishti which expanded to cover 20 villages each. Two more local NGOs in Bolangir – Adhikar and Jan Mukti Anushtan – also started work in 13 and 12 villages, respectively (see Adhikar, 2004, 2005a, and 2005b). The mobilization of more local NGOs for work on migration issues has, in this way, helped to expand coverage as well as to build advocacy strength.

Working at the receiving areas, on the other hand, has been a challenge. Orissa brick kiln migrations are inter-state and migrants go to urban peripheries of big cities in Andhra Pradesh, 700 to 800 km away. Collaboration with local NGOs and agencies in Andhra Pradesh was the only solution. AIF is therefore collaborating with ActionAid in its work with brick kiln migrants around Hyderabad. ActionAid's work covers approximately 1,500 children in work site schools in three districts of Andhra Pradesh. Mobile teachers are recruited from the sending areas to teach these children in the Oriya language, and Oriya text books are arranged for these site schools. Classes are either run in temporary structures at brick kiln sites or – where there is a government school in the vicinity – the Education Department of Andhra Pradesh has given permission for classes to be run on school premises.

NGO partners in Orissa also run bridge courses in villages during the summer months for children who migrate to work sites without a school during the normal school year. Vikalpa, for example, ran bridge courses for 250 returning migrant children in its first year, and for even more in the second year. The NGO's engagement with the state government has resulted in the SSA's growing awareness of the problems of migrant children and education.

5.7 Future Course of Action

Work related to the education of migrant children needs to be seen from two points of view – intervention planning and policy advocacy. Both of these aspects are discussed below.

5.8 Intervention Aspects

Interventions with seasonal migrants involve taking into account the larger reality of migration, as well as the specifics of the particular sector and geography being addressed. Moreover, experience shows that interventions need to be comprehensive, and to encompass the places of origin of migrants as well as their work sites, for them to be effective and sustainable. This usually involves working across several districts and often across more than one state.

While innovative solutions have been found for many difficult categories of out-of-school children, the factor that differentiates children of distress seasonal migrants from others is their mobility. Planning for children whose families are not settled, but are constantly on the move, warrants basic rethinking in terms of both approaches and models, especially if universal access, retention and quality – or UEE – are to be ensured. Some key elements of programme design emerging from existing work are shared below.

5.8.1 Working at Sending and Receiving Ends

The primary challenge in migration is of mobility, with families spending part of the year in the villages and part at work sites. Educational interventions for children of seasonal migrants thus need to cover both the sending and the receiving ends. Multiple options need to be put in place to maximize coverage of children in both kinds of sites, including seasonal hostels, site schools, and bridge courses.

In the long run, however, the main focus of interventions needs to be the sending villages, while supplementary interventions are provided in the work sites. In villages it is possible to invest in proper facilities and ensure continuity of provision in government schools through the elementary cycle and beyond. Universal coverage can also be monitored most effectively in villages; this is not possible at work sites.

5.8.2 Addressing the Scale, Spread and Nature of Migration

The scale of sending and receiving areas is often large, with several contiguous villages, blocks, or districts facing significant rates of out-migration. In-migration to work sites is similarly spread over large areas. The distance of migration is another issue to be reckoned with: migration may be short distance (intra-block or intra-district), as well as long distance (inter-district or inter-state). The dynamics of migration renders small scale programs ineffective, therefore for interventions to be effective they must have expansive coverage. Long distance and or inter state migrations may also necessitate collaborative work among multiple agencies.

The duration and timing of migration must also be taken into account when planning interventions. While some migration takes place once in a year for a long duration (6-8 months), others are for shorter durations but take place several times a year. Migrants may also shift constantly from one work site to another without returning to their home communities. Different strategies will therefore be needed to address migration cycles of different duration and frequency.

Scale is yet another critical component in interventions. In other words, planning must aim to reach a critical mass in terms of geographical coverage as well as coverage of children. It is also important to look at coverage in terms of migration belts or pockets rather than just blocks or districts. In sending areas, the approach should be to provide support to the entire education system, and to achieve universal coverage, retention and quality for *all* children, with a special focus on migrants. Collaboration between agencies will help to address planning and implementation across the distances between sending

and receiving ends, and the large geographical spread of migration-prone villages and work sites.

5.9 The Challenge of Planning and Management

Education programs for the migrant children have to work within two annual overlapping cycles – the migration cycle and the school cycle. Moreover, different interventions (hostels, schools, bridge courses) are required at different points of time during the year (November vs. May) and in different locations (villages vs. work sites). The main challenge of planning and logistics is to deal with mobile populations. Planning has to centre on the timing of the movement of these populations. Different migrations begin at different points of time and are for varying durations. The sugarcane, brick and salt migrations begin around October-November and end between April and June. Thus hostels in villages need to be in place before the families start to leave. Similarly, site schools need to be ready by the time they arrive at work sites, and bridge courses when they are back from migration. Delay at any stage will throw the process out of gear. There has to be a detailed preparatory process prior to each intervention, which includes recruiting and training of staff, identifying space for a school/hostel, surveying migrant families, mobilizing parents and communities, and – in case of work site interventions – contacting employers, and so on. This also involves managing work in different locations (i.e. sending and receiving areas) and if two agencies are working collaboratively, then coordination is also necessary.

5.9.1 Dealing with Unpredictability

Unpredictability of all sorts is inherent in seasonal migration, and has to be factored into the planning process. This can manifest in many forms: Firstly, this includes fluctuations in the number of families that migrate each year from a village (or an area) – the initial estimates will invariably differ from how many actually migrate. This has implications in terms of the planned capacities for hostels and work site schools. Secondly, there will be variation in the length of the migration season from year to year. If the season is shortened, a work site school which is planned to operate for six months may only be needed for four months. This will also require that exams be shifted from work site schools to village schools. If the season is extended, hostels in villages may have to remain open longer, and plans for bridge courses may have to be adjusted. The challenge on the one hand is to continuously refine the estimates, basing them on several sources of data (community, mukadams, employers, rainfall, crop productivity, related government decisions, market trends, etc), and on the other to have flexible plans and alternate courses of action in place in order to accommodate sudden, unforeseen changes.

5.9.2 Engaging with Communities on the Move

Working with mobile communities can be very different in comparison to working with settled communities. In addition to their mobility, in most sectors the size of labour force is too small at a given work site for large-scale interventions. Perhaps most significantly, the conditions at work sites are highly controlled, with families under strict surveillance by contractors and employers. Efforts by outside agencies to interact with them are often

not positively received by employers, because they are likely to increase the possibility of community mobilization at work sites. Some efforts have, however, been made, such as the formation of settlement education committees at sugarcane sites. These have helped communities to take a greater interest in their children's schooling. As of now, however, this kind of initiative is limited to sugarcane migration sites.

The time that migrant communities spend in the villages is often short, and it goes into putting back their homes together, attending to their many neglected household responsibilities and struggling to make ends meet. Before long they are preparing to leave again. The existing differences between migrant and more affluent communities also increase each year. Their participation in social and governance forums remains minimal because of the very nature of their livelihood pursuits, and even their interaction with members of their own communities (i.e. those who do not migrate) decreases. Thus mobilization of migrant communities is a serious challenge, and the usual methods are unlikely to work. These processes have to be seen with fresh eyes and need imaginative approaches. It is clear that unless their marginalization is addressed, the circumstances of migrant communities are likely to worsen.

5.9.3 Building NGO Capacity

As previously stated, the few NGOs that exist in migration-prone areas tend to work on livelihoods issues, with few addressing migration directly. Even fewer of these focus on education. Thus capacity building of NGOs on these issues is another challenging area. Some of the NGOs mentioned above were once new to these issues, but have since built their capacity in terms of both migration and education. They now have extensive ground-level understandings of the dynamics of migration in their respective areas, as well as of education issues, the school system and SSA. They are now also supporting other NGOs in the area on these issues. Their work is, however, also still restricted to issues of access, and the next task will be to address issues of quality in schools.

5.9.4 Enlarging the Research and Information Base

Research and documentation ought to be made an essential part of all work on distress seasonal migration, as there is need to develop much greater understanding with respect to this phenomenon. The detailed baselines prepared by some NGOs have been useful in building a picture of the issue. As coverage expands, data is becoming available over wider areas, and the extrapolation of this data will be helpful in arriving at estimates of migration over larger areas. These NGOs are also undertaking useful studies on different aspects of migration to arrive at a more wide ranging understanding of specific sectors and geographies.

6. Policy Aspects

It is imperative that the issue of distress seasonal migration be recognized and given due attention by planners and policy makers. This needs to encompass not only the education department, but also other related departments like labour, health and rural development, in order to develop a holistic plan that addresses the specific circumstances of seasonal migrants.

To work towards UEE, children of seasonal migrants also need to be taken up as a special focus group by the government, and annual work plans of each state must reflect data and time-bound plans for their coverage. Some key areas for policy intervention are set out in the following sections.

6.1 Drop-out Due to Migration

Seasonal migration causes a strange kind of drop-out, which is not captured by conventional ways of looking at the problem. It is possible for these children to be enrolled in schools and to attend for the first few months of the school session, (i.e. from July to October), but to then drop out for the remaining months to accompany their parents to migration sites. By the time they return the following April or May, the school session is already over. Thus these children have the strange predicament of having their names on school registers, but dropping out for part of the year. Over time, the learning deficit this causes gradually leads them to drop-out of school completely.

There is currently a debate about the number of out-of-school children in India, and the MHRD figures of 7.5 million in 2005-06 (down from 35 million in 2001-02) are contested (see SRI, 2005). This is because such a significant decrease implies that the last two years have registered massive increases in enrolment (12 million and 13 million, respectively). Considering that in the preceding twelve years the increase in enrolment has been only around 1 to 2 million per year, an increase in the range of 20 million over the last two years warrants careful examination (see Govinda and Biswal, 2004). In any case, the estimated number of children out-of-school due to seasonal migration alone is about 6 million. This poses a challenge for both survey design and method. In the context of migrant children, two questions need to be asked:

- Have state surveys ensured the coverage of families that migrate seasonally?
- How should the term 'out-of-school' be defined in the context of migrant children, many of whom are enrolled but remain out of school for the migration period every year?

6.2 Assessing Seasonal Migration in Each State

It is important to understand that seasonal migration, even in high migration regions, is not likely to be uniformly spread out, but rather occurs in pockets and belts. Therefore, from an intervention perspective, it is essential to identify and demarcate the specific areas effected (portions of states, districts or blocks) through mapping. In other words, to

effectively address seasonal migration, there is a need to assess its scale and spread in each region and also to understand its types and patterns. Broadly this would entail looking at:

- *Geographies*: Sending areas, i.e. agriculturally distressed districts and blocks which send out labour need to be identified. Similarly, receiving areas, where work sites are located need to be mapped. Since migration defies artificial boundaries, specific migration prone pockets or belts need to be marked out.
- *Sectors*: The different sectors attracting family, and especially child labour, need to be ascertained. For each sector, the key work site areas need to be demarcated.
- *Migration flows*: Labour flows may be intra-block, inter-block, inter-district and inter-state. Often a given area may both send and receive labour. Migration flows such as these need to be accurately mapped.
- *Magnitude of migration*: Work site surveys during migration months and village surveys during non-migration months will help to assess the magnitude of adult and child migration.

Data on these parameters will help generate a picture of migration in each state, which can then serve as a base for planning and policy change.

6.3 Joint Planning between Districts and States

As migration often results in children moving between districts, the focus of educational planning, like all other planning, needs a fresh look, and changes need to be made to the current tendency to treat districts as fixed entities. Once migrant children leave their home district they become external to it, and they are also often not counted in the district where they work. The government needs to respond to this, by having a system of joint planning between sending and receiving districts. The issue is even more complicated when labour circulates among various districts, when the same district sends as well as receives labour, or when migration takes place between states. Mechanisms to address all such scenarios need to be evolved.

6.4 Making the School System Responsible

Government schools have so far failed to respond to drop-out which results from seasonal migration. This neglect is visible at cluster, block, district and higher levels. For this scenario to change, schools and the system need to take responsibility for migrant children's education in terms of access, retention, learning and completion of the elementary cycle. Some systemic issues that need to be revisited in this regard are:

1. Each receiving district should take responsibility for the education of all in-migrating children for the duration that they are there, and proactively ensure that they have access to a school as soon as they arrive.
2. The transition between site schools and village schools should be made smooth for children through proper coordination between receiving and sending districts. Rules and procedures related to readmission, attendance, examination and promotion need to be modified towards this end.

3. Schools need to track the movement and progress of migrant children.
4. Additional learning support needs to be provided for migrant children both at work sites and in villages when they return from migration.
5. Local administrations need to track migrant children and monitor their coverage, retention and learning.

The long term strategy, however, must be to prevent migration of children by establishing seasonal hostels in villages. This would ensure their participation in mainstream schools and their completion of the school cycle.

6.5 Provisions and Fund Transfer Issues

The EGS and AIE scheme for out-of-school children under SSA is fairly proactive, and takes note of migrant children as a category. It also encourages states to accept the support of NGOs in reaching difficult categories of children. An important element of the scheme is making financial provisions on a per child basis (instead of the former system of funding on a per school basis), thus reflecting a commitment to every child. Yet its implementation is falling short of expectations. Many states show reluctance to engage with NGOs and to part with government funds. Also they continue to look at fund disbursement in the earlier mode of 'line items', instead of looking at comprehensive 'per child' costs. The problem is even further compounded at district levels, and the disconnect between the central government, state and district machineries is a barrier for NGO support and for the proper implementation of government schemes and programs.

While the government's funding provision for various types of alternate schooling facilities are not unreasonable (Rs 3000/- per child per annum for non residential and Rs 6800/ - per child per annum for residential programs), the author's field experience suggests that there is a case for revision of these limits. The NGOs covered in this field study are running their interventions in areas with harsh natural conditions or very low levels of development. Many basic needs of these hostels and schools (e.g. temporary structures for *sakharshalas*, tankers for drinking water in Kutchh, lighting at night in hostels in Nuapada and Bolangir where villages are not electrified, etc.) cannot be met at the present levels of government provision, and so instead are being externally funded. It would be much more sustainable, however, for the state to increase its own provision.

6.6 Conclusion

The focus on seasonal migration in recent years, through the work of NGOs and their continuing advocacy with the government, has yielded results in the form of a proposed amendment to the government's SSA policy framework in July 2007. Through this amendment, the central government has made mapping of migration-prone geographies, and coverage of this neglected category of children a mandate for all states. The mobility factor of these families has also been recognized, and it is now a requirement for administrations in both sending and receiving areas to work together to ensure schooling of migrant children.

Several state governments have stepped up their efforts to address the needs of migrant children, and many have sought the help of NGOs with experience in the area. A growing number of NGOs are also coming forward to engage with this issue, but the road is a long one. Concerted and multi dimensional efforts – by NGOs, academics, media, child rights activists, and government – need to be made over an extended period of time before significant progress can be made.

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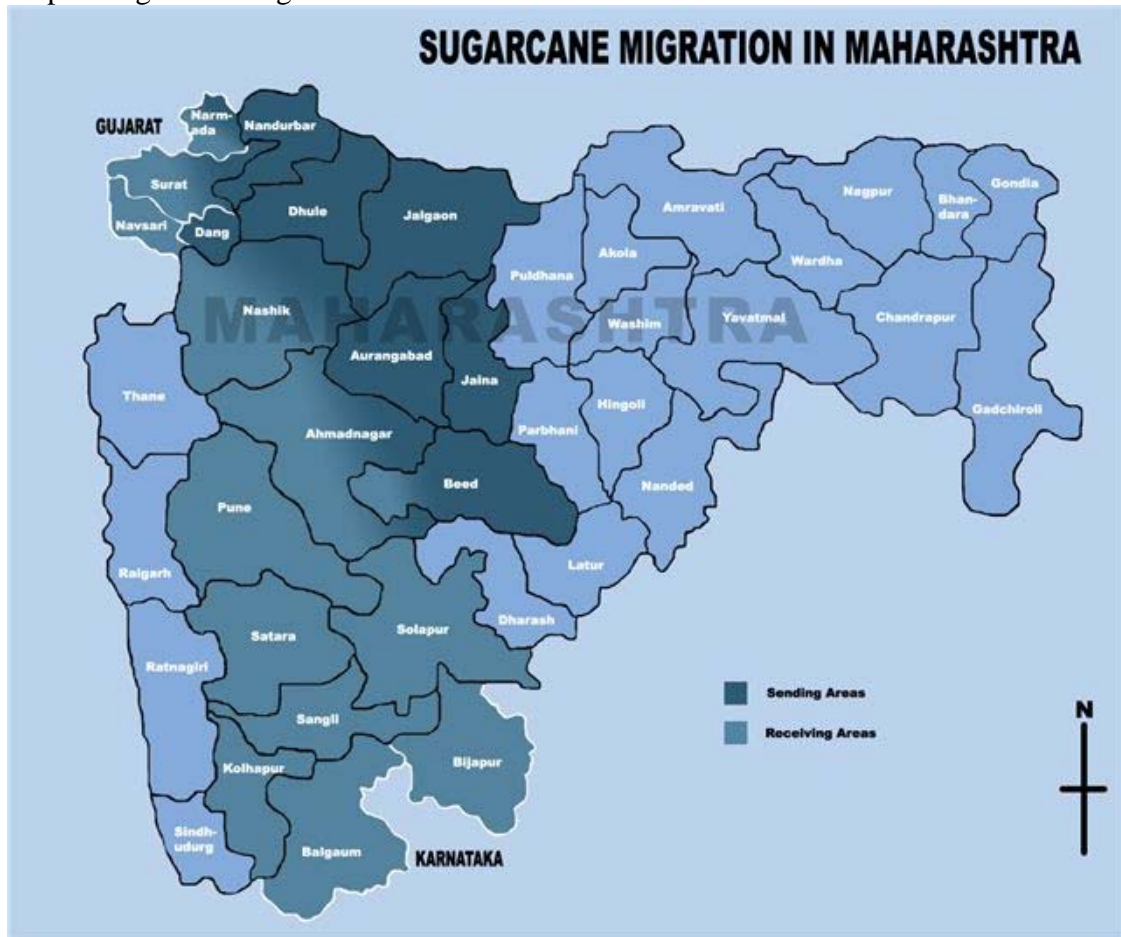
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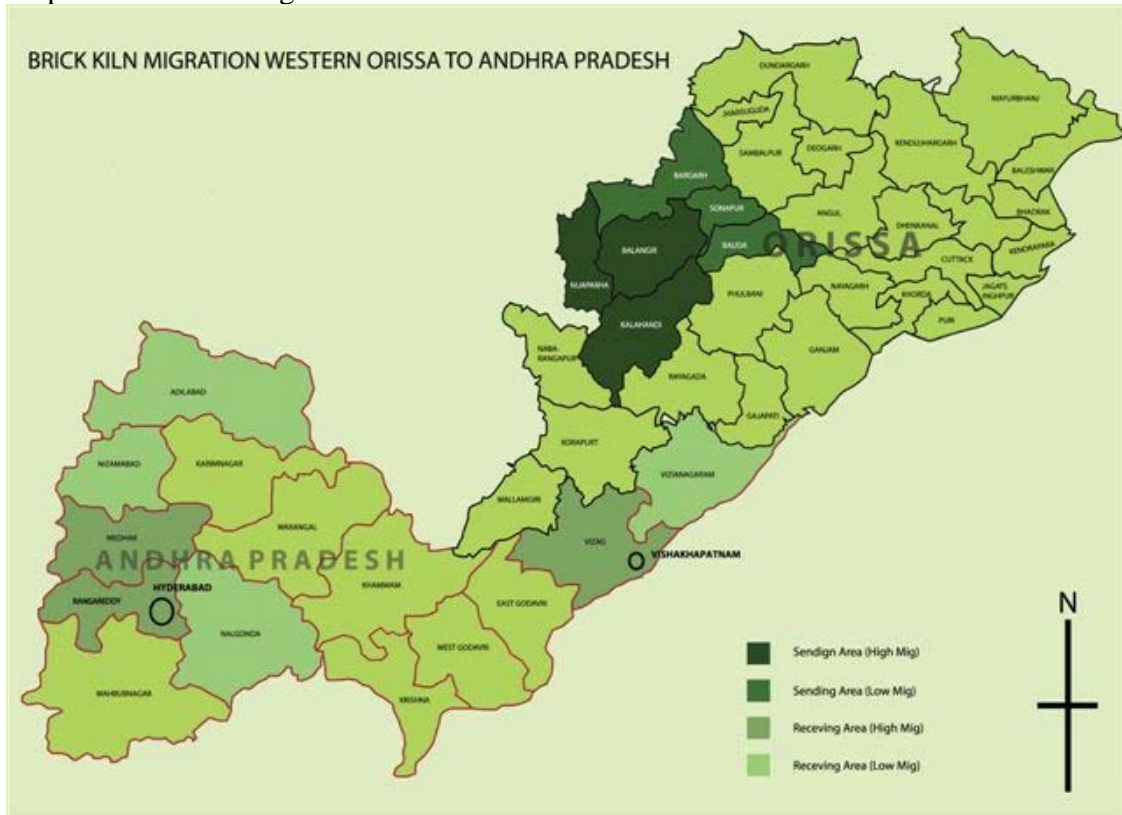
Annex 1 Migration Patterns in Key Areas and Sectors

Map 1: Sugarcane Migration in Maharashtra



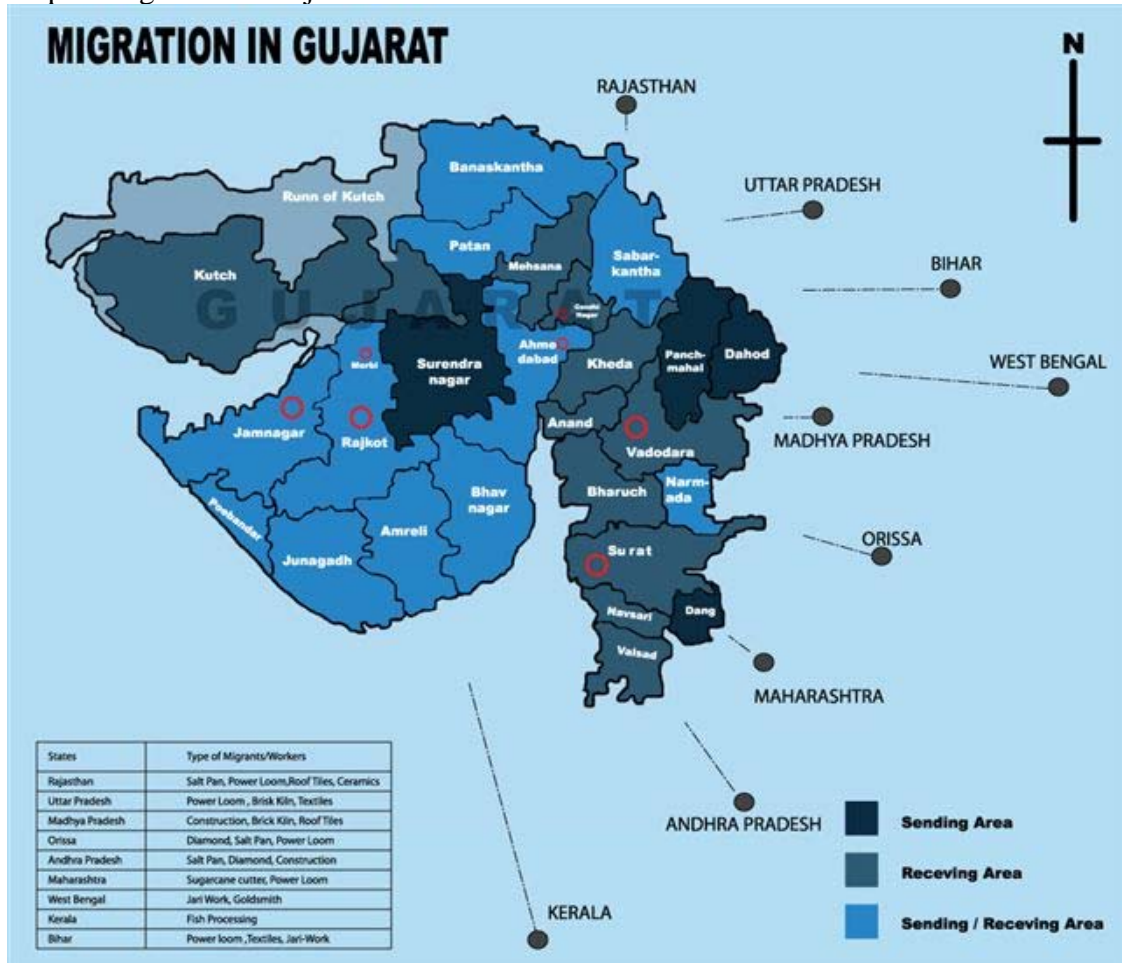
Source: Smita (2007)

Map 2: Brick Kiln Migration of Western Orissa to Andhra Pradesh



Source: Smita (2007)

Map 3: Migration in Gujarat



Source: Smita (2007)



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Report Summary:

Seasonal migration for work by poor rural families is a phenomenon that is escalating as the agrarian crisis mounts. Millions of families that migrate are compelled to take their children along, leaving school and a normal childhood behind. They spend several months every year at work sites such as brick kilns, salt pans, plantations and stone quarries, labouring under extremely difficult conditions. Children are put to work from young ages. It is estimated that the number of such children below the age of 14 years is 9 million.

This paper attempts to provide an overview of distress seasonal migration across a range of migration sectors and geographies. It touches on the nature and pattern of seasonal migration, the differing contexts and the working conditions of migrant families and children. It further documents the efforts made by the government and various agencies towards the schooling of these children, and possible emerging models to ensure the continuity of their schooling despite their constant, unpredictable mobility. Finally, it delineates the policy changes required to institutionalize these positive efforts and ensure universal coverage for migrant children.

Author Notes:

Smita has worked in the field of elementary education for two decades. Most of her work has focused on improving the conditions of schooling for the rural poor. Her work is highly field based, and her research is integrally linked with action. Her current research interests are how to achieve quality in a sustainable way on scale. She has been part of Lok Jumbish Project, Rajasthan, and the District Primary Education Project (DPEP), among others. Currently she is with American India Foundation, New Delhi.

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