

# Migration, Trafficking and Sites of Work: Rights and Vulnerabilities

A Pilot Study: Report of  
Initial Findings in  
Rajasthan and Gujarat

Jagori  
C-54 Top Floor South Extn II,  
New Delhi,  
Email: [jagori@del3.vsnl.net.in](mailto:jagori@del3.vsnl.net.in)

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# Introduction

Jagori has been working on the issues of trafficking, migration and rights of sex workers for over six years. In our work so far, we have consistently come across serious problems in the availability and reliability of data on the above issues, which render intervention either impossible or ineffective, and uninformed. In an effort to begin addressing this gap, Jagori, with the support of UNIFEM, initiated an action-research project on *Migration, Trafficking and Sites of Work: Rights and Vulnerabilities* to be carried out over the next two years (2002-2003).

A preliminary pilot study was conducted over the last five months in the selected districts of Rajasthan and Gujarat. The pilot study involved **State-level consultations**, a series of **informal meetings** in the states with NGOs and other stakeholders, and **field visits** to areas of concern, in order to understand the dominant trends and key issues and share the concerns of the project with NGOs working in the region. (*See Appendix 1 for details*)

The meetings and field visits were crucial in understanding how to best go about the study in a way that is insightful, accurate and useful to all of us. It was critical that we identify existing gaps in data, understand the issues of concern and exchange ideas and strategies that would optimize the scope and utility of the study with the active involvement of groups and experts working in the area. Through this process, **partner groups** and **resource persons** for the project were also identified.

In addition, an extensive **survey of literature** was undertaken to gauge the gaps and missing links in migration research, particularly with reference to women and migration, to enhance our own understanding of the issues and to contextualize the study in existing debates. A working bibliography has been developed to this effect.

Following this, to share our findings of the pilot study and to invite inputs from research scholars and experts in the field in evolving a concrete and relevant research design, Jagori held a **Research Methodology Workshop** in Delhi. The workshop provided keen insights into various issues related to migration, trafficking, feminist research methodology, and possible interventions through the project, and helped the Jagori team fine-tune and critically reflect on its own research objectives and methods. On the basis of the findings and these inputs, the team held a series of reflective and strategic discussions and the main **research design** for the project has been developed.

Our initial consultations and forays into the field were conducted within the conceptual framework of trafficking. However, increasingly we found that such a framework was too limiting for us to understand, analyze and engage fully with all the emerging issues. The NGOs and field sites visited threw open entirely new areas and ideas to explore, which hinted at possible intersections with the discourse on trafficking. Discussions with them as well as within our team helped us reflect on the debates surrounding the trafficking discourse.

Over the pilot study we felt that it was critical as a first step to focus on movement *per se*, that is, migration in itself, and explore its causes and implications for women in particular. Only through such a ‘lens’ would we be able to locate the elements of trafficking in the process – such as coercion, deceit, abuse and slavery-like practices. Using this approach enabled a more acute awareness of the needs for women to move in search of work, and the concomitant vulnerabilities inherent in the process of their movement. In the context of human rights, while the notion of illegal migration is redundant in the case of internal migration, the issue of violations of rights of migrant workers is increasingly relevant. The concept of rights as citizens needs to be invoked and used as a tool to address these violations. This also needs to be built into the trafficking discourse, in the context of trafficking within borders.

As the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women Radhika Coomaraswamy’s notes in her Report of her Mission to Bangladesh, Nepal and India: “Trafficking of girls and women often follow the same route as legitimate migration...’*traffickers fish in the stream of migration*’...”. The focus of inquiry and the report itself has been on unraveling and understanding these very streams of migration.

Following the pilot study, we are further convinced of the relevance of the project, the gaps in migration research it has the potential to fill and the links it builds, and the need to address the issues the project raises. The pilot study has been a learning experience for the Jagori team. We thank UNIFEM for enabling the pilot study and our colleagues and friends working in the two states, and the communities we had the opportunity to interact with for sharing their work and their lives with us.

# Migration, Trafficking and Sites of Work: Rights and Vulnerabilities

## *Preliminary findings from Rajasthan and Gujarat*

### **Introduction**

Migration has been a feature of all societies historically. There have been different forms of migration – nomadic migration, migration for labour, migration due to war, displacement, etc. Perhaps today it is the changing context of the world and the extent and scale of migration which makes it a key feature of the times. Globalization has today precipitated the process due to increased opportunities at one level and disruption of livelihoods and food security on the other. The reality is that people today, women in particular, are moving in search of survival, fulfillment, in search of ways to create new identities and a better life for themselves and their families.

In the context of migration and work how do we study the dynamics and specific ways in which women move. How secure is this movement – physically, mentally and structurally? How vulnerable are they to exploitation? How is their ‘labour’ used? We need to examine their access to resources and structural position within the family and community, both at the point of origin and at the places to which they migrate. This is particularly significant when we want to understand trafficking. It is inequalities, discrimination and violence within the home, during the journey or movement and at the sites of work that make women vulnerable to being coerced, deceived and violated.

The dimensions and magnitude of violence and deception due to trafficking have been highlighted in development discourses over the past 20 years. It has been increasingly recognised that women face several kinds of vulnerabilities during the process of movement. In some cases especially of cross border movements, trafficking takes place and this is now seen as a human rights violation which needs to be addressed. In order to tackle the issue of trafficking we need to make clear conceptual distinctions of the different elements involved. Neither should voluntary migration be collapsed into trafficking, nor should prostitution be seen as the only site where trafficking and violence take place.

It is also important to challenge the perception that whenever women have moved out alone in the world they have been forced into the sex industry. While it is true that this is valid in many situations, it is neither correct nor useful to assume this will always be the case. It is important to look at women’s rights and vulnerabilities within the different sites of work. It is also valuable to examine women’s perceptions of themselves and changes due to movement, migration and new forms of work. Migration indeed has been an extension of women’s everyday lives in many regions. Today with the feminization of labour and poverty, an additional dimension is the segregation of labour markets, within which women and men are separated in terms of the nature of work they do and the sites of work.

Migration life stories should also explore notions of loneliness, transformation in self and others in the event of movement and change, and other lived realities of women’s lives and

their circumstances. The notion of 'home' is also important. Patterns of violence and exploitation within the family also force women to move out of the home and migrate in search of work. Besides seasonal migration and crisis situation migration, what are the other situations of migration? What happens when the crisis is over? How do we address women's rights in these different contexts.

How do people, particularly women, build communities or support structures in these new sites? We must also look at women's aspirations and dreams? Women have been projected as 'victims' for far too long; but as with all oppressed people, we know that whenever there has been oppression there has always been resistance, in some way or the other. We need to understand and validate these and simultaneously create strategies for identifying vulnerabilities and protecting rights.

### ***Migration in Rajasthan: Some Conceptual Considerations***

We can broadly classify two trends of movement. One is when people move and change their occupation. The other is when their mode of subsistence involves mobility. That is, there is movement without a change in occupation, such as in case of pastoral communities.

In Rajasthan migration is a way of life, it is not an aberration. People from different castes in Rajasthan move for different reasons with different results. Social structure mediates all access to resources. The caste composition is distinct and has shown great tenacity in surviving the effects of modernization and urbanization. Mechanisms of caste accommodations and networks and local understandings have also been built over generations. As a result migration often occurs in clusters or networks, rather than individually. Structural conditions also may marginalize entire communities as a result of which they are forced to move. Even within the city, in resettlement colonies one finds this trend; Kalakar Colony in Jaipur is an example of this, composed primarily of (migrant) communities with a rich performing arts tradition. Another example is Bangalore, where one finds a huge community of traders from Rajasthan, so much so that 8,000 copies of the daily newspaper Rajasthan Patrika are published from there.

Pastoral groups also usually migrate in huge groups, of hundreds or thousands, with cattle and all belongings. The ecosystem in Rajasthan is intricately linked to migration patterns. The pastoral region to the West of the Aravalli Range is a totally separate ecosystem from the rest of Rajasthan, in fact Western Rajasthan is actually ecologically a part of West Asia. Pastoral migration is an essential part of the ecosystem of Rajasthan.

It is also essential to study the state policies with regard to migration to understand this better. The role of the State in the context of migration has been ambiguous. While on one hand it plays an enabling role, helping the international flow of labour and creating labour markets, at the same time it has also tended to focus on settling people (sedenterization) and in efforts to reinforce ethnicity and 'Statehood'. The major part of state policy has looked at migration as a problem and has worked towards sedentarisation of people, which has created its own set of social and economic problems.

Rajasthan exhibits tremendous regional variation, in terms of ecology, agrarian structure, caste, class and ethnicity. Southern Rajasthan has a history of bonded labour and exploitation

within the tribal institutional framework. In Shekhawati, for instance, the Jajmani system has been very popular, as a result of which people migrated in-groups. Thus along with the Marwari patron, the castes which provided services to them would move also – such as the barber, cooks and so on. Border districts such as Dhaulpur and Sawai Madhopur show a particular type of migration, in which case, the construction labour sector becomes important. There is also the phenomenon of migration to Gulf countries in Churu, Jhunjhunu etc., and in areas where there is a dominant Bohra Muslim community. The occupational diversity along caste lines is also important to understand. With its rich traditions, Rajasthan has always witnessed migration of one sort or the other; in the case of performing arts groups like the Nat, Mal and Mirasi they travel from village to village as entertainers. (*See Fig 1*)

Traditional migrants, the nomadic tribes have additional problems. They do not have citizen's rights, no visibility in the Census, and villages often do not let them in and they have to occupy revenue lands. The whole issue of citizenship, housing and shelter then becomes important. What is the difference between 'displacement' and 'migration'? What is the State obligation of resettling people. This is particularly true of the Madhya Pradesh/ Rajasthan border where there has been displacement.

At the same time processes of industrialisation and opening up of markets has made an impact on peoples livelihood options. For example in the Alwar area, over the past 15 years, a large number of locally run industries have closed down due to their non-viability which has led to severe unemployment. This has meant loss of livelihoods for families and there have not been a commensurate opening up of other livelihood options for them. This has led to women entering sex work, a phenomenon which we found both in Alwar and in Ahmedabad where textile mills have been closed down in large numbers.

### ***The Drought***

The last three years of drought in Rajasthan have been devastating, with over 3.3 crores of the population having been affected. Livelihoods have vanished, and many villages are suffering from acute crises - people are suffering from malnutrition, cattle have been affected, and in some places, people are eating by rotation. News came of Chittor region in January where 40 villages were so badly affected that as many as 1400 people were leaving a single village. In villages such as Fagir and Chakchakwada in Barmer only old people had been left behind; men, women and children had all moved in search of work and survival.. Even in areas around the Indira Gandhi Canal there has been acute water crisis and consequently large-scale migration. In the cities one witnesses increased begging, increased number of rickshaw pullers, women in prostitution, labour in the 'chokti's (labour markets) and swelling suburbs and slum settlements.

An additional dimension to the water crisis is the social structure in Rajasthan where caste hierarchies determine accessibility to basic resources including water. In many cases even where there is a tubewell, the practice of untouchability and caste restrictions prevent communities from accessing these sources of water. Facilities for storing water are also scarce, for instance a reservoir is able to store water only for 15 days, while water is supplied once every 20 days or so.

### ***‘Choktis’: Swelling labour markets***

‘Chokti’ is the local name given to the particular places in the city where labourers, most of whom have migrated from the rural areas, assemble in the early morning to provide their services to contractors who come looking for casual, daily-wage labour in their worksites. Where there were once 100 people in one place, there are now 250 to 300 people in the same place. Often the whole family is there to provide labour. Many of the labourers come from Bhilwara, Ajmer, Jhalawar, Kota and Tonk, near Jaipur; around 95% are Dalits.

While the number of labourers coming to the ‘choktis’ are on the rise, the work available is falling, Due to inflation middle class people are not in a position to build houses, so labourers are able to get work only around 10 to 15 days in a month. They have no income for the rest of the month. There are also different scales of wages amongst the labourers, the unskilled labourers are paid less, and women are usually paid Rs 20 or so less than men. Contractors come with work usually for construction labour, laying of telephone lines, cable lines and so on.

There are 35 such ‘choktis’ in Jaipur, 20 which are very big. The labourers live in slum settlements, where they have to pay rent of about Rs. 200-500 a month. Some of them live temporarily in the semi constructed houses they are working as labour in constructing. The CPI M-L party which has been organising workers, get around 15 to 20 cases every day on issues of non-payment and exploitation. There is a strong builder mafia which exploits these workers. It is not only a matter of payment, some workers are fighting for dignity. For fear of losing the job often, people do not even register complaints. Women are additionally vulnerable to sexual exploitation; often delaying payment is the pretext under which women are recalled by the contractors and harassed. Most women and men accept the abuse, as they see no choice. Women workers are usually in the range of 15-40 years. 99% of the women are accompanied by men. Only some single women like widows may be on their own. Of the migrant labour, around 40% settle down in slum areas while 60% go back when they are in a position to. (*See Fig 2*)

### ***New sites of work***

Carpet industries which were shut down for use of child labour have relocated to Rajasthan and have started employing women. Separate factories for women are being set up in many industries. In some cases, factories have been set up where labour is available and there has been no need for the people to migrate to find work in these factories. Many communities have also been put out of work by changing economic policies and conditions. The Regar community for instance which was a shoemaking community was affected badly when Bata and other shoe companies captured even the village economies; even villagers would no longer come to them for their shoes as cheaper (and sometimes perceived as higher status) options were now made available.

In Western Rajasthan there has also been a boom of tourism, and this could lead to increase in sex tourism and also the effect of festivals etc. like the Pushkar Mela. Western Rajasthan also sees border areas where armed forces are stationed. This should also be looked into in the context of sex work and trafficking. In the context of migration and trafficking, in recent years a new route has begun in which women are being taken from Alwar to Bombay and



then to the Gulf countries. When they return it is often with money, gold and consumer items. This has created a new class in the area.

Another area where women are finding work is at the sex centres located along the highways. In Rajasthan we found that these centres are completely run by women of certain communities such as the Nat, Bedia or Kanjars, who are castes of traditional entertainers. Some of these women also find their way to other places such as Meerut or Bombay. This is another area that could be looked at for elements of trafficking.

The tribal belt in the South West Rajasthan exhibits distinct traits from the rest of the State. Badly affected by the depletion of the forests, the tribal blocks are increasingly impoverished and are an ecologically, economically and socially vulnerable group. The central issues in the area are that of land rights, environmental degradation and resultant loss of livelihoods, health and education. There has been very little investment in the area – for example, literacy rates for women in the last Census was 2%; ignorance and lack of facilities, as well as erosion of local healing systems make health a critically neglected issue.

While seasonal migration of men for wage labour in the cities has been the norm in the last decade, the volume of migrants has increased phenomenally, and now includes women going into the cities to look for wage labour. A unique phenomenon is the seasonal migration of young tribal adolescent girls to work primarily in the cotton-picking fields in Gujarat, and also other sectors such as the tobacco industries, oil pressing mills and for cleaning out machinery. The young girls – 13 to 14 years onwards – go in groups, with a contractor from the village or with a group of young boys going to work, and are particularly vulnerable to exploitation by the contractor or the '*seth*' for whom they work, or even some of their village boys. Cases of girls being sexually exploited and 'kept' by the *Seth*, and her family's subsequent rejection and violence when she returns is common, but the Panchayat is intolerant of engaging with this issue. The silence around the issue and the pressure on the girls to continue this earning, as well as little knowledge of women's bodies and reproductive health issues make it all the more difficult to address these particular vulnerabilities.

### **'Naata'**

The phenomenon of Naata is also widespread in Rajasthan. This is the practice of 'bride price', where traditionally in some communities the father of the bride was given a certain 'price' for the services of his daughter by the groom. If the woman wished to change partners at a later stage, it was possible to negotiate for this change in 'attachment' as long as the man with whom she was to go to would pay a negotiable price to the groom and the father. In today's context this has been a cultural mode of enabling trafficking and exploitation. The links between this practice and migration and trafficking must be explored. Child marriage is also practiced extensively in Rajasthan and may have implications as well. How can we also expand the understanding and changing practice of *Naata*, - what are women's experiences, what is their understanding of the system?



**Fig 1: Traditional Nomads and Their Contemporary Patterns of Movement**

	From traditional migrating groups to:		Change of work	Traditional occupation	Present occupation	Main income	Son preference	Land Entitlement
	Men	Women						
<b>Gadiya Lohar</b>	Migrating for wage labour	Settled	Yes	Blacksmiths	Wage labour	Men	Yes	Struggling
<b>Banjara</b>	Migrating for wage labour	Settled	Yes	Selling salt and multani mitti	Wage labour	Men	Yes	Yes
<b>Mirasi</b>	Settled but migrating	Settled but migrating	Yes	Selling camels, maintaining records of <i>jajman</i> , singing on occasions	Decorators, radium painting	Both, predominantly men	Yes	Struggling
<b>Kalbelia</b>	Settled	Settled	No	Snake charmers/ dancers	Dancers	Both, predominantly women	No	Yes
<b>Nats</b>	Settled	Most migrating	Yes/ No	Entertainers	Sex workers & dancers	Women	No	Some do, others don't

**Fig 2: Migration to the Unorganized Sector- Patterns of Movement**

**Rural-Urban**

Seasonal	Wage labour in: Construction work etc.	Male
Circular	Brick kiln	Family
	Loading/unloading	Male
	Iron smouldering	Male
Permanent male	Wage labour	Family, predominantly
	Domestic labour	Female, with family usu.
	Sex work	Female
Distress	Wage labour	Family
	Domestic labour	Female

**Rural-Rural**

Seasonal & Circular	Cotton picking	Female
	Grounding spices	Female
	Tobacco	Female
	Oil pressing	Female and male
	Unclogging Machinery	Predominantly female

- 
- Women may go to nearby places to do wage labour to supplement income
  - Other sites of work in Rural Urban Migration: Begging, Rickshaw pullers etc.

## ***Migration in Gujarat : Initial Findings***

In Gujarat migration is not a new phenomena and is not just a post globalization phenomenon. The spectrum of migration stretches from seasonal migration of pastoral communities at one end to large numbers of Gujaratis migrating out of the country. Rajasthan and Gujarat share a common border and common geographical areas and there are many commonalities in trends of migration in the two states.

The migration patterns in the state can be broadly divided into four major patterns:

1. Pastoral migration
2. Migration from Tribal and Hilly Areas (Panchmahals /The Dangs)
3. Coastal Gujarat
  - a. Fisheries and Fish processing zones
  - b. Saltpan workers.
4. Migration in Central Gujarat and the industrial belt
  - a. Ahmedabad: Closure of textile industry.
  - b. Surat: The Golden corridor.
  - c. Alang: the story of ship breaking yards.

The pastoral movements in the State have been the traditional form of migration. The only difference that has come about is the migration routes of the pastoral communities. Before the independence they migrated towards the northwest to the banks of the Indus river, now they have started migrating to the south eastern part of the country to the banks of Godavari. However one major change that can be seen is that due to the depletion of forests and policies of the governments of the neighboring states, their access to grazing land is getting restricted by the day.

### ***Migration from Tribal and Hilly Areas (Panchmahals /The Dangs)***

Gujarat has 14% tribal population mainly consisting of the Bhils, Rathwas and Kolis. The tribals of the Panchmahals are not landless but own landholdings that are small. Mostly they migrate as families to other parts of Gujarat. During this time the land is left untended. In this area there have been several dam projects but the benefits of these have gone Baroda and other areas. Most of them move because working their own fields is no longer cost effective. They feel that with the amount of labour they put into their land they can earn double the money in the cities. The agriculture is labour and investment intensive and low yielding.

Every year, tribals of the hilly Dang district migrate to the plains of south Gujarat (to Surat and Valsad areas) in search of employment. Usually they are hired by the sugar factories and are paid according to the piece rate system (on the basis of the quantity of sugarcanes they cut). But this migration is seasonal and lasts for six to eight months. They return to their villages as soon as the monsoon begins to carry out the agricultural activities. The women from these tribal areas do not migrate alone but they go with their family to earn livelihood.

Since the children also move with the parents the level of education is very low even though the schools are within walking distance (1-2kms) from the villages.

Since the tribals depend largely on the forests for subsistence they are facing a number of problems because of the Forest Conservation Policy which restricts access to forest produce. As a result they are forced to look elsewhere for work. The lack of irrigation facilities is also one of the major reasons. (only 0.16 per cent of the total arable area of Dang is irrigated) and industrial activity is nil. There are 4 registered factories in the Dangs employing only 84 people according to 1991 *District Census Handbook*.) It is ironical that the so-called golden corridor that runs from Mehsana in north Gujarat to Vapi in south Gujarat, is not even 100 km away from this district. Studies in migration of tribals in Gujarat reveal a grim picture of the effects of 'survival' migration.

### ***Coastal Gujarat: Fisheries and fish processing units***

In the 1980's the fish processing zones grew and expanded in Gujarat. According to one local NGO there are around 40-50 units along the coastline starting from Veraval upto Dwarka. Gujarat boasts of 25% of the total continental shelf for fishing and 20 % of the total of the country's coastline. This is a major site of work for migrant women. Local women who were previously from fishing communities and other lower castes are employed in these units. They travel up and down the length of the coast each season. They work at the ports where the fish is downloaded from the trawlers and are involved in storing and transporting. Some women work in the processing plants. Women involved with storing and transporting live near the workplace in temporary makeshift shelters provided by the owners of the units. They have long working hours and can be called at any time of the day and night as required.

The majority of workers inside the processing units are women, many of them migrant contract workers hired from Kerala (5000 in Veraval) who specialize in shelling, peeling and grading prawns. They handled frozen prawns for hours at a stretch, working in damp and dirty halls reeking of fish. At night, they sleep in dingy hostels located above the units. A large chunk of the wages is deducted as charges for the food provided.

The hostels ensure that the factory owner has a captive workforce, which could be put on the job at any time of the night or day, whenever the fish arrive. The units have been given a special exemption from the ban on night work for women. The average worker works for 12 hours at a stretch. The majority of the workers are young girls (preferably unmarried and childless) between 16-25 years old. They generally work for 8-10 years in this trade, saving up money for dowries (specially women from Kerala) or to support impoverished families. Most women are unaware of the method of recruitment, the name of the company for which they work or the name of the contractor. They only know the sub-agent who had recruited them from their villages.

Since the units close down during the monsoons, the industry claim that it is seasonal and thus escapes the provisions of the Factories Act. It has also lobbied for relaxation of all labour legislation. Many units are run in mafia style, with security guards who do not permit free entry or exit. The workers are virtually captive.

### ***Coastal migration: Saltpan workers***

The Saltpan workers migrate in families and sometimes as a group of families from the same village or nearby villages. They travel to the various sites (Jamnagar, Bhavnagar, Kutch, amongst others) of Saltpan plants where they are employed in couples. The wages are paid to each couple (a man and a woman) and not to individuals. Majority of the workers come from the lower castes and scheduled castes. They leave for work after the festival of Diwali to the salt plants and then come back just before Holi or the monsoons when the saltpan work stops.

The work is contractual, the Mukadam or contractor comes to the villages and collects them and transports them to the work site. They live in makeshift shelters near the saltpan fields made from polythene sheets and bamboos, which are supplied by the owner of the plants. Here they live, braving the vagaries of the harsh weather. While the smaller fields employ 20-30 workers, at least 200-300 men and women work the larger fields, the companies may employ as many as 40-50 families. Most of the workers were not sure of the amount of wages paid. The wages varied from Rs. 50 to 25 per couple per day.

Working in saltpan exposes them to high levels of concentrated salt as they have to stand in the salt water when they are working. They develop sores and a lot of women complained that their hair steadily thins and falls off. Some young girls showed bald patches on their head. The main problem they face is of clean and sweet drinking water.

### ***Ahmedabad: Closure of textile industry.***

In 1982 there were 65 textile mills in Gujarat which have now dwindled to only 10. Of these most were in Ahmedabad. Nearly 50,000 workers were rendered jobless by the closure of these mills and of these 36,000 were in Ahmedabad alone. The job of a mill worker was a prestigious job and for those who were thrown out taking up petty jobs was very problematic and a matter of shame. Some started petty business and setting up small kiosks, paan shops etc. But this was not enough to sustain the family and keep up the middle class life style. The women in these families were gradually pushed out in to the work force. Since there was already a slump in the job market many drifted into the sex work. Though there are no red light areas in Ahmedabad, there is a flourishing sex trade, involving housewives, college girls and others who are brought in from West Bengal, Orissa and even from Bangladesh. There are also indications of some elements of trafficking that is occurring from West Bengal. The girls go from Ahmedabad to Surat, Bhavnagar and to Alang amongst other places.

### ***The Golden Corridor: The case of Surat***

Surat has emerged as the city of the migrant with nearly half its population comprising of migrants. Surat attracts migrant workers from all over the state as well as those from Bihar, Orissa and east Uttar Pradesh. The city is highly industrialized and known for its power looms, artificial Silk factories, diamond cutting and other industries. Nearly one lakh migrant workers work in the power loom factories. Those hailing from Orissa are preferred over others as they have expertise to work with artificial rayon and silk fibres. There are three kinds of migration to Surat - those who come to set up industry, skilled workers coming to work in the industry, and the unskilled migrant workers.

### ***Alang: The story of the ship breaking yards***

Alang the port near Bhavnagar is a unique place to study migration of men. The port which is famous for its ship breaking yards attracts the migrant workers from eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa. The work is back breaking and very risky. The workers are exposed to all kinds of danger as they are untrained for such a specialized job. They have to use sophisticated machinery for cutting through the hard steel of the ship and in the process become victims of numerous accidents.

The material taken from these ships and the steel sheets have to be transported to various locations in the country. As such there is heavy traffic of heavy vehicles like trucks and carriers. Most of the truck drivers are also from the eastern states of India. Because of the heavy traffic, a large sex industry has flourished along the highways to Alang.

### ***Reflecting on the Methodology of the Project***

The project will have to work towards understanding and mapping out the broad trends in migration and livelihoods and document case studies and village/area profiles. We need to understand the broad macro factors – economic/social/political that are leading to new trends and patterns of migration and changes in livelihood patterns. What livelihood opportunities are closing down and what are the new sites of work that are opening up for women?

Clearly there are several different kinds of migration and different dimensions that we need to delineate and focus on. The effects of macro factors such as globalisation, marketisation and continuous drought need to be analysed. At the same time we need to get detailed information on changes at the micro level, and specifically how it is affecting women's lives. What are the new challenges people, particularly women, are facing and how are they negotiating these? Has there been any reconstruction or recasting of notions – of migration, work, self?

What are the different kinds of vulnerabilities that women face in the process of movement? What elements of trafficking can we identify in this and what can we define as trafficking? There are certainly elements of coercion, deception, violence, abuse in many of the movements that women undertake, whether in families, groups or individually. How do women negotiate these and how can their rights be protected.

The study will have to choose its focus: to do an extensive or intensive study. While both are important, we feel that doing an intensive study might yield deeper, more meaningful information. It will be necessary to link up with groups and work in collaboration with them on the field. It is also imperative to see how this project can fit into the agenda of groups and broad based movements working on issues of women's rights.



### Appendix 1: Table of Activities

Event	Date	Place	Objectives
State-level consultation Rajasthan	20 <sup>th</sup> -21 <sup>st</sup> April	Jaipur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the current trends of movement and issues of concern</li> <li>• Identify groups and individuals working on issues</li> <li>• Collect material</li> <li>• Document voices from the field</li> <li>• Assess for ourselves through interviews and focus group discussions the need for such a project</li> <li>• Exchange ideas and strategies that will optimize the scope and utility of the study with active involvement of groups and experts working in the area.</li> </ul>
Field visits and informal discussions – Alwar district	11 <sup>th</sup> -13 <sup>th</sup> May	Alwar, Thanagazi, Viratnagar, Kalsada etc.	
Field visits and informal discussions – Jaipur district	14 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> May	Jaipur Highway routes to Tonk, Ajmer, Delhi	
Consultation – Udaipur district	3 <sup>rd</sup> - 4 <sup>th</sup> June	Udaipur City	
Field visits – Udaipur	5 <sup>th</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup> June	Kaya, Jhadol, Khairwara, etc.	
Consultations– Gujarat, round 1	26 <sup>th</sup> – 29 <sup>th</sup> July	Ahmedabad	
Consultations – Gujarat, round 2	30 <sup>th</sup> -31 <sup>st</sup> July	Baroda	
Field visits – Coastal areas of Gujarat	1 <sup>st</sup> - 4 <sup>th</sup> August	Veraval, Una Dwarka, Rajkot etc.	
Research Methodology Workshop	24 <sup>th</sup> - 25 <sup>th</sup> August	Delhi	

## **Appendix 2: List of NGOs and individuals consulted**

### **Rajasthan:**

Jaipur:

Kavita Srivastava, *People's Union of Civil Liberties (PUCL)*

Shail Mayaram, *Institute of Development Studies (IDS)*

Madan Lal Sharma, *URMUL Marusthali Bunkar Vikas Samiti*

Raj Kishore, *CECOEDECON*

Asha Kiran, *CECOEDECON*

Kanchan Mathur, *Women's Resource Centre*

Ratan Katyayani, *Muktidhara*

Tara Saini, *Muktidhara*

Mamta Jaitly, *Vividha Women's Resource Centre*

Narendra K. Singh, *Institute of Development Studies (IDS)*

Manju Sharma, *VIVIDHA*

Sucheta Singh, *VIVIDHA*

Harkesh Bugaliya, *Rajasthan Nirman Mazdoor Sangathan (AICCTU)*

Dr. Purnendu, *Institute of Development Studies (IDS)*

*Gram Bharathi Samiti (GBS)*

Mr. Ram Sahay, *Gram Seva Mandir Idan Ka Vaas (GSMI)*

Udaipur:

Ginny Srivastava, *ASTHA*

*Sewa Mandir*

Dr. Shobha Nandwana

Ramesh Nandwana

Dr. Anju Kohli

Madan Modi, *SASUMASU*

### **Gujarat:**

Prof B. B Patel, *Gandhi Labour Institute*

Indira Hirway, *Centre for Advocacy Studies*

Sudarshan Iyengar, *Gujarat Institute for Development Research (GIDR)*

Amita Shah, *Gujarat Institute for Development Research (GIDR)*

Mirai Chatterjee, *Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA)*

Ila Pathak, *Ahmedabad Women's Action Group (AWAG)*

Gaurang Jani, *Jyoti Sangh*

Achyut Yagnik, *SETU: Center For Social Knowledge and Action*

Binoy Acharya and Alice Morris, *UNNATI*

C. G Pandya, *ex- Gandhi Labour Institute*

Mamta Bakshi, Bela, Nimisha Desai – *Olakh*

Prof. Parul Dave, Prof Arti Nanavati, Prof Leena Mehta, *Women's Studies Resource Centre – M. S university Baroda*

Bina Srinivasan

Nandini Manjrekar

**Delhi:**

Ravi Srivastava, *Centre for Study of Regional Development, JNU*

Ghanshyam Shah, *Centre for Community Health and Medicine, JNU*

Mary John, *Women's Studies Centre, JNU*

Kalyani Menon-Sen, *UNDP*

Jyoti Sanghera, *Centre for Feminist Legal Research*

Jean Dreze, *Centre for Study of Developing Societies*

S. K. Sasikumar, *V.V Giri National Labour Institute*

Shobhana Warriar

Rita Brara, *Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics*

Sujata Gothoskar, *Committee for Asian Women, Mumbai*

Deboshis Chakraborty, *Seva Mandir, Udaipur*

Bina Srinivasan

Lakshmi Lingam, *Tata Institute of Social Studies, Mumbai*

Kavita Srivastava, *People's Union of Civil Liberties (PUCL)*

Preet Rustagi, *Centre for Women's Development Studies*

Meena Sharma, *Muktidhara*

Anuradha Rajan, *International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW), New Delhi*

M.N. Panini, *Centre for Social Systems, JNU*

Surendra Mathur, *MMVVS, Alwar*

Nimisha Desai, *Olakh, Vadodra*

Nandita Baruah, *UNIFEM, New Delhi*

Suneeta Dhar, *UNIFEM, New Delhi*

Nandita Bhaita, *International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW), New Delhi*

**Appendix 3**

# ***N*otes from the Field:**

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## *Stories of Movement*

*Migration, Trafficking and Sites of Work: Rights and Vulnerabilities*  
Research Methodology Workshop, New Delhi  
**Jagori**

**Notes from the Field:**  
*Stories of Movement*

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### *Gadiya Lohar: Settling the Community or Settling the Women?*

On the road from Alwar to Viratnagar, right on the highway is a community of the Gadiya Lohar caste. The Gadiya Lohar are traditionally nomadic people who move from place to place with all their belongings in their uniquely crafted iron carts. They are traditionally blacksmiths, with the work being divided between the men and the women, with the women often being the one to beat the glowing iron into shape or breaking it. Infact this is the reason given for the fact that these women do not keep *ghunghat*; this is not feasible for their work.

When the Gadiya Lohar camp, they usually sleep on their carts itself, no *katchcha* structures or houses or even tents are built, even temporarily. Their tanned skin, hardened and weather-beaten faces and their free swagger all reflect their way of life. While the 'village' we visit seems like a temporary encampment of about 15 iron carts, we are told that the group has been settled here for 11 months now and are trying to claim the land as their own. Why? Because they have seemingly realized how important it is to settle down and have a place of your own. We note that the influence of our host and the work of his organization has been critical to this decision. We are introduced to Bhano, a smiling, open-faced young woman, who has been going to the Collector herself with the application and requesting that this land be given to them. Bhano nods confidently and says, he says he will give it to us, but when I don't know!

Very few of them continue to be blacksmiths; most of the men go to the city for work as daily wage labourers on construction sites and so on, the women stay in the camp, look after the children and collect firewood, graze cattle etc. But it is not like the women did not go into the city; Bhano even went to the Collector, we are reminded with pride. The group and the surroundings look impoverished; very few children are wearing clothes and even the women and men's clothes are old and torn. The children constantly ask one of our team for some money. There is great interest in the camera and soon, everyone is hankering for their photograph to be taken, or even to hold and handle the camera themselves. Bhano asks us for some old clothes.

This community is beginning to settle down and does not seem to be repentant for giving up their traditional way of living. Why do you want to settle down we ask? "There is always so much dust," the women say, "always getting into food, into our eyes and mouth, it becomes very difficult to stay in the open in weather like this." But there is a bigger reason than that, they hasten to add. Security. A home is perceived to be the final safe haven. '*Izzat hone ke liye ghar hona zaroori hai*', they explain. Many a time they are walking in the open and men grab them, pull them or grasp their hand and harass them. Would they do this to us if we had a roof over our heads, they ask? We shift uncomfortably and talk about how in our experience the home infact, is not always a safe place. As for men harassing women walking in the open, well it happens to women in the city too, even though they have homes over their heads. But the women insisted that perhaps this was so, but still, honour would be accredited to the women only if they had a house to speak of and stayed within its boundaries; otherwise they would be seen as women of 'loose character' who slept out in the open. This move of 'settling down' would enable them to live safely and in a dignified manner, they felt. We were not convinced.

The camera and the veiled begging continues for a while and we are shown a gun owned by an old woman. Apparently, some crude air guns are made by the blacksmiths for shooting fowl for consumption. The Gadiya Lohar pride themselves on their marksmanship as well as their craftsmanship; they can use air guns to pin point accuracy.

Later on our way back, we express our thoughts to our host. We are taken aback that gendered notions of the 'home' as being the safe space (and rightful place) for women are being introduced into this community where the women are relatively strong and open in their body language and in their relationships with men and others around them. We have seen a definite feeling of equanimity amongst the girls and the boys, the *bahus* were not in *ghunghat* or conspicuous by their inscribed code of shame and honour. It would be a real shame if such a community were to 'Sankritize' themselves in a way to live a seemingly 'honourable' way of life, in which women were forced to settle down in the guise of safety and safeguarding their honour and submit to the sham of patriarchy, while the men continued to live as migrants, although with changed livelihoods.

Moreover the partnership – of men and women- in the work done by the community would be broken and the women would also be more and more excluded from being part of the 'bread-earner' and would be ascribed with the 'womanly' duties and caring and nurturing only. We feared that this 'settling down' would in reality be 'settling down of women', and only take them away from the freedoms they traditionally enjoyed. Our host tells us that he has never thought of it this way, and feels we should talk about this in greater detail and reflect on it, and find ways of avoiding the process taking this form, perhaps in the course of the Project.

### *Ramsai Village: A Study of the Rajnat Community*

Ramsai Village is a community of Nats. The Rajnats were traditionally nomads who made a living out of selling salt and performing for the royalty. They were patronized largely by the royalty and are even reputed to have been the king's spies because of their easy mobility and accessibility all over the kingdom. Often the king's picked up the women performers. With the decline of such kingdoms the community was left on the margins and came to be known as a criminal tribe. Slowly over the generations the women became traditional sex workers.

Ramsai village is approximately 45-50 kilometers from Jaipur on the Jaipur-Delhi highway. After travelling on the superhighway towards Delhi for nearly 40 kilometers, one turns right into a dirt road, which seems to lead nowhere into a rocky yet very sandy terrain. The track turns and twists, going up a small hill littered with short thorny bushes and dusty Ronjh trees, till one comes upon a boundary wall stretching into the distant.

From the top of the hill we can see the traffic on the highway below, but we are more or less out of sight of anyone passing by the road. We turn a bend and see a couple of houses built from the stone boulders cut out from local rock face of the Aravallis. Some kids are playing, a few women and girls sit and stand around, a woman is filling water from a hand pump. This is Ramsai, a settlement outside the village of Ramsai from which it takes on its name.

"It is better to be hidden away. The police cannot see the customers' cars from the road, but we can see them approaching." One woman informs us. She is wearing an old salwar suit, red lipstick staining not only her lips but her teeth too. But how do the truckers and others know of your presence? She laughs. "They know. By word of mouth. The clients talk". We are surrounded by children, women, girls, the men folk hovering in the background. Manju didi of GBS is well known so anyone coming with her is welcome. A couple of dogs hang around us, curious about the newcomers. A few yards from us two murgis break into a noisy fight. An old woman wearing a dark brown lehnga comes towards us. Her name is Kamla.

"Get me some job" she tells Manju. "I am too old now. I cannot work as much as I could before. Get me a job in your organization." Kamla, we are told is a widow, with no children. Till recently she used to grow and sell vegetables in the settlement and in the village. Then she opened a little stall selling toffees, matches, candles and other small things. But now she falls ill easily and feels too weak to do such work. "Many people came to buy me but I did not do this work. I also did not want to do Nata, so I stayed alone. But now there is no one to look after me" she tells us. But Manju has another story to tell. According to her Kamla is an ex sex worker. She got into the profession after her husband died. However, she does not want to admit it for some reason.

The families now settled at Ramsai used to move around from one place to another earlier. But there were a lot of problems. Then they came here and bought this land. Only two families live here: two brothers and their families.

We are introduced to Geeta. She has been practicing her traditional trade for twelve years now. She tells us that she has come of her own free will and there was no force or coercion from her parents at all. "My parents asked me what I want to do whether I wish to get married or get into the trade and I chose the trade. She tells us. Her parents were bootleggers, they had no money to feed and take care of the family. So, this was Geeta's way of taking care of



the family. She had three other sisters, who are in Bombay. They do dance performances. They do not do this petty flesh trade. That is a respectable business. "*Izzat ki roti khati hain*". Recently one of her sisters died. She tells us that she had been sick for sometime. Her name was Kavita. Geeta shows us a photograph of a good-looking girl sitting in a park. Well dressed in city clothes. She had had many operations. Even her daughter was born by operation only. Then she had kidney problems. She had to be operated. Something went wrong with the operation and that caused her death. However, Manju didi has another story to tell in this case also. She apparently died of AIDS.

Geeta had been to Bombay for a while. All the three sisters rented a room in Bombay but Geeta decided to return after a while. She does not want to go and live there, even if it means more money and *IZZAT*. The rooms are claustrophobic, small and dark. "We have to stay inside most of the time. I am used to these open spaces,' she tells us as she gesticulated towards the open fields, "I feel suffocated there. I have been there once, never again!" Her sisters earn much more money than her and have less clients and better working conditions. But this is not enough for her.

Geeta gets clients from the highway, most of the time they do not pay good money. Maybe 100 odd rupees. But the sisters send money from Mumbai. "They even have kids. Once the babies are six months -1 year old, they leave them with us. We take care of them."

"The clients that come to us were earlier mostly truckers, but now the trend is changing. The policemen, people from the administration, all come here. Some villagers also come from nearby villages, and many, specially young fellows from the cities too. If there is a *dhaba* near the settlement then it is easier for the truckers to come. In these settlements at least 80% are truckers. But here, if they stop their truck on the highway the police catches them and then harasses them no end. Even takes money from them . The police do not take money from us. Mostly from the clients. The clients come at anytime. City people come in cars, scooters. Mostly we get two to four clients a day. We are eight girls here now earlier we were more. They (the girls) keep coming and going. Mostly they are related to us. Then they move on. If there is a raid or police is troubling them in their areas, or there is less work, they come here. Some also move to Bombay<sup>1</sup> or to Meerut. They live in groups there."

"Have you been drinking", Manju Didi suddenly asks her. Eyes laughing and a bit sheepish she agrees. "But what can I do. I had a customer just before you came and he wanted us to drink. I don't generally drink during the day, but today he was paying for it... " she laughs slyly. "The fact is that I love drinking. I drink at least one or one and a half bottle of liquor everyday. The cheap kind, which the villagers make illicitly in the village nearby. I have only two involvements in my life.. this *daaru* and my son -- Chauhan." She pushes a shy looking boy towards us. "He is my son.. I don't know who the father is.. one of my many clients. I have to earn a lot. For my younger brother and now also for my son. We never abort our babies. We keep them. If they are girls, they will look after us, if it is a son then we will look

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<sup>1</sup> In our discussion with our hosts at the office, when we were discussing the issue of trafficking, they had mentioned that many Nat community groups/individuals also indulge in buying and selling very young girls from the Kanjar community. These girls are brought up as their own daughters. They also enter their trade. This was also one reason that the number of girls in the settlements keeps fluctuating time to time. In their visits to the settlements, they have noticed that there are times when many young girls are visible, and at other times they disappear.

after them. You see this one here?" she points to another young girl sitting nearby, "she is pregnant. She will keep working till at least eight months. I was taking clients, till the time my labour pains began", she laughs. "The day my son was born I took 1000 rupees from one client!" she proudly claimed. "The son carries the lineage forward, didi. Later, my parents will divide the property between my brothers, and me when I am unable to work anymore. I will also get a share for myself."

Her brothers do not do any work. They hang around idling their time playing cards, drinking and sleeping. Now they have even taken to bootlegging. "The women who marry in our community live a good life." She points to her sister-in-law, who is sitting on the floor, her head covered, her feet bare, with her back towards the men. "Of course she is not as free as us, but nobody can touch her. If I was married nobody would dare to touch me. My child would have a father, a name. Now he is without a father's name. What can I do, I have given up my life for my family. But every life has its benefits. We, who are in the trade have our freedom. If a client came now, I can tell him to come later, I am entertaining guests. I can do anything. I am free, but my *bhabhi*, she cannot do this. We can wear whatever we want, she cannot. She has to wear this *lehnga* and blouse and keep her head covered. She cannot talk to any man or even show her face and she has to do all the work of the house. But this one she needs to be controlled", she points towards her *bhabhi*. "She got a proper thrashing from my brother last night. She has a big mouth. She answers him back and fights with him. See she is not wearing any bangles, all got broken when her beat her up. She will be beaten if she answers her husband. But no one can hit us or slap us. We are the breadwinners. We bring in the money. We will decide what we want to do with it." <sup>2</sup>

The women in this community say that they do not develop any relationship with their clients. Condom usage is very high, specially after GBS began a sustained awareness campaign in the area. They are careful about using condoms for fear of AIDS. "We do not have any lovers. All who come here are our lovers. But we don't want babies or diseases. Our lives are important for us".

Most of the unmarried girls who work as sex workers move about freely. They go to the nearby cities to watch movies and eat good food. They also go with their clients to hotels or picnic spots. Sometimes the clients can stay here (for 200-250 rupees) but they prefer not to let them stay. Every full moon day is very special. This is day to celebrate, keep fast and pray to the souls of the elders of the family (*Pitron ki pooja*). On this day all women keep a fast and do not entertain any client no matter what money he offers.

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<sup>2</sup> Manju informed us that actually they do not get any part of the property. They usually live on the earnings of their daughters or girls they have bought. Also most of their earnings go to the family.

### Family Migration in Brick Kiln Factories

Banwari Lal and Kishandas live in Meda ka Vaas, approximately 50 kilometers from Jaipur, near Choma village, off the Jaipur-Delhi highway. They belong to the Raiger community. Although some of them own small pieces of land the majority are landless. Traditionally they worked on other people's fields as casual seasonal workers when the work was available. But of late it is becoming consistently harder to find regular work in their villages. With the state fighting severe drought for the last three years work in the fields has become scarce. So to make a living they migrate to nearby and far-flung cities to work as laborers on brick kilns. The last contract they had was on a kiln near Bijaipur on the Jaipur-Alwar road. They generally travel with their families because the whole family can get work on the site. The women and children all get involved in the work. In the past few years they have traveled to many places in Punjab i.e. Pathankot, Jammu, Tilwada, Ambala, Chandigarh, many towns in Rajasthan: Jaipur, Alwar, Ajmer; and also Himachal Pradesh.

Nearly 500 people are needed to work on a medium sized kiln. They come from many states but majorities of them are from Rajasthan and Bihar. An organized network of contractors and brick kiln owners that operate in the area, moving from village to village hiring workers and then transporting them to the site of work. They contact the workers for contractual labor year after year. The wages are not paid at the end of the day's work or even at the end of the week. Instead, the contractor gives each family a small sum for daily expenses (500-600 rupees) once in fifteen days. The contractor also arranges for a place for the to stay near the kiln area. These are generally *katchcha* huts or tents for which they are not supposed to pay any rent. The settlement is quite large, almost like a small village because many families migrate together, sometimes from the same village also. They generally migrate with 8 -10 families in a group. They are not allowed to come back in between. Maybe for a day or two, but they cannot leave the work in between and take up another work elsewhere. The final payment is done only at the end of the work period when the rainy season starts.

The work is very hard and backbreaking and endless. A typical working day begins early in the morning at 6 a.m. and stretches right through the day till 6 p.m. There are no holidays. All the workers including women and children have to work seven days a week. The wages depend on the number of bricks made by the family. So the men prepare the clay, the kids transport it to the site and women fill the mould and prepare the bricks for drying. An average family of four (husband-wife-two children) can prepare up to 4000 bricks a day. They are paid Rs.25 for every thousand bricks. This averages to 100 rupees a day for the whole family. They do not get paid per person. After meeting their expenses, they can save between 500-700 rupees in a month. At the end of the contract, which can extend up to an year or more the final payments are done. They come back with 5-7000 rupees after ten months, generally during the rains because there is no activity during this time in the brick kilns.

Besides making the bricks there is other kind of work in the kilns e.g. loading the firing hearth, firing the bricks, loading and unloading of trucks etc. For this some workers are paid according to the number of bricks, while some are paid daily wages also. But Banwari Lal and Kishandas were not sure of the amount the workers were paid or the terms and conditions in these cases as they had never done other work themselves. However, they were sure that all the workers were paid at the end of the contract and no final payments were made at any other time. They felt that the contractor did this to ensure that they did not leave the work in between.

Women do not migrate alone, they only travel with their families. If there is a single woman (widow) she will also move with relatives. The working conditions are harsh but there is no sexual harassment at the work place because they migrate in large groups, which is safer for women. The life in the village is much better, but there is no work. The children do not go to school because each year the family moves to another town, another location.

### Mohan: A Profile of a Crisis Migrant

Our host wanted to have tea before we spoke with migrant labourers about their migration experience. It was at the road side tea stall that we met Mohan from village Misraulia. It is the first time that this middle-aged man has left his village in search of work. The drought in the last three years has brought immense hardship on the people here and the number of migrants to small towns and cities is on the increase. Our host, who is a member of a leftist party, has first hand experience of the increased labor pool at the *choktis*. *Chokti*, locally called *thadi market*, is the name given to a place where workers gather every morning to get work from contractors.

Mohan had gone to Ajmer and Khedi before coming to Jaipur. He went to Ajmer first as it was close to his village. He found work for only five to six days in one month and so decided to move to another town for work. He went to Khedi, which is 40 kilometers from his village, where he found work for only two days for the fifteen days that he was there. He tried to find work close to his village so he could make a living as well as take care of his family.

He decided to come to Jaipur as his brother and nephew had been here for a long time. Besides, there are about 100 people from his village who are here and so he found it easy to get work. For the three months he has been here, he has found work for two months. He is working as a “helper” in the construction industry, that is, carrying bricks, *masala*, water and so on. He earns Rs. 80 per day. In the past three months he has been able to send Rs. 700 to his family.

We inquired about the conditions back home that made him migrate. Mohan told us that the drought in Rajasthan for the past three years has caused people to migrate. Earlier he used to cultivate his land, two and a half bigha, and find work on other’s fields. He used to engage in a practice called *batai*. *Batai* is where the owner gives his land to another person for cultivation under certain terms and conditions. The owner provides land, seed, and water to the cultivator, half the amount of fertilizer and half the cost for threshing the crop. The cultivator must provide the bullocks or tractor for tilling the land, deweed, cut and irrigate the crop, provide half the amount of fertilizer, and half the cost for threshing the crop mechanically. His wife helps in deweeding and cutting the crop. In return for this work, the cultivator gets fifty percent of the crops. Given the drought, Mohan has been unable to get any work through *batai*. In these circumstances he decided to migrate for work.

Mohan then went on to tell us about the government’s grains-for-work scheme for the people below the poverty line (BPL). There are about 1200 households in his village, of which 300 fall in the BPL category. Under the scheme, one member of the family gets work in two months. Work is given for 15 days and the wages are paid in cash and in kind, that is, Rs. 500 plus 60 kg of grain. In effect, the family has to wait for two and a half months before getting some money and grains. This payment is not enough to meet the food requirements of the family and hence people migrate to find work. Women are not given work under the scheme unless the woman is a widow or her husband has migrated and there is no one to take his place from the family. Women get the same payment as men in the scheme.

The types of work provided under the scheme are:

- (1) Digging mud out of ponds so water can be conserved more efficiently during monsoons,

- (2) Construction or repair of schools and panchayat bhawans. Construction of schools is taking place under the Rajiv Gandhi Paatshaala Yojna
- (3) Road construction and repair.

We asked Mohan if all castes have migrated due to drought. This region, our host informed us, was not well developed and so everybody has migrated although the *dalits* have done so in larger numbers.

Mohan stays in Mansarovar, where he pays Rs. 450 per month as rent. The problems that he faces here are the high cost of rent, that everything has to be purchased, and he has to cook his own food after a hard day's work. We asked him if he liked the village life to which he replied: "I like village life, feel more secure there...have family there. *Gaon to gaon hai.*" He does not plan to bring his wife here as she is unlikely to find work. His brother's wife is also in the village.

Mohan plans to return to his village in a couple of days. If it rains in his village he will stay there or return to Jaipur for work. Mohan is very clearly a crisis migrant.

On our return, our host informed us of the reasons why migrant laborers are finding it difficult to get work. For one thing, the drought has increased the number people looking for work. Besides, ten years ago Jaipur was developing and so there was more work available. Moreover, the government has decreased its support to the Government Housing Board. The government had planned to develop Mansarovar, said to be the biggest housing complex in South Asia, but with the economic reforms since 1990 the government has given over the development to private hands. So, there is less labour being involved in the development of the area. Also, the housing complex earlier built homes with stones, which required high labor input. With houses being built with concrete these days, the demand for labour has decreased. Finally, the high cost of building houses has stopped the middle-class from building homes which has had a negative impact on the work available to labour. The migrant labourers are in a bind as the drought has forced them to migrate while the amount of work available has been declining.

## Always an Outsider: Bengali Sex Workers in Ahmedabad

The adjective ‘conservative’ is often used to describe the Amdavadis. They would find it difficult to believe that their Ahmedabad, which has no red light area as such, has a flourishing and growing population of sex workers (and clients!) throughout the city. In the course of their work on HIV/AIDS the staff at Jyoti Sangh have managed to build a network of over 4,000 sex workers in the city – call girls, street walkers, housewives operating from home and even ‘floating sex workers’, who go from city to city on a contract basis. We meet a most unlikely and lively group of ten women and a man – a mixed group of street walkers, housewives, peer educators, and a pimp- who have dropped by to the office for a meeting.

After an initial shyness, the energy in the room is tangible. I smile at the woman sitting across me. She speaks Bengali and is delighted to speak to me in her mother tongue. “Of course there are lots of Bengalis here, it’s like home” she laughs, “but its always nice to hear another one!” Rani is from West Bengal and has been here for five years now. She came with her husband, but he deserted her, leaving a young son to take care of. What else could she do, she asks? “*Kuch bhi karo waise bhi aadmi to peechhe padta hi hai!*” She understands Gujarati but cannot speak it.

Malati, sitting next to her, was brought here from a village in Bengal on the pretext of work. But she didn’t know that this was the work, she smiles ironically! Before she knew it she was in the trade. It has been a year and a half since. She sends money back home as her family is very poor, Naren adds. Naren is the man sitting with her and seems to be her agent. From then on he answers for her.

Naren informs me that there are very strong networks between Ahmedabad and Bengal. “Every week, girls come”, he confides, “Infact, I just got a call last night from someone telling me that he is bringing three girls day after tomorrow. It is like this only here.” Naren is a mysterious fellow; he insists he is not a pimp, but our hosts tell us otherwise. Naren tells us that he came to Ahmedabad to work in a guesthouse. He didn’t know at the time, but that guesthouse rented rooms to sex workers. He fell in love with one of the girls who came to work and ran away with her. That was how he got involved in this business.

We notice a distinct difference in the deportment of the Gujarati and Bengali women. Quite distinct in their no nonsense demeanour, it is fascinating to note that the women do not conform to the stereotype image of the prostitute. One would think you were sitting with a group of middle class housewives at a colony kitty party, or having a chat over buying vegetables from a thelawala. The absence of a red light area which creates a certain idea and trait of a ‘prostitute’ is therefore missing; in this situation the sex worker must behave in the confines of her other roles as housewife, ‘conservative’ Amdavadi and so on. Geeta, a portly housewife shows us the pager she carries – this is how she conducts business. Another woman, Mala is an old sweet woman who rents out her room during the day to sex workers. She also has a little business of making ‘tiffins’ and supplying it on demand. Her husband is aware of the side business, but not her twenty-year-old son. She is keeping a low profile now, she says, apparently the neighbours informed the police of another such house in the colony and there was a big incident, where the police came and dragged women out. “Every colony has houses where sex work is happening”, they say, “You would never even come to know!”

And if people enquire about the girls or the clients, it is simple - you say they are your relatives!”

Discussion turns to the police and it is obvious that the group faces tremendous problems from a corrupt police force. Gujarat being a dry State, alcohol for the clients apparently comes from the police – which have a reputation for being the biggest liquor smugglers in the State. One of the women talks about a client of hers who paid Rs. 1000, just to sit and have a drink with her!

In the course of the discussion, it seems that the Gujarati women have greater control over their services than the Bengali women do. It takes one question on whether there is a marked difference between the Bengali sex workers and the Gujarati sex workers, to set the group into an animated discussion. It is agreed that the Bengali women get less for a ‘programme’ although how much less is a moot point. (“Ten times less!”, Naren furiously whispers.) But there is a reason for this, the Gujarati women insist. The girls don’t usually know the language, and the clients feel more comfortable with their own women. Also, the Bengali girls always have agents to give cuts to, but this is not that prevalent for the Gujarati women. Besides, many times clients are suspicious of Bengali girls...they think, “Maybe she is coming from Bombay, who knows where she’s been, what disease she’s carrying?” Malati, Naren and Rani invite us to Neelbaug, a locality that is full of Bengali women and men – most of who are sex workers or pimps. “Life is much more difficult for us, we are always outsiders”, they sniff, “these people won’t understand...why don’t you come and see for yourself?”



## A Case Study of a Saltpan Worker in Gujarat

It is a hot scorching day as we approach the village of Kharchia, near Jhodia in Gujarat. As we bump along the practically non-existent road we can see the white salt ridden soil through the fresh green grass. This area has had good rain after three years of draught. Soon one can see the red tiled roofs of the temporary shelters made for the villagers who have lost all their houses and possessions in the earthquake.

Vijayaben Karsan Bai has been working in the salt pans since the last 22 years. She is 45 years old. She goes with her family every year to work on different sites. The Mukadam or contractor (who could sometimes be from the same village) contacts them and offers them work with a certain company. This could change every year. Vijayaben has traveled to Bhuvaniya Taluka in Rajkot, Khejadia, Gagwa and Sikka in Jamnagar. She has also migrated towards Bhavnagar, Surat and to Kutch last year. Her family consisting of one son, one daughter in law and three children move every year for 8 months to work in the salt pans.

The work is hard and painfully slow. First we have to fill the salt pans or fields when the tide is high. Then we make the boundaries to keep the water in. Guarding the boundaries is also a major work. They keep breaking down and a constant vigil has to be kept up. After about a month the salt gets 'cooked'. During this time there is not much work and we have to wait. The Mukadam gives us expenses but these are later deducted from our wages. After the salt starts crystallizing, it has to be taken out and pulled along the sides to be kept in huge mounds. This is then loaded on the trucks to send to the plants where it is cleaned, iodized and packed. Each truck can carry up to 62,400 kilos (13-14 mounds) of salt. The women and men both work on loading and women mostly carry the salt in 'chabras' each carrying 20 kilos of salt at one time.

On the salt pan or field she works as a 'pair with her husband and both of them together get 700 rupees at the end of fifteen days. On probing further about the wages she seems confused. The women do not know what they get as wages, one of the men explains. As long as there is food to feed the families. Anyway most of them are illiterate so they do not know how much their wages come to at the end of the fortnight. Feeding the family is the major concern for her. "In the beginning we eat bajra roti with potatoes and onion sabzi, sometimes daal also..urad, and chana. But the money is not sufficient to keep this up everyday. Then we eat only bajra roti and chillies or onions. We never get milk, not even for the children. Even our tea is black!" she grimaces. "When the money is over we just go hungry.. What can we do. If we get a little time we go to catch fish and eat it roasted with salt when we have no more money.

The workers have to stand for long hours in the salt water, which is very harmful for their health. Most develop sores and rashes on their skins. "See " she shows us the scars on her hands and feet. We all have them. The scorching heat coupled with salt water burns their skin black. We are thirsty all the time and our hair starts falling off. She pulls her grand daughter towards us to show the bald patches on her head. Vijayaben herself has lost a lot of hair. "What will we do with long hair if our stomachs are empty. This is a small price to pay" she says philosophically. Salt gets into every pore of our body- on our skin, in our hair, our mouth, noses and eyes. In our clothes. We feel nauseated at times and sick. Even when we sleep we feel the itching and irritation from the salt. We have to have bath at least twice a day or our bodies will itch terribly and the skin will get rashes.

Bathing and washing clothes needs clean water and that is a valuable commodity for the workers. The owner sends one tanker of water after every three or four days and this has to be used for every thing- bathing, washing, cleaning and cooking. The women have a tough time. They have to bathe and defecate in the open. The stark surroundings sometimes with not even a bush in sight adds to their exposure and shame. We sleep on the hard floor, which becomes like stone in the harsh winters. Sometime when the sand gets soaked with dew sleep can be a punishment.

Life for Vijaya Ben is not easy when she comes back home. Mostly her earnings and that of her family have already been spent during the eight months they live outside. So when she gets back she has to find work on the fields of the laded people mostly Patels in the area. Her two daughters have gone to wok in the fields today. There is not enough work for all the members of the family. “We have to live somehow,” she says. “We have started making coal in from the wood we cut from the thorny shrubs around.” The wood is burnt in closed furnaces and then water is poured over it to make coal. This is sold to the Patels in the next village who take it in bulk from them. Vijay Ben knows that the Patels do not pay them enough for the coal and they make much more money out of this business but they have no way of selling it themselves.

This year has been particularly bad after the earthquake. Vijaya’s family was not in the village when the quake happened. They were working in the saltpans. The earth shook with such force and thunder that we thought the world had ended, she says. This little girl was born that night. We call her “bhookamp!” she laughs. “I assisted in her birth. We can’t go to the doctor in normal circumstances and it was impossible that night. Her mother is still so scared that she screams in the night. Even if her bed shakes she starts trembling. It was a terrible day. “ The problems of these saltpan workers have not ended here. After coming back to their village they found that even though their houses had come down in the earthquake they do not figure in the list of the affected people because at the time of the calamity they were not present in their village. As such help and aid from the government has not been with in their reach. Now they are living in temporary shelters which have been built with the help of SETU.

## **Appendix 4**

### **A Note to the Working Bibliography on “Migration, Trafficking and Sites of Work: Rights and Vulnerabilities”**

Early studies in migration focussed on male migrants. Women were seen as associational migrants; they moved with their families or for reasons of marriage. Also, women were not seen as participants in the sphere of production and hence not relevant to migration research. It was in the 1970s and 1980s that feminist scholarship sought to remedy the exclusion of women in migration research. The attempts however resulted in attachment to sex role theory, which maintained that women are anchored in the domestic sphere and men to the public sphere, which facilitated men’s migration. These studies were based on atavistic assumptions of the earlier era when men were seen as migrants.

It was in the late 1980s and 1990s that feminists offered a different insight on women’s migration. Labour markets are gendered and hence women’s migration is determined by the nature of labour markets. Also, feminist scholars in migration research added a new dimension to the household, hereto assumed to be a unitary unit. The household came to be seen as organized along differential power relations, which had an impact on migration decision-making. The question that needs to be examined is the say that women have in migration decision-making.

The bibliography is structured as follows. The first two sections of the bibliography address the need for feminist insights into migration theories and methods. The third section provides an overview of the conceptualization of women in migration research since the 1970s. The purpose of section four is to address the issues and challenges in migration, particularly of poverty and livelihoods, brought about by the development process. Sections five and six are to understand the process and dynamics of internal migration and how women have been accounted for and impacted by these. Section seven addresses the difficult problem of conceptualizing trafficking in migration. Trafficking has been conceptualized as a set of violations occurring during cross-border migration. Our attempt here is to broaden the conceptual understanding of trafficking as a set of violations that occur in the course of migration, internally as well as internationally. Section eight focuses on the role of women in migration decision-making and household strategies for migration. The attempt here is to capture how structural elements, patriarchy, the state and the market, shape women’s role in migration decision-making and formulating household strategies for economic survival or economic diversification. The purpose here is to link the macro and micro aspects of the gendered process of migration. Sections nine and ten address the rights and vulnerabilities of women in the work place and the household.

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