

RAPID ASSESSMENT OF UNORGANISED, INFORMAL AND MIGRANT WORKERS: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

About the Rapid Assessment

This assessment is a joint effort by the Centre for Labour Research and Action (CLRA), Habitat Forum (Inhaf) and Mashal with the Department of Sociology at Savitribai Phule Pune University.

In response to the current crisis under Covid-19, relief work was begun by CLRA, Inhaf and Mashal directed towards those (including migrant labour, informal & unorganised sector and slum dwellers) in distress or stranded in parts of Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra. With a rising chorus across the country to open State borders and stories of different struggles reaching the organisations, a team was assembled to undertake a rapid survey to assess the needs of those at their places of work and assistance needed for those who wish to return to their villages.

Our summary presented here draws on data we were able to collate from 592 respondents covering migrant, informal and unorganised workers in Gujarat-Rajasthan and Maharashtra. The interviews were carried out between 23rd April and 1st May 2020.

We have used the data at hand to make quick observations on trends and based on this, some key recommendations. A detailed data analysis may find other nuances that this rapid assessment may have missed and slight variation in data, but should not impact overall findings.

Method:

- A sample of unorganised, informal and migrant labour workers was drawn from partners involved in this assessment and other local organisations.
- Questions were focused on employment, Covid-19 awareness & support and assessing current need and decisions needed to support either staying back or facilitating return to their villages.
- Interviews were conducted individually over the phone by oriented staff members and entered directly into a Google form.

Limitations:

- Rajasthan data is a very small sample and covers only brick kiln workers but are presented here as part our findings.
- Several key questions were multiple choice answers but we had not asked respondents to rank their choices so we will not be able to determine priority. Therefore when analysing multiple choice answers, where respondents have selected many options: we have given both the first selected choice and also considered the frequency with which a particular choice occurs whether selected as first, second or third when answering.
- Many labourers were hard on cash and supplies and did not respond.
- A number of migrants were not reachable over the phone due to discharged phones likely due to the inability of workers to recharge talk time at the moment.
- We do not as yet have a perspective of the challenge from women and children particularly in Gujarat-Rajasthan as the interviewees were primarily men.

Coverage and Migrant Profile

Respondents: 592 unorganised and migrant labour across the three States with details as provided further.

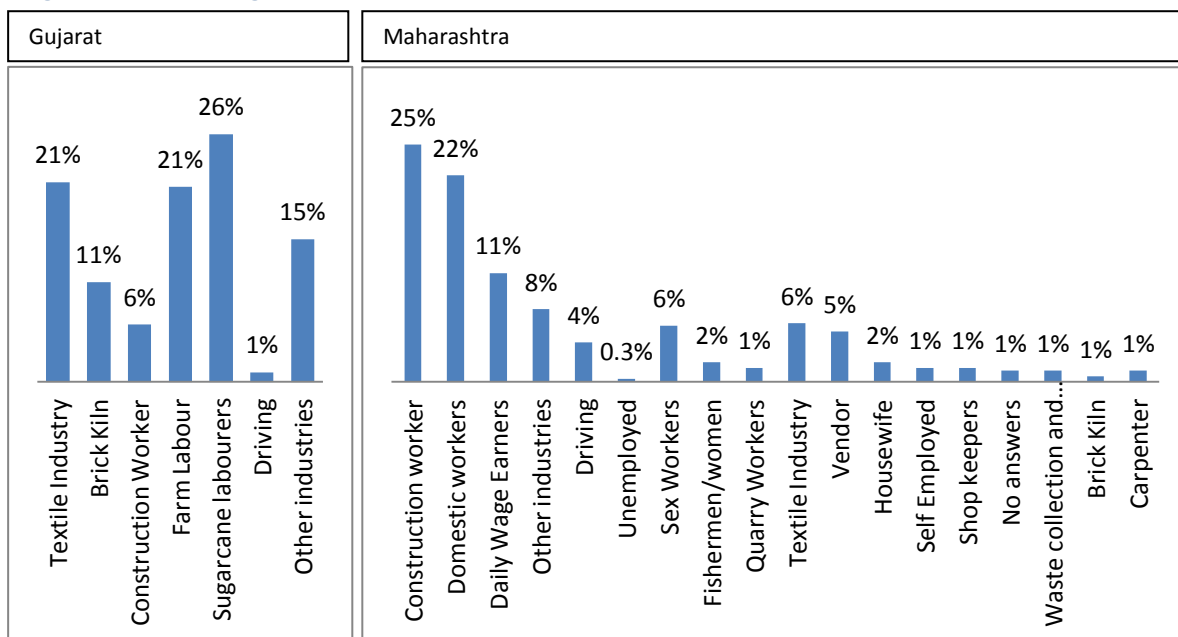
States: Maharashtra (341 workers), Gujarat (200 workers), Rajasthan (51 workers)

Gender:

Maharashtra 61% (Male), 39% (Female)

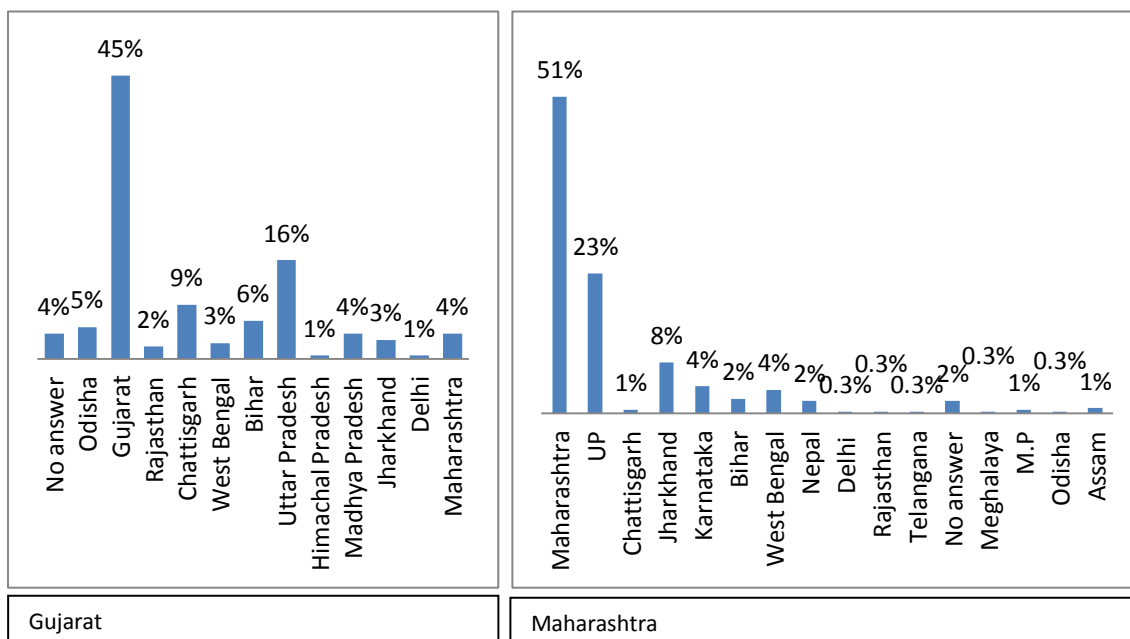
Gujarat-Rajasthan 97% (Male), 3% (Female)

Migrant worker categories:



State of Origin:

45% of workers in Gujarat and 51% of workers in Maharashtra belong to the respective State itself. The rest belong to other States as given in the chart below.



Key Findings

These findings are based on a quick analysis of data received from the rapid assessment in Maharashtra and Gujarat-Rajasthan. Only selected data tables are included as reference.

Most have Aadhar card but few have Bank accounts or Ration cards

- **In Maharashtra, 60% of workers have a bank account compared to 54% in Gujarat.**
- **An overwhelming majority in two States have an Aadhar card but lack Ration cards, with the exception of Rajasthan's brick kiln workers.** In Maharashtra only 58% have a ration card but 95% have Aadhar card. In Gujarat-Rajasthan, around 97% have an Aadhar card but ration card data varies: 57% Labourers in Gujarat have a ration card compared to 84% in Rajasthan.

Employment & Wages are uncertain

- In Gujarat, 44% of respondents were paid wages for work done before the lockdown and 47% said they would receive wages later. **An overwhelming 92% said they are not being paid during the lockdown. We have attempted to understand this by sector since some of the labour are paid at the end of the season.**

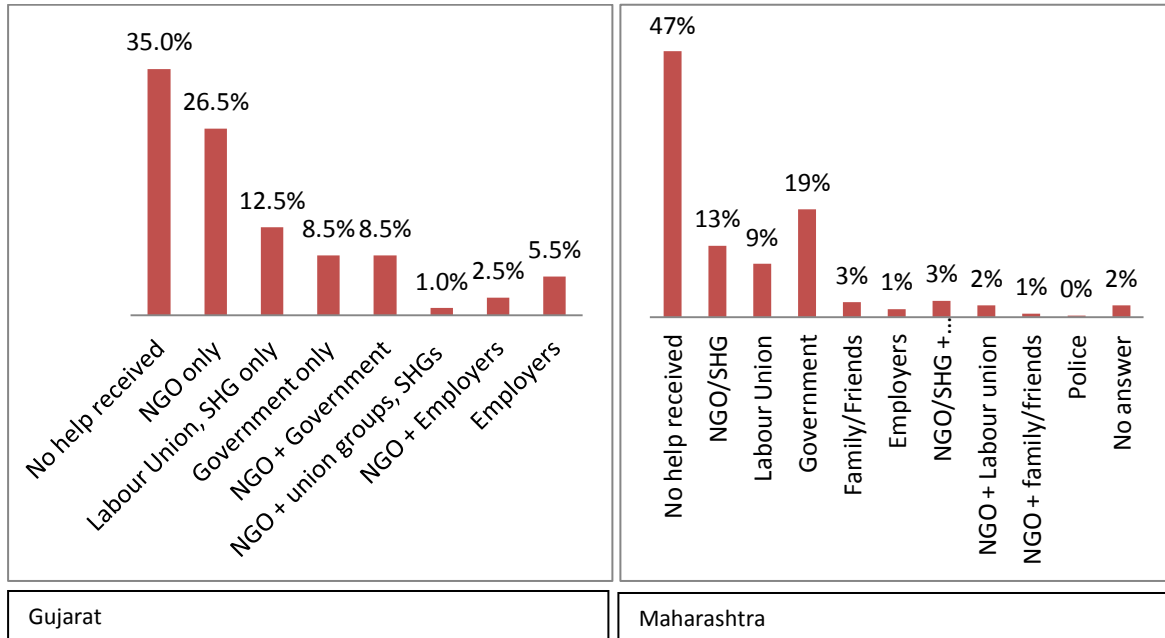
Brick Kiln Workers 71% workers said they would be paid later and almost none have received payment during the lockdown. There are also complaints that they are still being made to work and the attitude of the employer has worsened.	Textile Workers Around 63% say they have been paid for work done prior but not paid during the lockdown. About half say that they half assurance that their jobs will be retained post-lockdown.	Farm Labour 71% say they have been paid for work done before, but around 88% have not been paid during the lockdown. There seems to be however assurance of work later.	Sugarcane Cutters 92% workers said they would be paid later and none have received payment during the lockdown. Most continue to work at this time and have received no help from the employer.
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- 61% of labourers in Gujarat also reported a multitude of employer-related grievances including a change in employer behaviour for the worse, lack of contact & therefore no way to ask for salary, and in some cases, being forced to continue working.
- **On the other hand, amongst the brick kiln workers in Rajasthan payment is expected later and most labourers reported being treated well by the employer and assured of their job post-lockdown.**
- In Maharashtra, 64% workers have been paid for work done prior and 59% say that they have not been paid under the current lockdown with an additional 22% stating that they are self-employed. However, 33% of those interviewed said that there was no contact with their employer and another 12% reported that employers provided no help and no job assurance post-lockdown.

Relief Assistance is primarily from NGOs and focused on Food Ration

- **Large numbers of workers have received no help and where they have, it is being channelled primarily through NGOs, labour unions/Self-Help groups and the Government.** If we calculate based on frequency with which answer occurred amongst all those interviewed, we find that in both States NGOs play a large role with Government having a marginally higher role in Maharashtra.
- **47% of workers in Maharashtra received no help, and the remaining obtained help from NGOs (19%), Labour unions (12%) and Government (22%).**
- **35% in Gujarat and all the brick kiln workers in Rajasthan have received no help.** The remaining in Gujarat received help from NGOs (39%), Labour unions (14%) and Government (17%).

- This data includes a small number of workers who stated multiple agencies had helped them.
- **52% of the workers interviewed in Gujarat and 45% in Maharashtra, received food ration as assistance and 3-4% said they received some Government money in both States. The remaining obtained some help in the form of cooked food or PPE but a vast majority said no help was being provided.**



Decision to Stay back or Return to the village

- **30% of workers in Gujarat and only 5% of those in Maharashtra have already returned to their villages.**
- **Of those still at their place of work, 68% workers in Gujarat are inter-state and 71% of this subset want to return.**
- **In Maharashtra, 49% of inter-state workers are still at the place of work and 73% of this subset want to return to their villages.**
- **Considering both inter-state and intra-state workers, 42% of those in Maharashtra and 76% in Gujarat want to return to their village.** On the other hand, all but one of the brick kiln workers in Rajasthan want to stay back.
- In Maharashtra, those who want to stay back are primarily domestic workers, construction workers, vendors and sex workers. About half of those (45%) who want to stay back own their house and 85% live with family in the city.
- **Of those who want to return, a majority in both States are inter-state migrants: 85% in Maharashtra and 64% in Gujarat.**

Needs on the Ground Vary

- **In Maharashtra and Gujarat, those who want to return require Travel arrangements and Money both (73%, 59% respectively).** A smaller number require only arrangements for Travel (19% in Maharashtra, 30% in Gujarat).
- When asked about shortages/challenges currently being faced to those in the city: In Maharashtra about 35% have said they are facing no shortages compared to 7% in Gujarat.
- **Amongst those who need help there are differences:**

In Gujarat, 40% selected Cooking fuel and 28% as Drinking water first. However, frequency of answers across multiple choices recorded reshuffles the priorities as follows: Food-Ration, Cooking Fuel, PPE, Drinking water.

There is also variation across Labour Sectors:

In Rajasthan, Brick Kiln and Sugarcane cutters are primarily asking for Drinking water, Textile workers for cooking fuel, and Farm Labour for PPE. 80% of Rajasthan brick kiln workers requested only for PPE equipment.

In Maharashtra, Cooking fuel, Drinking water, Food and Water for household work are priorities based on first answers recorded. Calculating using frequency of answers across multiple choices, Cooking fuel still remains a top requirement, followed by Food, PPE and Water for household work.

- **21-22% of those at their place of work in both States had ration left for only 0-2 days when the interview was conducted.**

In Maharashtra, around 50% of those still at their place of work, have said that they have ration for 3-10 days. In Gujarat, 42% have ration for only 3-5 days.

Recommendations

Recommendations are in two parts – one, targeting those who remain at their place of work under and two, those who seek to return.

A. THOSE WHO WANT TO STAY BACK IN THE CITY

1. Universalisation of Public Distribution System

Our assessment indicates that only a little more than half the workers in both States have a ration card and given that it is not applicable when they migrate is not at all an adequate way in which to access the PDS. On the other hand, a vast majority in both States have Aadhar cards however these are not being used to direct benefits. Mounting evidence thus continues to point towards the universalisation of the PDS to anyone who needs food grains during the crisis.

2. Direct cash relief not money transfer

Considering data that indicates half the labourers do not have bank accounts, we suggest cash relief with an appropriate mechanism of doorstep delivery.

3. Assistance must meet shifting on-ground needs

So far, support to labourers has primarily come in the form of Food packets/Ration. However, needs on the ground are now shifting to Cooking fuel, Water – for drinking and household work, and to some extent PPE. We must acknowledge also the particular needs of different labour groups as we found in Gujarat (Refer key findings).

4. Leverage NGO networks

Most help being provided is centred around NGOs and SHGs, and to some extent from labour groups. Government role has varied as per State – much more in Maharashtra and lesser so in Gujarat. As per our findings and considering that many labourers have non-working phones at the moment – States can leverage and support the vast networks of on-ground NGOs/Labour unions/SHGs to identify and help transport distressed workers who want to return and provide

appropriate relief to those who intend to stay. Our suggestion is to also set up helplines to supplement assistance and awareness.

5. Protect Worker Rights

MHA order, 29th March for employers to pay full wages may be supplemented to ensure employers who cannot are able to atleast provide basic essentials in lieu of wages and ensure that worker rights are protected.

B. THOSE WHO WANT TO GO BACK TO THE VILLAGE

1. Provide Free Train Travel

All travel related to their returning home needs to be made free—the cost being borne by the national government. This should include last-mile connectivity and long-distance transportation: bus journey and/or train.

Many important steps have been taken by the government already. These include (a) permission to travel, (b) pressing trains into service for the bulk transfer of the passengers (more trains and higher frequency needed), (c) faster journey and thereby reducing travel time and exposure to risk, (d) better convenience, especially for the long distance travellers, and (e) running trains and buses at nearly half the capacity to avoid crowding and facilitate social distancing.

2. Journey Planning

In the given circumstances, with total lockdown in place and no income, savings and money, helping them start journey safe, travel safe and reach the destination safe is the second part. This includes: (a) careful planning, deft coordination and efficient execution of individual journey to avoid unruly crowds and disorderly rush, (b) screening of passengers prior to commencement of journey, (c) arrangements, instructions and supervision of journey with social distancing and hygienic behaviour on the way, (d) arrangement for food, water, soap, etc. during journey, (e) safety check and screening at the entrance to the state/village/destination, (f) quarantine/seclusion at home or public health facility depending on the need and the case, and (g) availability of food, ration, water, medicine at destination.

3. Cash Relief

Provide direct cash relief to all migrant workers returning home in lieu of wages lost.

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Department of Sociology, S.P.U: Dr. Shruti Tambe

Independent: Riddhi Bora

Phone Enumerators:

Gujarat:

Jitu Baraiya , Jayesh Gamit, Denis Macwan, Mina Jhadav, Dinesh Parmar, Gova Rathod, Bhupat Solanki, Ramesh Srivastav, Dayal Thakor.

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Rajasthan: Int Bhatta Majdoor Union-Bhilwara.

Maharashtra: Paheli, Santulan, Janeev, Pune Shahar Molkareen Sanghatana, Molkareen Panchayat, Thane Shahar Koliwada Samvardhan Samiti, Koliwada Gaonthan Seva Samiti, Chendani Koliwada Samvardhan Samiti.

Annexure with Selected Data Tables

1. Type of Documentation		
	Maharashtra (out of 341 surveys)	Gujarat (out of 200 responses)
Bank Accounts	60%	54%
Aadhar	95%	97%
Ration Card	58%	57%
Jan Dhan	9%	12%

2. Has your employer paid wages for work done before the lockdown?		
	Maharashtra (out of 341 surveys)	Gujarat (out of 200 responses)
Yes	64%	44%
No, but will get paid later	11%	47%
No, and will not be paid later	15%	9%
N.A	10%	-

3. Has your employer paid wages for work done during the lockdown?		
	Maharashtra (out of 341 surveys)	Gujarat (out of 200 responses)
No	59%	92%
Yes	12%	6%
Yes-but half	7%	1%
N.A/Self-employed	22%	3%

4. Type of Help received during lockdown (based on first and second selection of responses)				
	Maharashtra (out of 341 surveys)		Gujarat (out of 200 responses)	
	Selection 1	Selection 2	Selection 1	Selection 2
No help received/Not adequate	46%	46%	38%	38%
Food ration	42%	3%	49%	3%
Cooked Food	7%	8%	9%	2%
Monetary Assistance through government	4%	-	3%	-

Ration through ration card	-	-	1%	-
Employer Arrangements	-	-	0.5%	-
PPE	-	3%	-	2%
Money	1%	-	-	-
No second option/N.A	1%	41%	-	56%

5. Where are you located now?

	Maharashtra (out of 341 surveys)	Gujarat (out of 200 responses)
Reached Village	5%	30%
In Transit	0.3%	1%
At place of work	89%	70%
No answer	6%	-

6. Of those still at place of work, how many are Inter-state and Intra-state?

	Maharashtra (out of 303 surveys)	Gujarat (out of 139 responses)
Inter-State	49%	68%
Intra-State	49%	27%
N.A	2%	4%

7. Of those who are Inter-state and still at their place of work, how many want to go to their village?

	Maharashtra (out of 149 surveys)	Gujarat (out of 95 responses)
Want to go to their village	73%	71%
Want to stay at place of work	28%	29%
N.A	-	-

8. Of the total (inter and intra) still at place of work, how many want to go back to their village?

	Maharashtra (out of 303)	Gujarat (out of 139)
Want to go back	42%	76%
Want to stay	58%	24%

9. Of those who want to go back, how many are Inter-State and Intra-State?

	Maharashtra (out of 128)	Gujarat (out of 105)
Inter-State	85%	64%
Intra-State	13%	31%
Origin State Unknown	2%	5%

10. Assistance needed to go back

	Maharashtra (out of 128)	Gujarat (out of 105)
Travel arrangements only	19%	30%
Travel + Money	73%	59%
Travel + Food	-	5%
Travel + Money + Food	-	6%
Money only	1%	-
No answer	7%	1%

11. What shortages/challenges are you facing now?						
(of those still at place of work)	Maharashtra (out of 303)			Gujarat (out of 139)		
	Selection 1	Selection 2	Selection 3	Selection 1	Selection 2	Selection 3
None	35%	35%	35%	7%	7%	7%
Food, Chai-Nashta	10%	6%	4%	7%	50%	4%
Cooking Fuel	26%	10%	2%	40%	9%	6%
Water for HH work	10%	5%	-	6%	7%	-
Bathing and Toilet	1%	5%	3%	1%	6%	11%
Drinking Water	11%	-	-	28%	-	-
PPE	7%	7%	7%	11%	7%	27%
Cash	-	0.3%	1%			
N.A	1%	1%	1%	-	-	-
No second/third choice selected	-	32%	49%	-	14%	45%

12. How many days ration do you have left?		
(of those still at place of work)	Maharashtra (out of 303)	Gujarat (out of 139)
None	7%	1%
1-2 days	15%	20%
3-5 days	24%	42%
6-10 days	25%	26%
12-15 days	11%	4%
15+ days	14%	2%
We have enough	1%	5%
No appropriate answer	2%	-