

Assessing the portability of social protection and services for children affected by migration

A study across five Indian states

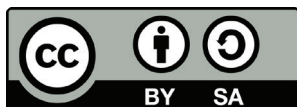
2021

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Cover image: A migrant woman who returned to her village in Gujarat during the COVID-19 lockdown helps her child study with a pre-education activity kit provided under ICDS. *Photo by UNICEF/Vinay Panjwani*



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Acknowledgements

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) India and the Centre for Policy Research (CPR) are deeply grateful for the collaboration and assistance of UNICEF state offices in enabling primary data collection, especially given the difficult circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, we thank Job Zachariah, Bal Paritosh and Hemant at UNICEF Chhattisgarh; Laxmi Bhawani, Tejbir Soni and Moira Dawa at UNICEF Gujarat; Anuradha Nair and Kamini Kapadia at UNICEF Maharashtra; Monika Nielson and Soumen Ray at UNICEF Odisha; and Piush Antony at UNICEF UP for anchoring and facilitating the research study as well as providing crucial inputs from time to time. We are immensely grateful to the support of the Women and Child Development Department of the Government of Odisha and the Department of Labour of the Government of Chhattisgarh, for facilitating appointments with state government officials.

The authors wish to especially thank Misaki Akasaka Ueda, Urvashi Kaushik, Antara Lahiri and Sruti Mohanty from the UNICEF Delhi office for their support and guidance. This report has greatly benefited from the contributions of interns and staff at CPR, including Aarushi Sharma, Anmol Rana, Seema Sharma and Shruti Appalla. Last, but not the least, we express our gratitude to all our respondents, who spared time in the middle of a pandemic to generously share their insights with us for this study.

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Abbreviations

ASHA: Accredited Social Health Activist	NHM: National Health Mission
AWW: Anganwadi Worker	NIUA: National Institute of Urban Affairs
BOCW: Building and Construction Workers	NRLM: National Rural Livelihoods Mission
BSKY: Biju Swastha Kalyan Yojana	NSS: National Sample Survey
CAS: Common Application Software	NULM: National Urban Livelihoods Mission
CSO: Civil Society Organization	ONORC: One Nation One Ration Card
DBT: Direct Benefit Transfer	PDS: Public Distribution System
DKBSSY: Dr Khoobchand Baghel Swasthya Sahayata Yojana	PMAY-HFA: Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Housing for All
ePoS: Electronic Point of Sale	PMJAY: Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana
FPS: Fair Price Shop	PMMVY: Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana
GP: Gram Panchayat	POSCO: Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012
ICDS: Integrated Child Development Services	RMSA: Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan
ILO: International Labour Organization	RSBY: Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana
JJ Act: Juvenile Justice Act, 2015	RTE: Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009
KBK: Kalahandi Balangir Koraput	SC: Scheduled Caste
KII: Key Informant Interview	SHG: Self Help Groups
MJPJAY: Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Jan Arogya Yojana	SMC: School Management Committee
MGNREGA: Mahatma National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005	SSA: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
MDM: Midday Meal	ST: Scheduled Tribe
MoHUA: Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs	TE: Teacher Education
MoHFW: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	Tent STP: Tent Special Training Programme
MoLE: Ministry of Labour and Employment	THR: Take Home Ration
MUKTA: Mukhyamantri Karma Tatpara Abhiyan	UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
MWCD: Ministry of Women and Child Development	UP: Uttar Pradesh
NFSA: National Food Security Act, 2013	UWSS: Unorganized Workers' Social Security
	WCD: Women and Child Development

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Executive summary

The 2020 migrant crisis in the wake of the COVID-19 national lockdown highlighted the urgent need to incorporate migrants in existing social protection mechanisms, which fail to recognize circular and seasonal mobility patterns. During the lockdown, the lack of adequate portability mechanisms meant that migrants were unable to access social protection and welfare services, including emergency relief measures, at destination locations. In this context, the study focused particularly on social protection measures to address the vulnerabilities of children and women, whose role in migration has been under-represented in the policy discourse. A summary of key findings and recommendations is presented here.

Findings

The study found that social protection in India is embedded within contrasting logics of universalization and eligibility. Even elements such as education and health that purport universal access are, in practice, only accessible if eligibility criteria such as domicile/residence are met. In addition, social protection schemes are split between Central and state governments under India's federal structure. While the impulse of Central schemes is inclusionary, state schemes tend to exclude interstate migrants. In particular, children and women are peripheral to the state's imagination of migration on account of being poorly captured in employment and migration statistics. They are also seen as victims of trafficking, and the distinctions between distress migration and trafficking are often blurred.

The rural–urban axis is vital to understanding migrant incorporation in social protection and welfare. A strong sedentary bias serves to include migrants at source, usually rural in classification, where governance structures are better suited for delivery. The push out of home is viewed

as a function of lack of skills, and the significant role of identity factors in shaping migration pathways are less acknowledged. Correspondingly, urban areas tend to exclude migrants owing to nativist politics, weak governance mechanisms, inadequate infrastructure and limited state capacity. Circular migrants, in particular, face high barriers in accessing social protection as such patterns of migration are not adequately recognized and enumerated by the state.

Finally, there is a growing acknowledgement of the role of policy in facilitating safe migration pathways, with key elements of documentation, identification, information availability and access to recourse in the case of injustice and discrimination. These general findings manifest in specific ways across scheme design and intent; institutional arrangements for implementation; and eligibility and identification.

Scheme design and intent

The study revealed that many social protection and social welfare schemes operate within a rights-based framework and inclusion is often by assumption. These assumptions are, however, not always grounded in reality and often result in portability barriers persisting, especially for children and women. For instance, embedded portability features in schemes such as Ayushman Bharat allow for access to households that are split across multiple locations, while the One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) scheme envisages Aadhaar-seeded ration cards as a vehicle for portability. However, the study documented gaps in access to these schemes due to a lack of awareness among migrant beneficiaries as well as identification and logistical issues. Moreover, scheme design did not take into account the challenges of serving remote locations such as peri-urban construction sites, where delivery mechanisms were absent.

Social protection is embedded within contrasting logics of universalization and eligibility, but even universal elements such as education and health are, in practice, only accessible if eligibility criteria such as domicile/residence are met.

Circular migrants had to bear the burden of establishing themselves as beneficiaries with every movement between destination and source, to prove their eligibility.

Datasets that formed the basis for scheme design tended to see migrants from a mainly economic lens, thus marginalizing children and women, as well as poorly capturing seasonal and circular migration patterns. Intersectional vulnerabilities posed by the compounding of the axes of gender, caste, disability, along with migration, were also not taken into account. This limited conceptualization excluded the most vulnerable, such as seasonal migrant children who found it hard to continue education due to a mismatch with the schooling calendar, resulting in them being pushed into the workforce at an early age. Further, even schemes such as seasonal hostels for migrant children were only provided up to the age of 14, in line with the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE), thus excluding children above this age who tended to join the workforce instead of continuing their education.

Institutional arrangements for implementation, awareness and scheme delivery

Even in cases where scheme design was universal and/or portable, a lack of institutional capacity, sensitization and training resulted in incomplete enumeration and coverage of migrants. While a systematic lack of awareness of migrant issues within the government tends to skew infrastructure provisions and institutional priorities, resulting in exclusions, awareness regarding migration and incorporation of migrants into government schemes varies across tiers of government – national, state and local – as well as across departments within state governments. This fragmentation in understanding and acting on migrants' needs also led to children and women slipping through the cracks. Labour departments, usually the nodal departments for migration-related matters, were understaffed and did not have a presence below the district level. Moreover, they tended to focus on formal

employment, and inadequately supervised informal sectors of work, where many migrants were employed. Additionally, while rural governance structures were reported to be relatively accountable, essential institutional counterparts to implement social protection were missing in urban areas.

Scheme uptake among migrants was also reported to be a challenge due to the lack of awareness among beneficiaries, in particular circular and seasonal migrants. Conflicting guidelines, advisories and directives between Central and state schemes also created a barrier in scheme delivery and the scope of migrants' inclusion. For flagship schemes such as ONORC, the operational guidelines were not available in the public domain, creating confusion among beneficiaries as well as agencies providing the services. Employers and contractors were also not always aware of schemes and benefits of registration. The ability of employers and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to fill the gap was further inhibited by weak collaborative mechanisms between government, CSOs and private actors, which could have otherwise harnessed complementary capabilities and skill sets to come up with long-term solutions. Many successful ad hoc efforts, often through state–CSO collaborations, were not institutionalized into the government mechanism, preventing their scaling up to other areas.

Eligibility and identification

Migrants faced impediments in accessing and utilizing identity documents across state borders due to domicile/residency requirements. Moreover, these requirements inhibited pregnant women's access to cash transfer and maternity benefit schemes and infrastructure access in urban informal settlements, among other entitlements. Migrant children were particularly impacted as they often rely on parents' identity documents.

Seasonal and circular migrants faced particular barriers due to weak registration processes, especially for employment-related social protection. Circular migrants had to bear the burden of establishing themselves as beneficiaries with every movement between destination and source, to prove their eligibility.

The role of data

State governments tended to recognize the inadequacy of public datasets such as the Census and National Sample Survey (NSS), and in the wake of COVID-19, demanded more calibrated, dynamic and functional data that reflects the complexities of migration. The existing data collection was also observed to be skewed by sedentary bias, with better records of workers at source states and poor enumeration at destination states. Data collection efforts from returning migrants in source states during the 2020 national lockdown suffered from a poor understanding of migrants' realities, were fragmented in their approach, and hence less relevant to policy use cases. Governments were keen to leverage digital identities, especially Aadhaar, for more effective scheme delivery for migrants in the future. Furthermore, they wanted to explore non-traditional data sources such as mobility data, while recognizing the differences in data collected by government and civil society, and opportunities for synchronization.

State-wise variations

Overall, source states tended to be more invested in the needs of migrants, including children and women; however, they were less aware of the need for portability mechanisms for intrastate migrants. Approaches to migrant incorporation varied among the source states.

- Odisha's approach, building on a history of interventions, focuses on facilitating safe migration for seasonal out-migrants from the state. A significant focus on poverty alleviation

through housing and land upgradation, as well as urban employment, is likely to benefit intrastate migrants.

- Chhattisgarh builds on a pre-existing universal approach to social protection and welfare to ensure better livelihood opportunities and quality of life at source while building responses towards facilitating safer migration through a new migration policy that pushes for dynamic databases and grievance redressal of migrants at source and destination.
- In Uttar Pradesh (UP), containing migration appears as a clear policy objective, with a thrust on skilling and employment at source to contain distress out-migration. At the same time, the out-migration of skilled migrants who send remittances is seen as beneficial to the state.

In sharp contrast, destination states, while acknowledging interstate migration, saw their responsibility limited to extending 'universal' types of entitlements such as health and education, while pushing labour-related responsibilities on to employers who are not held particularly accountable, especially in the case of informal workers. Child labour and women's work remained undercounted and under the radar. With the state stepping back, the gap was filled by civil society and, sometimes, by employers. While the difference in approaches between the government and civil society and the role of privatization in complicating access were very stark in Gujarat, in Maharashtra urban and rural differences in social protection delivery were far more apparent.

Snapshot of best practices

Data collection

- Odisha has attempted to maintain village-level databases at Gram Panchayat (GP) level, which document the movement of seasonal migration.
- Chhattisgarh has also attempted such a *palayan panji* (migration register)

Source states are more invested in the needs of migrants, including children and women, but less aware of the portability mechanisms for intrastate migrants.

system to record migrant movement. Further, they are introducing an online migration register to track the migration of individuals and families in real time.

Food security and nutrition

- The Government of Gujarat devised the Anna Brahma scheme for migrants to avail of free ration in the state. The scheme extends the scope of Public Distribution System (PDS) in the state to include interstate migrants who are able to furnish correct documentation.
- The Chhattisgarh Food and Nutritional Security Act, 2012 aids universal coverage of subsidized food entitlements. It explicitly extends coverage to migrants in locations where they currently reside, and considerably strengthens nutritional support to pregnant women and lactating children.
- The ONORC scheme launched by the Government of India is a significant step towards portability, but has seen poor uptake in its initial months and requires concerted efforts to strengthen its implementation.

Education

- The Government of Gujarat's migration card and online tracking initiative has proven successful in tracking students migrating along with their parents within the state and from other states, thus reducing dropouts and ensuring continuity in education during the period of migration.
- The Government of Maharashtra, in collaboration with the TATA Trusts, initiated the education guarantee card scheme to track out-of-school children from migrant families without permanent addresses.
- The Government of Gujarat introduced on-site temporary schools for children of interstate migrants at worksites, enabling alternative schooling to out-of-school children.
- Seasonal hostels to retain left-behind children during the period of migration

have proven successful in addressing the problem of disrupted education and school dropouts in Odisha, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh.

- The Government of Odisha, in collaboration with CSOs, countered the language barrier faced in migrant children's education by facilitating access to Odia textbooks and teachers in destination states, and issuing bilingual transfer certificates to allow children to continue their education even with circular migration.

Health

- In Gujarat, the Surat Municipal Corporation has clustered Anganwadis in migrant-dense areas to aid migrants' access to the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). The state also incentivizes frontline workers to include migrants within health schemes.
- The governments of Gujarat and Odisha use Mother and Child Protection cards, which serve as records of immunization and maternal health. These cards have associated online tracking systems that facilitate limited portability of ICDS benefits for pregnant women migrants.

Livelihood and labour

- The governments of Chhattisgarh, Odisha and UP eased the registration procedure for the Building and Construction Workers (BOCW), by allowing self-certification by workers through affidavits in place of certification by employers or contractors. In Odisha and UP, the labour departments also worked with CSOs to facilitate worker registration.
- The Government of Odisha's Department of Labour has set up migration help desks in Andhra Pradesh, Delhi and Telangana. The objective of these centres is to support migrants with scheme access, grievance redressal and cultural connections.

Summary of recommendations

General

- Migrant source states need to recognize the aspirations of migrants and facilitate safe migration instead of reinforcing sedentary bias. Correspondingly, destination states must recognize the contribution that migrants make to their workforce and economy and seek to actively include them in social protection schemes.
- States must make concerted efforts for mainstreaming migration in the policy discourse across departments, and creating awareness of migrants' related vulnerabilities and lived realities, especially for children and women.
- State governments need to facilitate collaborative arrangements with CSOs and employers to facilitate migrant incorporation and create awareness about government schemes amongst migrant beneficiaries.
- States should review their data systems to include gender and caste-disaggregated data on migration by incorporating appropriate variables in Management Information Systems (MIS) of schemes.
- States will need to build IT-enabled data systems to converge multiple scheme databases and village-level migrant registers to track circular and seasonal patterns on a broader level. Existing IT interventions, including Common Application Software (CAS) and ONORC, should be strengthened while taking care to avoid technology-related exclusions.

Food security

- Awareness regarding the ONORC should be improved and carried out among all stakeholders including beneficiaries and Fair Price Shop (FPS) owners at the GP/ward level in migrant-intensive districts at both source and destination.
- There is a lack of clarity on whether

the ONORC facilitates portability for split households. The system and guidelines should clearly provide for availing of ration separately by different members of the family who may be in different locations.

- For ration cards seeded with the Aadhaar, the possibility of Aadhaar-based authentication without requiring the production of ration cards should be explored.
- Mechanisms of portability for non-NFSA beneficiaries of state food security schemes must be strengthened.

Health and childhood nutrition

- Institutional responsibility for the ICDS at urban destinations should be given to municipal bodies as a means for effective convergence, along with training and incentives to frontline workers for covering migrants as a priority group.
- The loss of continuity of ICDS coverage due to breaks in tracking beneficiaries with each migration needs to be specifically addressed through cards and IT-enabled systems on the lines of Gujarat and Odisha. Strengthening the CAS and training AWWs will provide an effective real-time database to track mother and child health and improve Anganwadi services to migrants overall.
- Solutions to the issue of lack of physical access to Anganwadis in urban and peri-urban areas will have to be locally evolved.
- There is a need for concerted awareness programmes regarding the Ayushman Bharat scheme among target populations, highlighting its portability aspect, so that migrants can use it effectively.

Education

- Source states must strengthen hostels in source districts to reduce

school drop-out rates among children of seasonal migrants with the involvement of School Management Committees (SMCs), on the lines of Odisha.

- States must consider extending enrolment in hostels (and RTE support) beyond the age of 14, to encourage children of migrants to complete their education.
- States must collaborate with CSOs and employers to set up systems for on-site schools, especially in rural or peri-urban locations far from regular schools.
- Drawing on Gujarat's experience with the Migrant Card and online tracking through the MMS software, states must introduce simple portability systems that allow children of seasonal migrants to access schooling at both source and destination.
- Destination and source states must work together to ensure language facilitation for children of seasonal migrants to continue in school on the lines of the Odisha–Tamil Nadu model.

Livelihoods and shelter

- Taking cues from UP and Chhattisgarh, state governments should ease barriers and maximize the registration of migrant workers under the BOCW and Unorganized Workers' Social Security (UWSS) boards.
- In the aftermath of the pandemic, increased vigil is required on employers and contractors to combat child labour, along with strengthening helplines and grievance redressal mechanisms by both source and destination states in high-risk corridors. States should also consider extending provisions of the RTE up to the age of 18, to deter children's entry into the workforce.
- Interstate migrant workers must not be barred from using shelters under the NULM (SUH) for lack of documentation. In municipalities that see a lot of family-based migration, states must set up adequate family shelters or, alternatively, facilitate the setting up of Affordable Rental Housing Complexes under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Housing for All (PMAY-HFA).

1. Introduction

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 national lockdown in March 2020, India saw the mass exodus of an estimated 11.4 million migrants back to their home states,¹ often under difficult and dangerous circumstances. Many more remained stranded at worksites and destination locations, and experienced hunger, indebtedness and sickness.

This migrant crisis highlighted the extent and complexity of internal migration in India as never before. It re-iterated the inadequacy of current datasets on migration, something that migration literature has adequately highlighted (Chandrasekhar et al 2017; MoHUA 2017), and exposed the ignorance of the policy ecosystem about the lived realities and vulnerabilities of migrants. Moreover, the significant presence of children and women among returning migrants, and among those who required food relief at destinations, shattered the pre-existing notions that internal migration in India is largely driven by males moving alone.

The migrant crisis was substantially exacerbated by the inadequate incorporation of migrants in social protection mechanisms, which fail to recognize circular and seasonal mobility patterns, even as they aim to reduce the vulnerability of the poor. Migrants remained largely excluded from the Government of India's 29.87 lakh crore (over US\$360 billion) post-lockdown Atmanirbhar Bharat relief package, which sought to alleviate the economic shock of COVID-19 on informal sector workers (Centre for Sustainable Employment, 2020). Specifically, the lack of adequate portability measures meant that migrants were unable to access social protection and welfare-oriented public services at destination locations.

The livelihood crisis and migrant exodus during the COVID-19 pandemic urge

us to consider questions around how India's social protection landscape accommodates/excludes migrant households – and within these, children. While many exclusions for migrants are likely to be related to the unorganized and informal nature of employment, the literature is less precise about what rights and entitlements migrants miss out on specifically on account of being mobile, and in what manner this affects them. In this regard, it is important to note that the right to movement and residence throughout the territory of India is guaranteed by Articles 19(1)(d) and 19(1)(e) of the Constitution; in addition, Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the basis of place of birth, among other criteria, and Article 16 guarantees equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters of public employment and prohibits the denial of access to public employment on the grounds of place of birth or residence. Accordingly, key elements of social welfare such as education and health are conceptualized as universal, while food security and livelihood support are broad-based in coverage. However, in practice, domicile-based eligibility, location-based delivery, information asymmetries, cultural differences, social discrimination, inadequate financing and poor state capacity often result in migrants being excluded (MoHUA 2017).

The portability of social protection and welfare has been often discussed as a solution, but there is a need for further examination of specific mechanisms to enable migrants to access schemes and entitlements as they move between locations. This report addresses this gap by looking at how social protection and welfare schemes serve migration-affected children and women, specifically in food security, health and nutrition, education, and livelihood and employment, across five states: Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Odisha and UP. It also captures conceptual

The significant presence of children and women among returning migrants shattered the pre-existing notions that internal migration in India is largely driven by males moving alone.

What new possibilities does this COVID-19 moment unravel for the design, implementation and delivery of policies and schemes for internal migrants?

understanding and attitudes of policy actors towards migration. These insights can help improve problem interpretation, prioritising solutions and in evolving novel policy directions (Bleich 2002).

In the wake of the migrant crisis, state governments and CSOs were compelled to respond to the migrants' vulnerabilities through various ad hoc relief initiatives, often implemented through some form of state–society collaboration. If building portability into social protection and welfare services is key to migrant incorporation, what new possibilities does this COVID-19 moment unravel for the design, implementation and delivery of policies and schemes?

Study objectives

The study's objectives were, therefore, to:

- Develop a broad understanding of the vulnerabilities faced by children impacted by migration;
- Understand the role of social protection and welfare policies and schemes in addressing these vulnerabilities, before and during COVID-19;
- Document good practices and case studies of initiatives that succeeded in improving migrant incorporation and portability mechanisms;
- Understand how conceptions and attitudes towards migration shape migration-specific initiatives and policy; and
- Explore avenues to improve portability and access to social protection and welfare services for migrants, especially for children and women.

Conceptual and research framework

The report builds on UNICEF's social protection framework, which defines social protection as 'a set of policies and programmes aimed at preventing or protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion throughout their life-course, with a particular emphasis towards vulnerable

groups' (UNICEF 2019). In addition to vulnerabilities related to poverty, disability, caste, ethnicity and gender, internal migrants in India face additional challenges in accessing rights, entitlements and welfare services. The UNICEF social protection framework also recognizes that social protection must address the impacts on children of macro trends such as climate change, demographic shifts, urbanization and forced displacement. In the same vein, the complexity of the migration process is a key consideration in this study.

The study focused on government schemes and programmes that directly impact the well-being of children. Accordingly, the design and implementation of schemes related to early childhood nutrition, maternal and antenatal care, immunization, primary healthcare and education were examined from the specific perspective of portability. Other aspects of social protection like food security, employment guarantees and welfare schemes for specific sectors of work such as construction workers were examined to understand how they help migrant households – including women and children members – cope with shocks, in this case related to COVID-19.

A simple three-tier research framework underpins this research. The research study (a) explores conceptualizations and attitudes around migration in each state; and (b) analyses state-level initiatives towards the social protection and welfare of migrants, especially children and women. Within (b), good practices are also documented. At a broader level, the report offers comparative insights across state-level initiatives and responses, and captures emerging ideas about policy related to children and migration.

Methodology

The study was conducted in two separate phases. Phase 1, spanning April–November 2020, involved secondary research, i.e.,

a review of secondary literature including academic papers, reports and scheme guidelines, to understand the underlying vulnerabilities of migrant children and women as well as their COVID-19 specific experiences in the context of social protection and welfare services. Phase 2, spanning January–May 2021, involved primary data collection, analysis and documentation.

Primary data was collected through key informant interviews (KIIs). State government officials, CSO representatives and experts on migration were interviewed. Respondents were selected via dialogues with the respective UNICEF state offices; subsequently, respondents were also chosen through snowballing. Since physical travel to states for data collection was not permitted and face-to-face interviews were not possible due to the pandemic, KIIs were conducted online. In mid-March, members of the research team were able to travel to Raipur to interact with officials in the Govt of Chhattisgarh. Availability of respondents was an issue in several places on account of COVID-19 related disruptions, especially during the second wave, which hit all five study states badly. The sample is, therefore, not consistent in terms of the number of KIIs or the coverage of departments across the five states. Nevertheless, a total of 72 KIIs were conducted as part of the study.

The KIIs were semi-structured and conducted in a combination of English and Hindi. Interviewers followed a pre-prepared interview guide but customized their questions as per the respondent's area of expertise. The interviews were, on average, 60 minutes long. Most interviews were with individuals, but there are also group conversations, especially with CSOs.

The KIIs were recorded and transcribed in full. Verbal consent was taken from respondents and has been recorded on each transcript. Some of the face-to-face interviews have not been recorded and transcribed; instead, detailed field notes have been made by researchers.

Analysis of the primary data involved the following steps:

Inductive coding of primary data

Each KII was coded, using an inductive approach, by a member of the team. The coders used a previously devised research framework as guide, selecting text and typing the code into a comment box. The KIIs were often bilingual (with Hindi transcribed in Roman script); hence, the coder needed to read the text carefully to not miss details.

Aggregation of codes

The codes were then aggregated into three thematic sheets: on migration perceptions, on migration trends and patterns, and on social protection and welfare responses. These thematic sheets become the basis for writing the corresponding chapters in the report.

Triangulation with secondary data sources

The emerging narratives and findings were triangulated with information from secondary data sources during the drafting stage. These included papers, reports, government orders and notifications, budget speeches and media articles, including sources referred to us by key informants.

Aggregation of good practices

The good practices that emerged in each state are identified and elaborated upon, to create a compilation across states.

2. Locating children and women in migration data

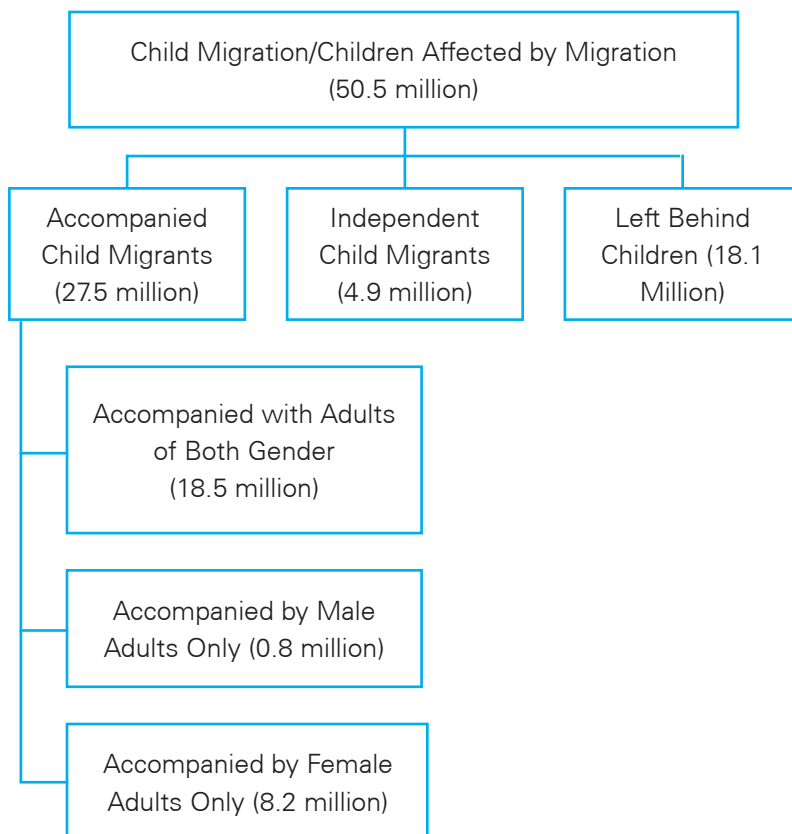
Most of the literature on child migration focuses on two types: children who are directly affected by the migration, i.e. independent child migrants and child migrants who accompany adult members of the household. In this report, we place children into the broader context of migration and consider all children who are affected by the migration process. As a result, we have broadened our definition to include left-behind children, since the migration of one or both parents can have numerous economic, social, and psychological impacts on them. Even though this is also true for left-behind wives, our report does not cover this aspect, focusing only on children. We adopt the definition from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and include 'every human being below the age of eighteen'.

2.1 Estimates of child migration

Despite a well-established statistical system, data on child migration in India is notoriously inadequate. Popular government data sources such as the Census and the National Sample Survey (NSS) are at best useful to provide some broad trends on child migration, but they offer little scope for detailed analysis on the nature and patterns of child migration. As a result, various international agencies, including the United Nations, have reiterated the need for better data (UNICEF 2018; UNESCO & UNICEF 2016). Similarly, the need for conducting large-scale migration surveys in India have been highlighted by several researchers and reports (MoHUA 2017; Sreevatsan 2020). Outdated data, inconsistencies of definition across data and over time, and difficulties in accessing public data are some major challenges that affect research and policy formulation for migration (NIUA & UNICEF 2020, MoHUA 2017). As we will elaborate later in the report, government officials often rely on data collected by non-government organizations to enable programme implementation. The need for better migration data in India was urgently felt during the 2020 lockdown, when the country faced the daunting challenge of providing humanitarian support to a large number of stranded migrants.

A national picture of child migration using the Census 2011 data shows that there were 92.9 million migrants in India in the 0–19 age group, roughly equally divided by gender (49 per cent boys and 51 per cent girls). It implies that nearly every fifth of the total migrants in India is a child, with a higher proportion of male migrants (31 per cent). While child migration has more than doubled (3.8 per cent per year) between 1991 and 2011, the growth rate of male child migrants (4.3 per cent) is higher than female child migrants (3.3 per cent) during this period. Over 44 per cent of the total child migrants live in urban areas. In

Figure 1. Classification of migrant children



Source: NSS Employment-Unemployment and Migration Survey, 2007-08.

terms of reasons for migration, half of the total child migrants 'moved after birth' or 'moved with household' and the share of employment-related migration was very low. Yet, because more than one-third of the child migration is due to 'other' reasons, it is difficult to get a clear picture from Census data.

According to the NSS, around 10–13 million people migrate seasonally every year for employment (Keshri and Bhagat 2012). A large proportion of these people belong to rural areas and households with lower economic status. While in some cases the whole family migrates, in other cases the children are left behind at the origin with their relatives. According to multiple estimates, the number of left-behind children is in the range of 10–20 million (Mehrotra 2019, Venkataramakrishnan 2020).

2.2 Spatial patterns

The states studied in this report – Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Odisha and UP – can be divided into two categories based on the share of interstate migrants to total migrants (Census 2011): Gujarat (6 per cent) and Maharashtra (6 per cent) as destination states, and Chhattisgarh (8 per cent), Odisha (8 per cent) and UP (19 per cent) as source states. These classifications are not watertight: migration within state borders (intrastate migration) is significant in India, including in destination states; source states, too, attract interstate migrants, especially to urban and industrial clusters. In this study, the portability of social protection and welfare of intrastate and interstate migrants are addressed, but the focus is on the latter, who experience considerable barriers to access.

As per data from Census 2001,² most of the migration in India happens over very short distances, within the same district or across adjacent districts. A large proportion of interstate migrants from all states move to neighbouring states. For example, states such as

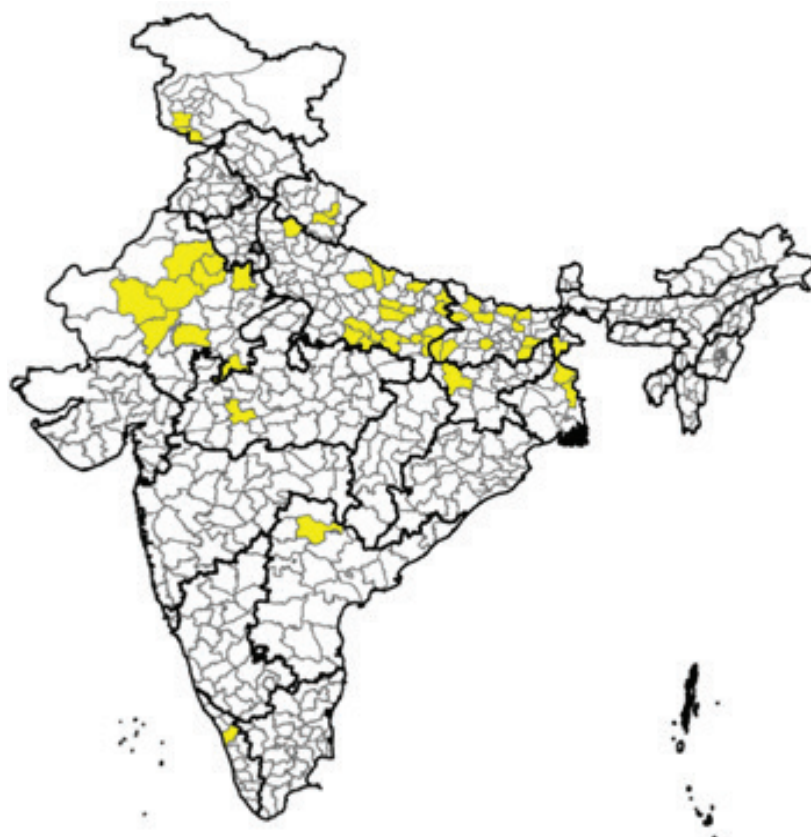


Figure 2. Top 50 districts in terms of left-behind children

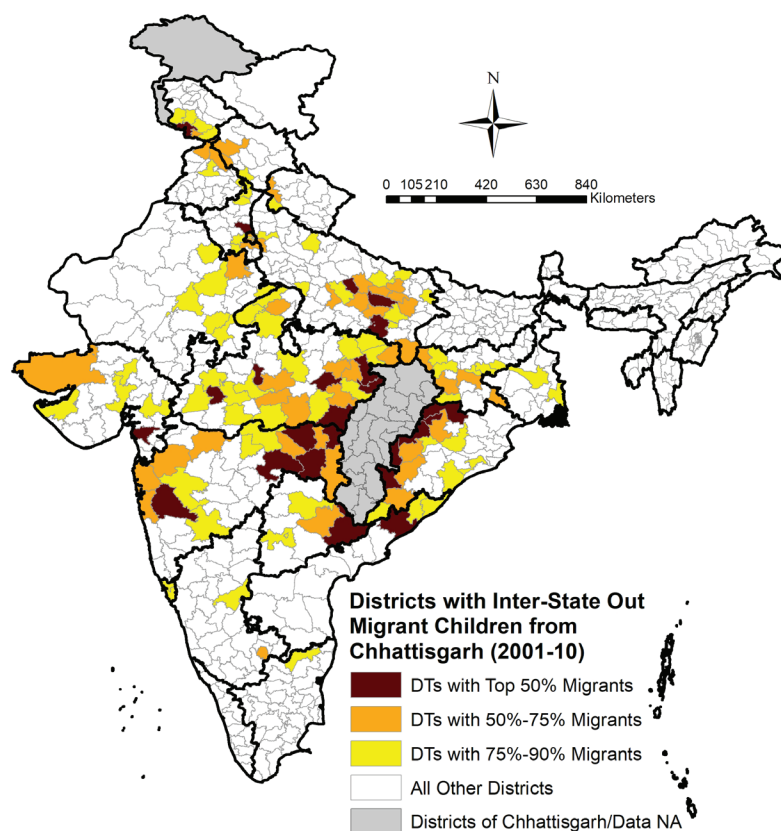


Figure 3. Destination districts for interstate child migrants from Chhattisgarh

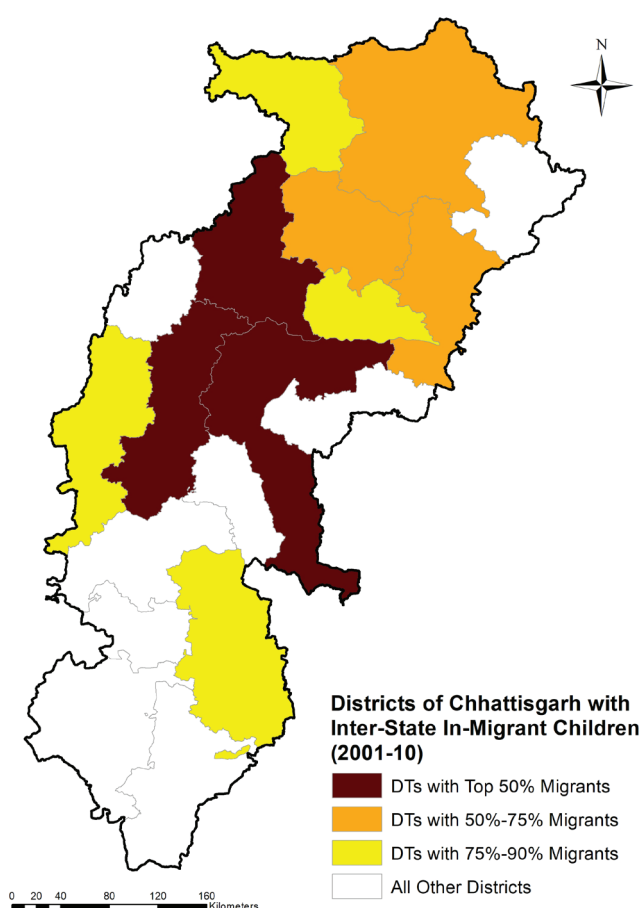


Figure 4. Districts in Chhattisgarh with interstate in-migrant children

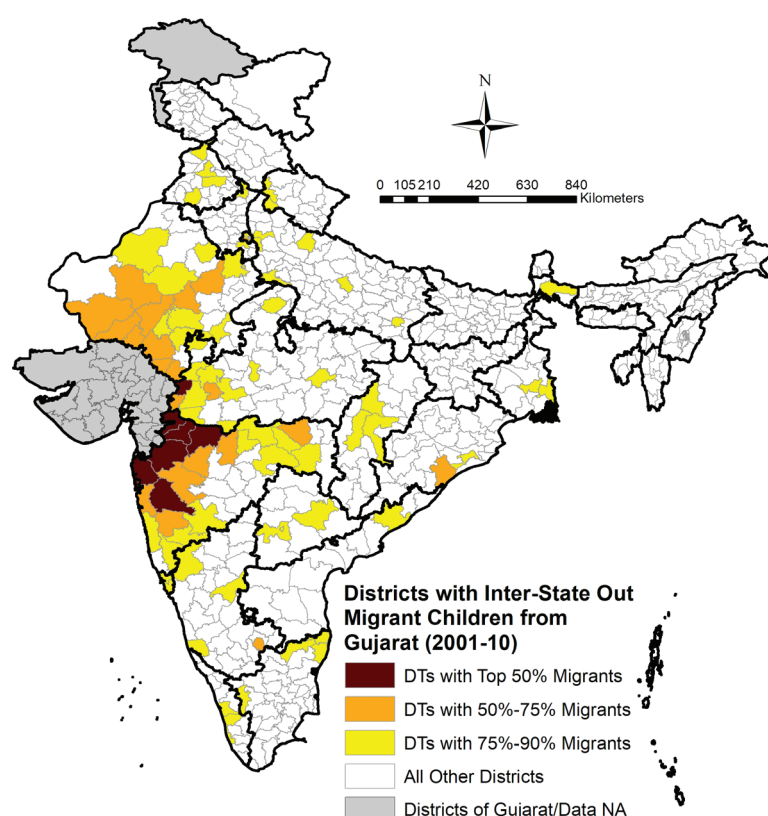


Figure 5. Destination districts for interstate child migrants from Gujarat

undivided Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and West Bengal are major destinations for interstate migration from Odisha. Similarly, Delhi, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand are major destinations for interstate migrants from UP. Of these, a large proportion of interstate migrants migrate to the bordering districts. For example, districts such as Mahasamund, Bastar and Durg in Chhattisgarh; Visakhapatnam and Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh; and Kolkata, North 24 Parganas, East Medinipur and West Medinipur in West Bengal are major destination districts for interstate migrants from Odisha. However, some interstate migration does happen over long distances. Gujarat and Maharashtra are major destination states: in particular, Surat, Mumbai suburban and Thane are major destination districts for interstate migrants from Odisha and UP, while Ahmedabad is an important destination for migrants from UP. In addition to district pairs across state borders, major migration corridors during 1992–2001 for the source and destination states in this study were Ganjam–Surat, Ganjam–Mumbai, Bilaspur–Delhi, Jaunpur–Mumbai, Azamgarh–Mumbai, Gorakhpur–Mumbai, Varanasi–Mumbai, Jaunpur–Thane, Gorakhpur–Delhi and Allahabad–Thane.

2.3 Migrant categories and patterns from primary data

The government officials and CSOs we interviewed had a rich understanding of spatial patterns of migration; in their articulations, these were constantly linked with lived realities associated with sectors of work, modes of recruitment, workplace conditions and intertwined with the identities of migrant communities. While CSOs offered detailed insights based on their own surveys and interventions on ground, government officials' perceptions relied on official datasets, CSO feedback, as well as their personal takeaways from field visits and district-level postings.

Chhattisgarh

Respondents in Chhattisgarh tend to classify migrants based on caste and tribe. These identities also map on to distinct geographies within the state. The first category they identify comprises illiterate scheduled caste (SC) populations, who migrate from districts such as Baloda Bazar, Mungeli, Janjgir-Champa and Raipur mainly due to a lack of opportunity at the source as well as caste-based discrimination. This migration, mainly for construction and brick kiln work, is seasonal and starts in March every year. Some major destinations are Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Karnataka. The second category includes people from scheduled tribes (STs) and comprises seasonal family migration from southern districts of Chhattisgarh to Telangana for chilli picking, from Kabirdham district to neighbouring states for sugarcane cutting, and from Jashpur district to Jharkhand and UP for agricultural labour. Children are also involved in chilli picking.

However, the migration of educated STs from southern Chhattisgarh is more aspirational and long term. The migration of single women to major cities in India to work as domestic help, while common across Chhattisgarh, is more prominent among the ST population. The nature of migration is permanent, and migrants stay at their destination for three to four years continuously and send money home. These migrants are also prone to trafficking: while districts in northern Chhattisgarh (e.g., Jashpur and Surguja) are hotspots for such cases, it also happens across the Bastar region, where young girls and women are sent to metro cities through intermediaries under the pretext of better employment but end up being sold into prostitution.

Being rich in mineral deposits, with highly industrialized places such as Raipur, Bilaspur and Durg, Chhattisgarh attracts a large number of skilled and semi-skilled

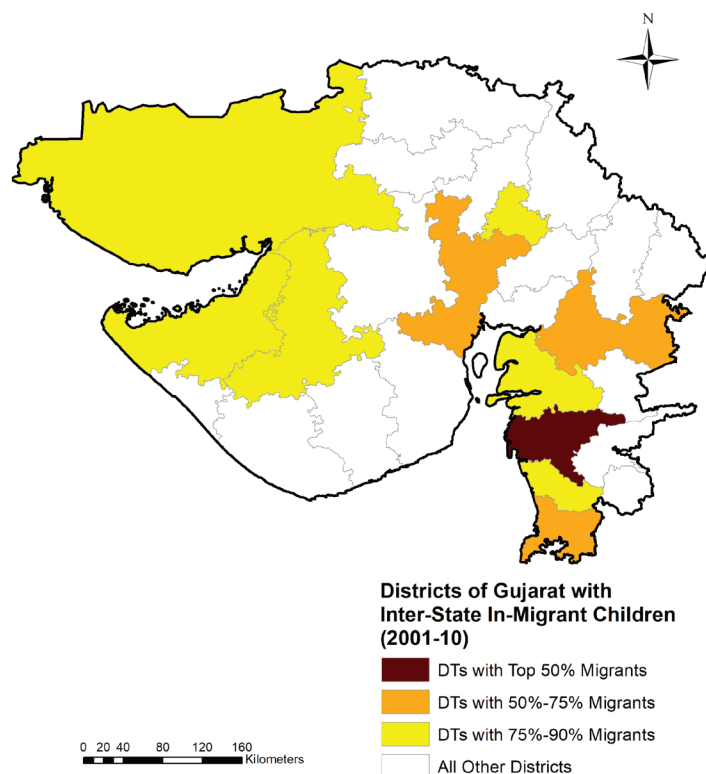


Figure 6. Districts in Gujarat with interstate in-migrant children

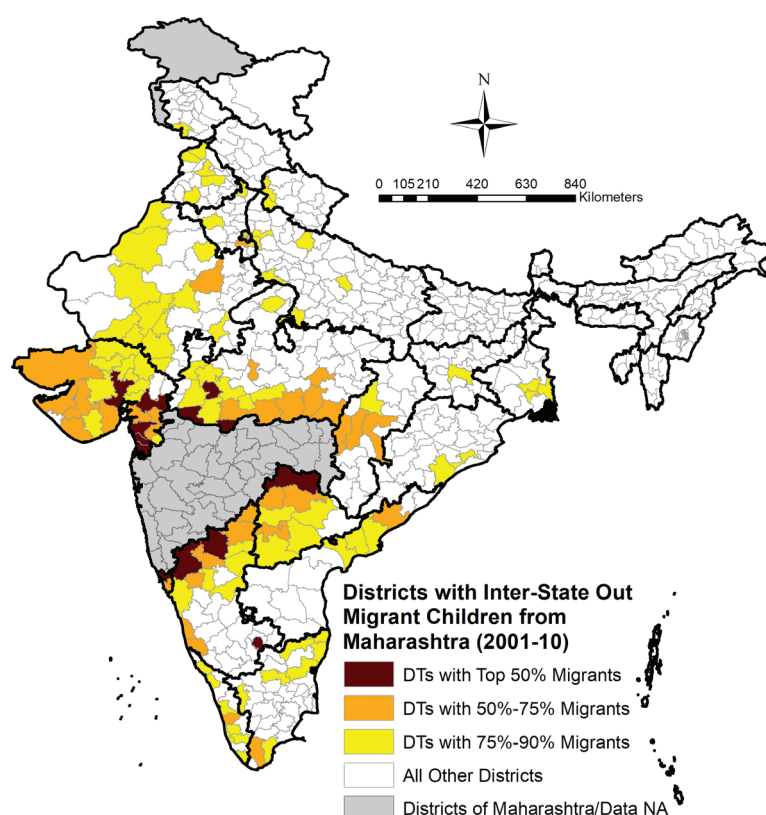


Figure 7. Destination districts for interstate child migrants from Maharashtra

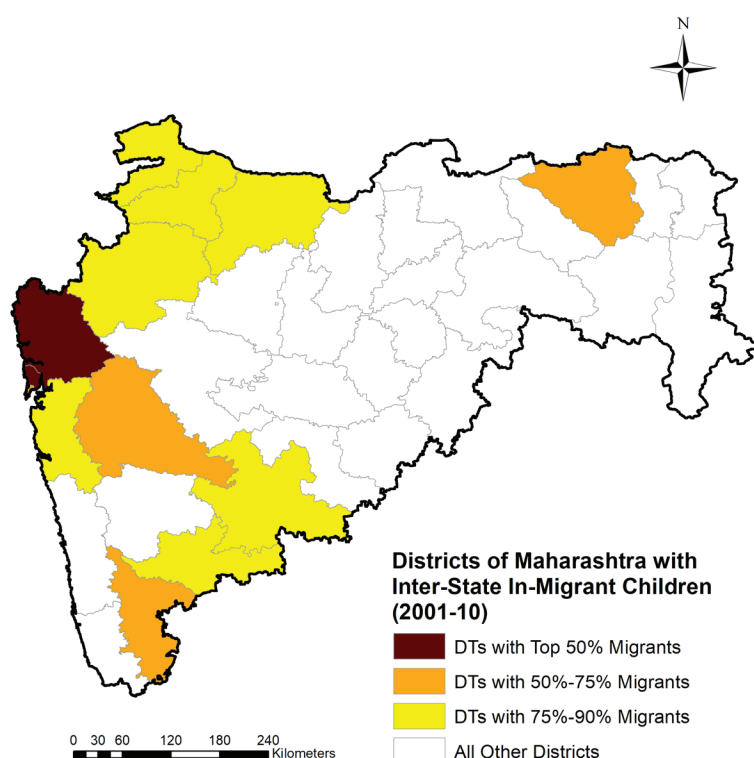


Figure 8. Districts in Maharashtra with interstate in-migrant children

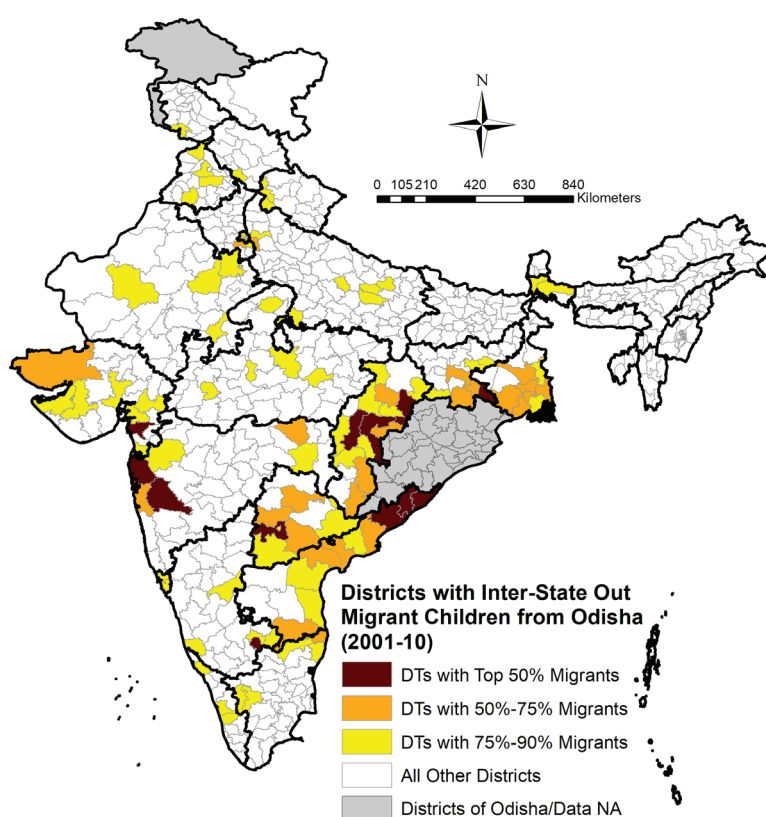


Figure 9. Destination districts for interstate child migrants from Odisha

migrants from other states, e.g., Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, and UP for factory and construction work. Figures 3 and 4 offer a visualization of spatial patterns of in- and out-migration from Census 2011.

Gujarat

Gujarat attracts many interstate migrants, mainly to its urban centres, with Odisha, Bihar, UP and Rajasthan as prominent source states. The two largest cities, Surat and Ahmedabad, attract a disproportionate share of the total interstate migrants, with textile/power loom and construction as major sectors of employment. In most cases, the nature of migration is permanent and young migrants come to the city leaving their family at home.

Intrastate migration plays a crucial role in Gujarat's economy. The diamond industry is mostly dependent on Gujarati labour.³ There are two important streams of intrastate migration in the state: the seasonal unskilled family-based migration of tribal labour from the eastern belt to major cities in the state to work in the brick-kiln and construction sectors; and the intrastate migration from the salt pan areas of the state, e.g., Kachchh and Surendra Nagar, of workers who move with their families during summer for a period of around eight months.

Child migration is quite visible in Gujarat. Children are hired through contractors and brought in from districts such as Udaipur, Raksmandi and Bhilwara in southern Rajasthan, and Kishanganj and Purnea in eastern Bihar. In addition to the textile markets and diamond polishing industry in Surat, many child migrants are engaged in pollination work of cotton farms in northern Gujarat. In recent years, with the cost of living increasing in cities such as Surat and Ahmedabad, due to rising housing rent, privatization of education etc., groups traditionally involved in family migration were starting to leave their families at home. Conversely, the closure of schools during the pandemic has re-triggered

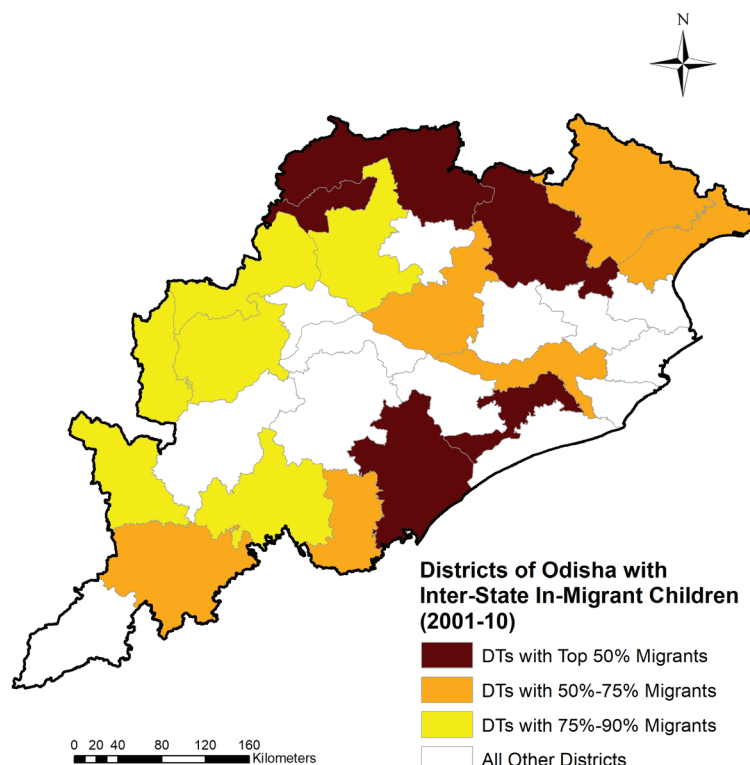


Figure 10. Districts in Odisha with interstate in-migrant children

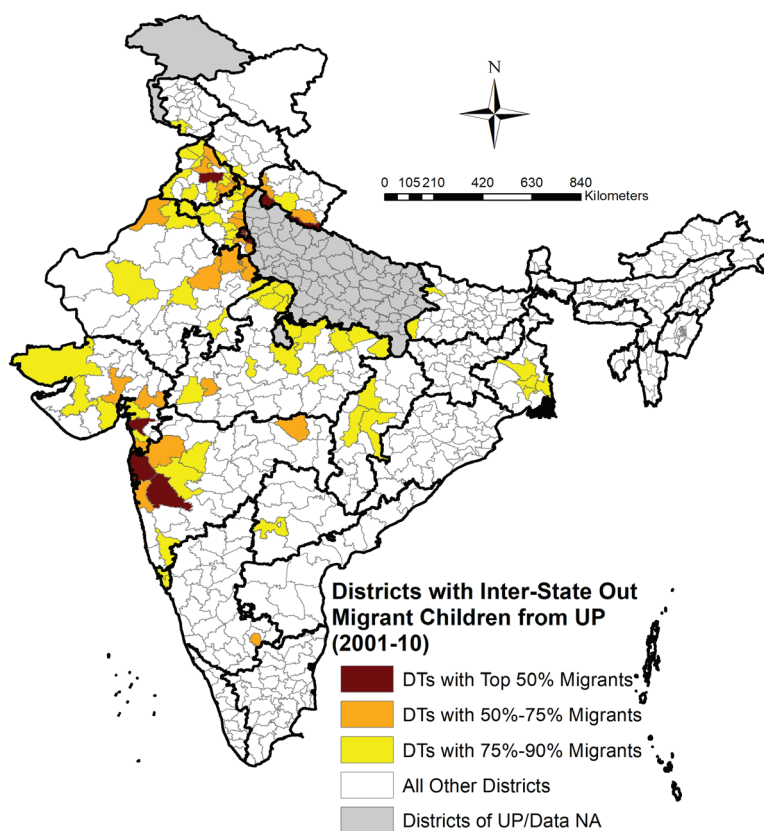


Figure 12. Districts in UP with interstate in-migrant children

family migration and the involvement of children in labour on construction and agricultural worksites. Figures 5 and 6 offer a visualization of spatial patterns of in- and out-migration from Census 2011.

Maharashtra

Maharashtra is well known as a major destination for interstate migrants, especially to major cities such as Mumbai and Pune. In addition to neighbouring states, Bihar, Rajasthan and UP are major source areas. A significant and longstanding stream of migration into Mumbai from eastern UP involves family and single migration, wherein migrants are embedded in deep-rooted social networks. Newcomers might circulate more frequently, but they develop their own networks and, over time, find opportunities to transition into longer-term durations at destination. A similar pattern is seen among intrastate migrants from Marathwada, who circulate between the village and Mumbai to avail of work opportunities.

Respondents pointed to important streams of seasonal intrastate migration, among which migration related to the sugarcane industry appears prominent. People from the drought-prone Marathwada region migrate to districts such as Kolhapur, Satara, Solapur and Sangli to work as seasonal migrants in the sugarcane industry. This involves family migration, which starts in October and continues till March/April. Workers are hired by local contractors (*mukadam*) who are connected to factories and are paid according to the amount of sugarcane they cut every day. Children also work as cutters in the sugarcane fields (Women's Feature Service 2016). Figures 7 and 8 offer a visualization of spatial patterns of in- and out-migration from Census 2011.

Odisha

In Odisha, two distinct patterns of migration are observed. The migration from western Odisha is mostly seasonal,

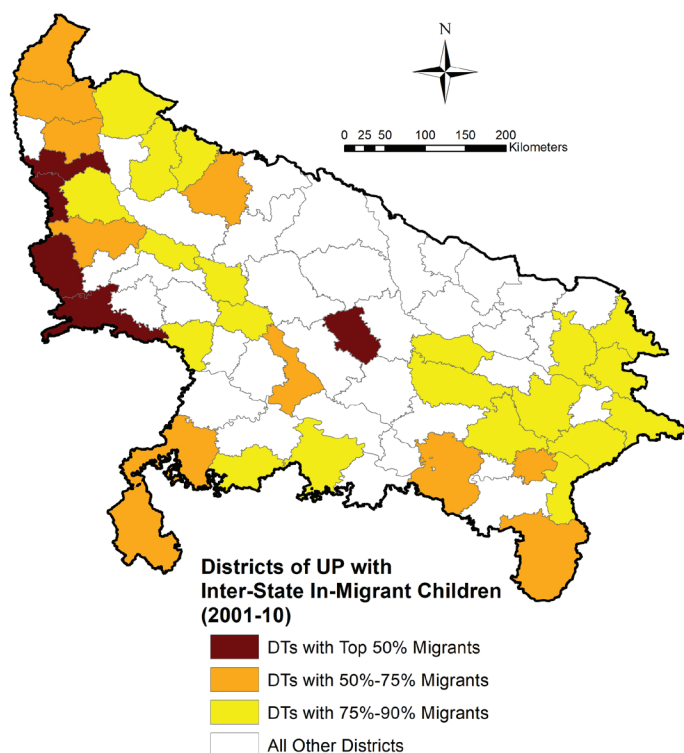


Figure 11. Destination districts for interstate child migrants from UP

with migrant families moving to large cities such as Hyderabad to work in the brick kiln and construction sector. The cycle of migration starts in October/November and continues till April/May. In the brick-kiln industry, migrants who make bricks leave their villages a little early, and those who dry and burn the bricks leave a little later in the season. This sector predominantly records family migration (locally known as *Teenipatri*), and men, women and children undertake specific types of work in the brick kilns. These labourers are usually hired through contractors (who connect brick-kiln owners with local subcontractors) and sub-contractors (from local areas with connections with these workers), and exploitation is very common.

The second type of migration from western Odisha involves single youth migration, which includes both married and unmarried male migrants. Most of these migrants work in the construction sector, but the profile of employment varies from daily wage labour to semi-skilled work such as masonry and plumbing. The duration of stay at the

destination is longer than family migration. In addition, seasonal migration happens within the state for a shorter period during the harvesting season for crop cutting in districts such as Sambalpur and Bargarh.

The pattern in coastal Odisha is mostly single youth migration, but the destination varies across districts. The major destination for migrants from the southern part of coastal Odisha is Gujarat (Surat) and Maharashtra (Mumbai). Similarly, major destinations for migrants from other coastal districts are Kerala, Tamil Nadu (Chennai) and Karnataka (Bangalore). Figures 9 and 10 offer a visualization of spatial patterns of in- and out-migration from Census 2011.

Uttar Pradesh

UP is both a source and destination state. Eastern UP is a key out-migration region. Districts such as Varanasi and its adjoining areas have long-term labour networks to Mumbai. There is also large-scale out-migration from eastern and central UP to Delhi, Punjab and Kolkata. These include both single male and family migrations. Within UP, significant intrastate migration can be observed to Lucknow, more industrialized Western UP, and parts of NCR. These places also serve as destinations for migrants from Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

The nature of work varies by source regions. Women migrants who move with their families from Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh primarily work in the construction sector. Women coming from Bihar or within UP tend to be engaged more in domestic work. Another stream pertains to distress work by left-behind children and women in vulnerable industries such as brick kiln or agriculture, where they have no specified streams or regularity of movement. They are also the most deprived in terms of social benefits. Figures 11 and 12 offer a visualization of spatial patterns of in- and out-migration from Census 2011.

3. Social protection, portability frameworks and state initiatives

Social protection helps children by addressing multidimensional household-level poverty, which is an underlying cause for a range of deprivations such as education, health and nutrition. A recent report underscores that households in abject poverty that are unable to provide for their children because of their economic condition *'need the State as the primary duty-bearer to step in as the families lack resources to provide adequate care'* (Mobile Creches, 2020).

India's social protection and welfare landscape is complex and continually evolving. Some aspects, in principle, provide universal coverage, e.g., education and health. Others, such as the PDS (for food rations), while broad-based, have

eligibility criteria, in this case income levels and residential location. Social protection and welfare are operationalized through a gamut of Central and state schemes, missions and programmes.

The Central Sector (CS) and Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) are designed to improve development outcomes and address multidimensional poverty; thus, they contribute to social and economic risk reduction in an indirect manner and address key areas of vulnerability that migration-affected children experience. While Central schemes are entirely funded by the Government of India, states contribute fiscally to CSS. Additionally, states run their own social security and welfare schemes as well, which complement or supplement

Table 1: Snapshot of India's social security architecture

Social security (articulation; legal backing)	Operational architecture (schemes/ machinery)	Who is responsible for implementation?
Education (Fundamental Right; RTE, 2009)	Samagra Shiksha (Central)	States (with Central support 60:40)
Health (Scheme Entitlement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NHM/Ayushman Bharat (Central) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PMJAY (Central) PMMVY (Central) ICDS (0-6 years; Central) DKBSSY (Chhattisgarh) BSKY & MAMATA (Odisha) MJPJAY (Maharashtra) MJAY (UP) 	States (Central Scheme for some eligible categories)
Food security/nutrition (Statutory Right; NFSA, 2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PDS/ONORC (Central) ICDS (0-6 years & mothers; Central) Non-NFSA coverage in Chhattisgarh 	States (with Central support 50:50)
Shelter (Scheme Entitlement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PMAY-HFA (Central) DAY-NULM (Central) 	Local bodies (with Central support)
Labour and Livelihood (Statutory right; MNREGA 2005, various labour laws)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NRLM (Central) DAY-NULM (Central) MUKTA (Odisha) MMPSUVY (UP) 	Local bodies (with Central support)
Protection/Safety (Statutory Right; POCSO 2012, JJ Act 2015)	ICPS (Central)	States (Police and Child Welfare services)

CS and CSS. As per the Economic Survey 2020–21, the combined expenditure of Central and state governments in India on social services was about 8.8 per cent of its GDP (PIB 2021).

In this report, we examine four areas of social protection and welfare, which directly impact migrant children and women. These include education, health, food security/nutrition, and aspects of employment/livelihood where interventions are directed towards migrant households, especially relevant in the context of the COVID-19 migrant crisis. Additionally, under health, we examine COVID-19 interventions targeted at returning migrants. We do not explicitly cover child safety and protection services, due to the lack of primary data in this regard. Table 1 captures the legal and institutional frameworks relating to the schemes and programmes covered in this report.

Under each theme, we first examine how statutory provisions and scheme guidelines provide for migrants, specifically children impacted by migration. Then we discuss the insights gleaned from the five study states: Odisha, Chhattisgarh, UP, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

3.1 Education

Provisions under RTE and NEP

Elementary education has been viewed as a universal entitlement as a directive principle of state policy, and in 2002, it

became a fundamental right under the 86th Amendment to the Constitution. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 (RTE Act) provides free and compulsory education to all children aged 6–14 years. It creates a statutory entitlement that every child in the country, regardless of their location or other identities, can claim as a right from the state. The Act is implemented through Samagra Shiksha, an overarching scheme for the school education sector extending from pre-school to class 12. Operational from 2018, it subsumes the three erstwhile schemes of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyaan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE) and also includes pre-school education.

The framework document for the SSA recognizes migrant children as “belonging to most underprivileged groups... [deserving]...special priority and focused action” (para 3.8.2.17). It recommends the identification of migrant-intensive districts and the adoption of “innovative and effective strategies” to ensure enrolment, retention and continuation of education across source and destination (para 3.8.2.21). Broad strategies include (i) provision of seasonal hostels / residential schools to retain children at source during the period of migration of their families; (ii) schools at parents’ worksites along with special training centres for children to prepare them for age-appropriate classes; (iii) peripatetic educational volunteers who move with migrating families to manage children’s education between schools at source and destination; (iv) tracking of children through migration cards or other records to enable continuity in their education (para 3.8.2.22). All of these are being implemented in different parts of the country and have proved to be successful for the care of these children.

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) also recognizes the need to pay attention to migrant communities in ensuring access to education. Migrants

Key challenges

Despite the rights-based framing, children of migrants face the following challenges in continuing their education:

- For children of seasonal migrants, the academic year is split across locations, making it difficult to continue education.
- They are unable to enrol in schools at destination, due to the lack of identity documents or transfer certificates.
- Unavailability of instruction in their mother tongue at destination results in drop-outs.
- Leaving children behind at source to continue their education requires care modalities that parents can trust.

are explicitly recognized among the socioeconomically disadvantaged groups that require additional attention (para 6.2). The policy also recommends the provision of alternative and innovative education centres for children of migrants to minimize dropouts (para 3.2).

Seasonal hostels and other residential interventions primarily aim to retain left-behind children during the period of migration so that they can continue their education while their parents migrate by providing residential facilities in the villages (Srivastava 2020). For children who migrate with their parents, section 4 of the RTE Act provides for the admission of all drop-out and out-of-school children in classes appropriate to their ages, and conducts special training for them to be at par with others. Under SSA and its sub-components, the Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative and Innovative Education scheme, special provisions made for migrant children at destination include mobile schools, examinations on demand, bridge courses, residential camps and drop-in centres for street and slum children (UNDP 2009). Special training, such as bridge classes, eases the entry of migrated children into schools (Srivastava 2020). However, difficulties have been recorded in recruiting teachers at destination with knowledge in the languages of the migrants; this constitutes a major challenge in the education of migrants' children (Kumar 2011). Furthermore, challenges exist in setting up site schools due to the lack of advocacy to employers and parents, and financial and infrastructural support from employers (Srivastava 2020; Daniel 2013).

All states and UTs are required to conduct or update household surveys annually, to identify out-of-school children who are a priority group under the SSA. These surveys collect information on children affected by the migration of their families. The framework document for the SSA further places responsibility on the receiving districts and states for ensuring

that children's education in age-appropriate classes can continue during the period of migration, and encourages the involvement of civil society in the processes of migration mapping, intervention planning and implementation (para 3.8.23). The SSA also envisages financial accountability through scrutiny of the Annual Work Plan and Budget of migrant-intensive receiving districts, to assess whether areas of high incidence of migration have been identified and if strategies for education of seasonally migrating children have been included in district plans (para 3.8.2.25).

The Government of India under the Samagra Shiksha provides financial support for out-of-school, dropout and migrant children at the rate of 6,000 and 20,000 annually per child, for non-residential and residential interventions, respectively. It is evident that considerable local action and capacity is required to access these funds. Moreover, scholars and policy experts have observed that, in practice, local governments do not maintain records of children leaving school and joining the workforce, and surveys and databases of out-of-school children are not conducted or maintained regularly in many states (De and Mehra 2016). This data gap makes it difficult to track and redress issues, and is even more complicated if children are migrating alone or with adult family members. This was a significant concern in the context of tracking patterns of mobility during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Initiatives

Support for left-behind children of migrants

Seasonal hostels for left-behind children

The SSA provides for states to run seasonal hostels for left-behind children of migrant workers and the five study states have used this provision in different ways.

Gujarat: Hostels for intrastate migrants

For intrastate migrant children in Gujarat, a survey is conducted at the beginning of the academic year by the SMC, other

Migrant children are explicitly recognized in the RTE Act and by the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyaan, with interventions identified at source and destination. However, local capacity for implementation is inadequate.

school staff and cluster level officials. The survey shows how many enrolled students will be sent out of the cluster. Hostel facilities are provided to children of migrating parents. In 2010, boarding and lodging were provided by local CSOs, but since 2011–12, the children are housed in buildings sanctioned under the SSA by the Government of Gujarat. The hostels are maintained, constructed and managed by the SMC/community, thus enlisting support from the parents who trust local members. While there is an acknowledgement of the success of these hostels in improving attendance, especially in north Gujarat, it is also true that some children slip through the cracks, e.g., children of migrants working in cotton farms in north Gujarat. In recent years, this trend of leaving children behind in the villages has been accelerated by the increasing privatization of education in cities and closure of public schools in urban areas.

Maharashtra: Seasonal hostels for children of sugarcane workers

The seasonal hostel scheme for the children of migrant sugarcane workers was introduced through the Mahatma Phule Sikshan Hami Yojna in 2002, under which sugar mills were asked to provide mandatory schools for children. Temporary schools named 'Sakhar Shalas' were also set up alongside. However, these facilities still remain inaccessible as they are located far away from the working sites. The scheme could not gain momentum because it was under-financed and under-capacitated in terms of human resources.

Odisha: Leveraging convergence and collaboration for seasonal hostels

Western Odisha is known for seasonal migration to neighbouring states for brick kilns and construction work. In most cases, the whole family, including children, migrate after the harvesting season for six to eight months, and children help their parents in brick making, which also affects their education. Seasonal hostels were started in the Balangir district as a pilot project in the early 2000s to prevent

the migration of children and help them continue with their education. The pilot project was limited to a few villages, and the hostels were managed by CSOs with grants from the American India Foundation and support from the district officials. Later, the state government, through the Odisha Primary Education Programme Authority under the aegis of the SSA, took over these hostels and opened new hostels in other districts with high seasonal migration. In 2019-20, there were 164 operational hostels in the state and more than 5,000 students were enrolled in these hostels located in five districts.

The seasonal hostels run roughly for six months: from October/November to the end of May or early June. Children aged 6–14 years whose parents are migrants are eligible to enrol in these hostels. In most cases, the existing school premises are used as classrooms during the daytime and residences at night, and migrant children stay on after the school hours, managed by caretakers. The government provides financial assistance of 10,000 per child to the school for a period of six months under the SSA, spent on food, study materials and other expenses of children, excluding the Midday Meal (MDM), which is separately funded. The state Department of Labour also provides beds and mattresses for these hostels. The SMCs set up under the RTE Act play an important role in running these hostels, identifying families who are most likely to migrate, preparing lists of children eligible for these hostels, and deciding the duration of these hostels based on the pattern of migration. Since SMC members are mostly local people, it is easier to convince the migrating parents to leave their children behind at the hostels. To increase the confidence of parents, children are also allowed to move into the hostels before their parents leave.

Interviews with the CSOs involved in running these hostels highlighted a few challenges. First, seasonal hostels only

cover children aged 6–14 years (aligned with the RTE Act), leading older children to drop out or being unable to complete their education when this support is removed. Second, the remuneration to caretakers in some cases was cited to be inadequate. Lastly, a need was expressed for improving the infrastructure of these hostels, especially the provision of separate rooms for classrooms and residence, and clean water and sanitation facilities. These findings complement suggestions made by the Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights in 2013 for improving the seasonal hostel scheme, including running hostels for eight months instead of six months, providing health insurance to children and regular transfer of money to the SMCs (OSCPCR 2013).

Kinship care model for left-behind children

Community-based support mechanisms have been used to strengthen the outreach of various schemes among the beneficiaries through the involvement of the local population. In the Jalna district in Maharashtra, the Kinship Care Programme was started by the CSO Society for Action in Creative Education and Development, Jalna (SACRED) in 2016 for left-behind children (6–14 years) of sugarcane migrant workers. These children used to migrate with their families for sugarcane cutting, leading to a break in education. The development of a kinship care model was occasioned by migrants unwilling to leave children in boarding schools, which called for alternative community-based arrangements (Chandrasekhar and Bhattacharya 2018).

The kinship care model involves persuading parents to leave their children behind with caregivers, who are usually the grandparents or other close relatives, supported by a network of CSO volunteers. Under this model, AWWs were trained at the district level and then encouraged to make at least one village volunteer in each village, covering around 1,700 Anganwadis.

Scaling Odisha's seasonal hostels to Chhattisgarh

Borrowing from the experience of seasonal hostels in Odisha, Samerth Foundation started the concept of seasonal hostels in Chhattisgarh in 2017, with support from the American India Foundation. The first hostel started in a rural school building in Kabirdham district after getting approval from the district official. The Samerth Foundation first conducted a survey in the area to identify potential migrant children and then convince parents to keep their children in the residential hostel. In the first year, 15 students were enrolled in the hostels, but many withdrew their children at the last moment due to a lack of confidence in the system. However, regular interactions among the various stakeholders and the resultant improvement in the quality of education, including attendance of teachers, has led to increased confidence from parents, which was evidenced by a threefold increase in enrolment in the second year. In 2020, there was an MoU with the government to scale up this experiment and open new hostels in other areas with high seasonal migration.

The success of the scheme was indicated by CSOs reporting that in 2019, around 4,000–5,000 children across the Jalna district stayed back, while their families migrated. They also formed collectives of village volunteers called Bal Mitras and Shiksha Mitras. This was reported to have worked very well during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, as these volunteers belonged to the same village and could reach out to the people during lockdown; they also helped prevent incidents of child marriage.

Support for children moving with parents

On-site schools for interstate migrants

For interstate migrant children, the Government of Gujarat has set up Tent STPs at worksites under provisions of the RTE, enabling alternative schooling to out-of-school children. If the migrating students are admitted to regular schools, language proves to be a barrier. In Tent STPs, teaching is done by Bal Mitras (teachers/instructors) who are relatively familiar with the language of the migrating children. A morning snack and MDM are also provided

at Tent STPs. For example, a Tent STP school at a brick-kiln site in Gandhinagar district receives MDM from the CSO Akshaya Patra on a daily basis (NITI Aayog 2015). Some CSOs also reported an increase in non-Gujarati medium schools in recent years, as evidence of demand from migrant communities for enrolling their children in schools at destination.

The Government of Odisha has also opened non-residential worksite schools at the destination districts (Cuttack, Khordha and Balasore) to reduce the school dropout rate among intrastate migrant children. This appears to be a step in the right direction but requires systematic study to scale.

Portability via migration cards

The Government of Gujarat introduced a Migration Card initiative in 2001 to track students who were migrating along with their parents within the state or from other states, with the objective of reducing dropouts and ensuring continuity in education during the period of migration. Under the Migration Card Initiative, intrastate children were covered in seasonal hostels at their source locations

while interstate children were covered under Tent STPs in temporary schools set up at the worksites of their parents (NITI Aayog 2015). Cards were printed at the state level and distributed to the schools. The cards would indicate the education level of the student and their grades, based on which the student could then continue schooling at the destination. The data helped track the status of intrastate and interstate migrant children by entering each migration stream separately (CLRA 2019).

While the introduction of migration cards was useful in facilitating the education of migrant children, it had some limitations in tracking children accurately. In 2009, the Migration Monitoring Software, an online tracking system for migrant children, was introduced to overcome these limitations and streamline the process of tracking in real time. Under this, a unique pre-printed number is given to each migrant child and is displayed on all migration cards. When migration takes place, the coordinator of the sending school cluster fills a form online using this number and both receiving and sending coordinators are updated in real time. The system has proven successful in significantly reducing dropout rates among migrant children (NITI Aayog 2015) and was reported to be working well in the last few years before the lockdown, especially in the tribal districts of Dahod, Panchmahals and Dangs.

Language facilitation at destination

Language has been a predominant barrier for accessing education for children moving across states, since all schools in destination states do not have the capacity or training to teach migrant children in the source state's language. Noting the significant movement of Odia workers to Tamil Nadu, the Tamil Nadu state education department under the SSA partnered with Aide Et Action (AEA), a CSO working in Odisha, to deliver Odia textbooks to migrant children in the destination areas. They also engaged teachers in Odia language, with

Key takeaways

- The RTE and SSA guidelines have explicit provisions for the continuing education of migrant children, whether left behind or moving with parents. The NEP also recognizes the vulnerability of migrant children.
- Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Gujarat have utilized SSA provisions to operate hostels for left-behind children at source, while Maharashtra has a kinship care programme.
- The use of migration cards with unique numbers as a portability feature for children moving with their parents shows promise, as seen in Gujarat; however, it is unclear how successful this has been for interstate migrants who struggled to get documentations at source.
- Language facilitation at destination through textbooks and volunteers and on-site schools for alternative learning are also examples of initiatives targeted towards interstate migrant children.
- These initiatives show possibilities, but remained limited in coverage and require scale.

support from the Government of Odisha and AEA. In 2019–20, 4,062 child migrant beneficiaries were identified. This included both interstate and intrastate migrants. Through AEA's educational volunteers and CSO support, interstate migrant workers were educated in languages such as Bengali, Hindi, Telugu and Odia.⁴

The programme further incorporated the issuance of bilingual transfer certificates, which would ease the transfer between schools and allow children to continue their education even with circular migration. Beyond Tamil Nadu, interviews highlighted a similar effort undertaken by the Government of Odisha in partnership with the Government of Telangana and CSOs to support and supply local language textbooks to migrant children in the destination state. This programme involved a partnership between CSOs and government, and convergence between departments of education and labour, to collate information on migrant workers flow and equip interstate dialogues on initiatives for resource sharing and teacher training, which could help bridge the education barrier especially in prominent migration corridors.

An emerging trend among destination states, including Maharashtra, is towards encouraging migrant children to study in local languages, envisaged as a measure of integration, instead of investing in multilingual schools.

3.2 Food Security

Provisions under the NFSA

Food grain entitlements at subsidized rates are guaranteed to 50 per cent of urban households and 75 per cent of rural households under the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA), which provides a rights-based framework to food security. The Act is implemented through the PDS, which is designed to deliver entitlements in a place-specific manner through neighbourhood-based FPSs.

Taking a life-cycle approach, the NFSA has enabled special provisions for pregnant women and children (aged 6–14 years), who are entitled to a daily nutritious meal through Anganwadis or the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) centres and through schools under the MDM. Pregnant women and lactating mothers are also entitled to cash maternity benefits to compensate for wage loss and supplement nutrition. The NFSA further enables direct benefit transfer (DBT) modality as well food security allowances to entitled persons in the case of non-supply of entitled quantities of foodgrains.

To address the lack of portability, the Government of India in 2020 expedited the ONORC scheme, which enables portability through an IT-driven system that includes the installation of electronic point of sale (ePoS) devices at FPSs, seeding ration cards with Aadhaar numbers and using biometric transitions.

Key challenges

- Since the PDS has been usually linked to FPSs closest to the home addresses on their ration cards (MoHUA 2017), migrants have faced issues in accessing their food entitlements at destination.
- A particular challenge is the delivery of benefits when only some members of a household migrate.
- The need for portability of this infrastructure was highlighted during the COVID-19 lockdown, where stranded migrants were unable to access the PDS. Ration card rationalization exercises also resulted in migrants discovering that their ration cards were cancelled when they returned home.
- Digitized systems have not been workable in areas of poor connectivity, i.e., 'dark FPS' are a recognized problem in remote areas, where some of the most vulnerable populations live.
- Biometric ID systems have not functioned seamlessly. For instance, fingerprint IDs often malfunction for manual workers whose fingerprints fade over time.
- There is a concern that vulnerable populations who are not NFSA beneficiaries might be slipping between the cracks of the system, since the ONORC does not cover them either.

State variations and independent schemes

Under the PDS scheme, there is some variation across states in terms of provisions. For instance, Chhattisgarh's Food and Nutritional Security Act, 2012 predates the NFSA and broadens entitlement, with explicit coverage for migrants in the locations where they currently reside. In 2019, the scheme was broadened to include above poverty line households.

In addition to schemes under the NFSA, states have their own food security schemes. Chhattisgarh started the Mukhyamantri Suposhan Yojana in 2019 to target malnutrition and anaemia, targeting pregnant women and young children. Under the Shaheed Veerananarayan Singh Labour Food Scheme, Chhattisgarh provides subsidized cooked food to the poor and needy workers in selected areas. Under this, workers registered with the BOCW Welfare Board get the meal at a highly subsidized price of ₹5 per plate. Gujarat also runs the Shramik Annapurna Yojana that provides subsidized hot meals to construction workers utilizing BOCW funds. Similarly, the Annapurna Bhojanalaya Scheme in UP, Bhojan Thalies in Maharashtra, and Aahaar Scheme in Odisha provide subsidized cooked meals in urban areas.

Initiatives

ONORC implementation

From August 2020, ONORC is stated to be available across 24 states/UTs, covering

65 crore beneficiaries representing 85 per cent of the scheme's coverage (PIB 2020). The ONORC architecture is premised on the digitization of both the front end and back end infrastructure of the PDS and the seeding of Aadhaar information of beneficiaries in the database, and requires an updated and uniform database across states. Moreover, there is a persistent issue of 'dark FPSs', which do not have internet connectivity and therefore cannot implement portability features. Concerns regarding exclusion on account of identification and IT system failures also need to be addressed (Khera 2019; Muralidharan et al. 2020).

As the ONORC scheme is still in the process of being rolled out, the extent of actual implementation varies across states and the availability of portability depends on the systems being operational in both source and destination states. Some states such as Odisha have implemented partial portability for intrastate migrants.⁵ An analysis of data from the ONORC dashboard shows that the scheme has been slow to take off: in the eight months since August 2020, just over 40,500 transactions have taken place under the ONORC, for an average of about 4,500 each month. This is an infinitesimally small number compared to the average of 13 crore Aadhaar authenticated PDS transactions that took place each month during the same period. Further, not all states appear to have rolled it out to the same extent. Of the three source states (CG, OD, UP) in our study, only UP had a significant number, accounting for almost 16,000 source-level transactions in that period. This means that about 40 per cent of all transactions on the ONORC were carried out by migrants holding ration cards issued from UP, indicating a relatively higher awareness of the scheme in that state. Not a single migrant from Chhattisgarh availed of the scheme, and only 309 from Odisha did so, all in April 2021. Both destination states (Maharashtra and Gujarat) appeared to have rolled out

Key takeaways

- Since ration cards have been linked to specific FPS locations, PDS access at destination has been a challenge for migrants.
- This is set to change with the ONORC, but implementation is slow and both technical and fiscal issues need resolution.
- States pushed to expand the coverage of cooked meal services and PDS during COVID-19; where possible, these efforts need to be continued to support underserved migrant communities especially at destination.

the scheme, together accounting for about 9,000 destination-level transactions (18 per cent) over eight months.⁶

Cooked meal schemes

The cooked meal schemes for workers outlined above were reported to have eased survival during COVID-19.

3.3 Health and early childhood nutrition

Provisions under the ICDS

The ICDS is an early childhood development programme, aimed at addressing malnutrition, health and developmental needs of young children aged 0–6 years, as well as pregnant women and nursing mothers. It has four components: (i) Early Childhood Care Education & Development; (ii) Maternal Care & Nutrition Counselling (iii) Health Services; (iv) Community Mobilization, Awareness, Advocacy & Information, Education and Communication. It is a CSS anchored by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) of the Government of India.

The ICDS offers a package of six services: Supplementary Nutrition, Pre-School Non-Formal Education, Nutrition and Health Education, Immunization, Health Check-Up and Referral Services. The first three services are nutrition-related and are administered directly by the MWCD, while the last three are health-related and provided by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW). For better governance in the delivery of the scheme, convergence is in-built in the form of Anganwadi centres, which are a platform for providing all services under the Scheme.

The ICDS is a universal scheme and, on paper, every child aged 0–6 years, regardless of location or other identities, is identified as a target beneficiary of the scheme, with some limited recognition of migration. Anganwadi Workers (AWWs)

are required to maintain monthly records of food distribution to both temporary and permanent residents, for which they must record new in-migrants as well as delete persons who no longer live in the village. As per the ICDS manual, they are required to use a number of registers to make monthly totals of important events such as births, deaths and migrations. Further, the ICDS guidelines from 2006 state clearly that ‘all beneficiaries who migrate should be provided [with] a certificate from the Anganwadi in their village of origin. When they migrate to other villages/ towns, they should carry the original certificate with them and should submit it in the Anganwadi at the destination so that they can avail of uninterrupted services’ (Ruthven 2012).

The ICDS framework document recommends the study of Census data for demarcating the population for an Anganwadi/mini-Anganwadi centres, for reaching children from socially excluded groups, including in hamlets, scattered desert/hilly areas, slums and unauthorized urban poor settlements, migrants and construction labour. However, it is unclear how effective the analysis of Census data would be for identifying seasonal migrants.

The 11th five-year plan (2007–12) proposed walk-in ICDS centres in railway stations and bus stands, where the migrant children were most likely to arrive. Some states have provided facilities such as mobile Anganwadis for migrant or homeless children, which are discussed subsequently. In addition, CSOs have also stepped in to fill the gap in some places.

The POSHAN Abhiyaan, flagged off in 2018, is a national programme to improve nutritional outcomes among pregnant women, lactating mothers and young children. The programme seeks to converge the efforts of fragmented nutrition programmes and engage multiple departments and community resources in effecting behavioural change. The Common

The ICDS guidelines indicate that migrants are eligible for certificates that ensure portability and Anganwadi are supposed to record in-migrants and delete out-migrants on a continuous basis.

The Ayushman Bharat scheme provides access to government hospitals nationwide. Additionally, the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana provides health insurance and converges with the ESIC.

Application Software (CAS) programme, an important initiative to operationalize the universality promised by ICDS, is a data management system for Anganwadis, now replaced by the POSHAN Tracker. It captures data on weight and height of children, the opening of Anganwadis, distribution of Take-Home Ration (THR), and attendance of children for pre-school education at the respective Anganwadis. As of November 2019, it had been rolled out across 551,270 Anganwadis across 324 districts in 27 states and UTs (PIB 2019). Whereas a review of documents related to the POSHAN Abhiyaan did not show an overt focus on migrants, the CAS was successfully piloted as a measure to improve seasonal migrant children's nutrition and healthcare by allowing for continuity between source and destination location (Bohne 2018).

Further, the Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for the Children of Working Mothers, also under the umbrella ICDS, provides day-care facilities to children from poor families, in the age group of 6 months to 6 years. There is no bar of domicile or residency in the scheme, and it has been suggested that the scheme should cover migrating women and their children with better planning and additional resources (Srivastava 2020).

Provisions under the NHM

The National Health Mission, implemented through the flagship programme Ayushman Bharat, provides healthcare coverage through government hospitals nationwide. It is aimed at achieving universal health coverage and providing comprehensive need-based healthcare to all citizens. Behera (2018) suggests that the component of the Mission, which is targeted towards the needs of the urban poor, must pay attention to migrants as well. Training documents related to the mission also underscore the need for a strong outreach programme. They advocate a spatial planning approach and place the responsibility of maintaining

updated lists on ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) workers (MoHFW 2017).

One of the main components of Ayushman Bharat is the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY). It is a health insurance scheme that provides a cover of up to 5 lakh for secondary and tertiary hospitalization of marginalized families identified on the basis of the Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011. The benefits of the scheme are intended to be portable across the country. In addition to subsuming registered beneficiaries under its predecessor scheme Rashtriya Swastha Bima Yojana (RSBY), it has also been converged with the existing benefits under the Employees State Insurance Scheme for registered industrial workers.⁷ Convergence with the BOCW Act is in progress with the express objective of ensuring interstate portability.⁸

Provisions under the PMMVY

For first-time pregnant and lactating mothers, the Central government provides a one-time cash benefit of 5,000 in three instalments under the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), pursuant to fulfilling certain conditions relating to the health of the child and mother. These include the registration of pregnancy, undergoing institutional delivery in a government hospital, birth registration, taking the child for ante-natal check-ups, and immunization. The scheme is implemented through the existing ICDS or healthcare infrastructure and staff including CAS, AWWs and ASHAs. The PMMVY was launched in 2017 and is an Aadhaar-based subsidy scheme functioning through the DBT model. The scheme is explicitly portable and the Scheme Guidelines state: *'In [the] case of intrastate or interstate migration due to any reason, the beneficiary can avail of the remaining benefit(s) on the production of Aadhaar number; or MCP card and acknowledgement slip at the nearest AWC/ approved Health facility...and after fulfilling the conditions for each instalment'* (para 3.8.4.c).

State schemes

As health is a state subject under the Constitution, state governments have come up with several schemes to complement the NHM and the ICDS. Some of these include health cards, health insurance, and cash benefits for pregnant and lactating mothers. The eligibility criteria, benefits and implementation vary from state to state. However, all the schemes are characterized by a lack of specific targeting for migrants and are portable only within the state.

Gujarat has been operating a Mother and Child Protection Card (MCPC), called Mamta, since 2005. The Mamta Card serves as a record of immunization and maternal health and according to government health officials is portable throughout the state.

Maharashtra has dovetailed an existing health insurance scheme, the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Jan Arogya Yojana (MJPJAY) with the Central scheme PMJAY. The benefits and access points of both schemes are common, while the MJPJAY features some additional categories of beneficiaries identified by the Maharashtra state government, which pays the premium amount for them. Consequently, while PMJAY is portable, the benefits of the MJPJAY are contingent on holding a ration card issued in Maharashtra.

Odisha has also launched a state scheme, MAMATA, providing cash benefits to pregnant and lactating mothers in two instalments, upon fulfilling certain conditionalities including registration of pregnancy, antenatal check-ups, registration of childbirth, and immunization. The scheme is administered using the ICDS infrastructure and is portable within the state using an MCPC. The beneficiary under this scheme is entitled to ₹5,000 in two instalments. Further, Odisha runs a health scheme called Biju Swastha Kalyan Yojana (BSKY), which aims to provide universal healthcare coverage within the

state. There are two components: (i) free health coverage at all government facilities within the state, which is universal and not residence-dependent; (ii) health insurance at private facilities for eligible beneficiaries, available only for residents of the state.

Chhattisgarh operates a health insurance scheme, Dr Khoobchand Baghel Swasthya Sahayata Yojana (DKBSSY), which is dovetailed with PMJAY and available to all residents of the state based on their ration card. The scheme is portable across Chhattisgarh, and the Guidelines indicate that the dovetailing with PMJAY will enable portability even outside the state (para 6).

Initiatives

Portability via MCPC Cards

Under the MAMATA scheme, Odisha uses the MCPC called the Mamata Card and the e-Mamata app is used to track information of registered women and children. During COVID-19, Odisha's WCD made efforts to register pregnant women and children aged 0–6 years among those who were returning migrants, under the MAMATA scheme. However, there were reports that only those women who were pregnant up to 4 months and not registered in any other state or Central government

Key challenges

- Central government health-related social protection and welfare schemes are designed to recognize the needs of migrants, but specific portability mechanisms are needed to ensure seamless delivery.
- Urban infrastructure and delivery capacity is weak, impacting access to healthcare for migrants in cities; circular migrants on construction sites – often located at the periphery of cities – are particularly impacted by lack of infrastructure.
- There is a gap in terms of training for healthcare frontline staff such as AWWs and ANMs in handling digital tracking systems (e.g., the POSHAN Tracker).
- Awareness among migrants, especially seasonal and circular migrants, about accessing healthcare schemes at destination is weak and requires more attention.

Challenges of urban ICDS

The delivery of ICDS in urban areas has been a considerable challenge. Insights from Maharashtra, where urban ICDS centres are looked after by the state ICDS Commissionerate, and Gujarat point to weak governance mechanisms, inadequate coordination, poor infrastructure, and lack of monitoring capacity as well as accountability. Despite efforts such as the POSHAN Abhiyaan promoting a multistakeholder approach, institutional responses in urban areas tended to be fragmented.

A real-time database to track mother and child health is imperative for ground workers to be able to improve services at the centres and ensure the inclusion of migrants. The POSHAN Tracker, while helpful in capturing data, has not been an effective tracking mechanism. According to a former government official, 'Portability issues are faced by mothers when they move to new areas or districts, as a result of which it becomes difficult to access services and other benefits like THR at a new Anganwadi, which may not have information to make provisions for her.' In both Maharashtra and Gujarat, the inaccessibility and non-availability of Anganwadis is a lacuna for migrant beneficiaries working in construction sites falling in peri-urban spaces lacking ICDS provisioning. In addition to inadequate infrastructure, linking migrants to ICDS benefits is difficult since AWWs do not visit the sites. Meagre salaries of AWWs and limited working hours of Anganwadi centres has further stymied inclusion. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Anganwadis were not functional since March 2020 and AWWs had been roped in for additional duties. 'This effective shutdown of ICDS has meant that there has been no tracking of children over the past one year,' the former government official stated.

maternity benefit scheme could register at the Anganwadi in their area (WCD Odisha 2021). In general, there are issues regarding awareness among beneficiaries, who fail to carry the card while migrating intrastate. They experience loss of benefits upon migrating outside the state and face challenges in finding Anganwadis at urban destinations. Urban Anganwadis are also reluctant to enrol rural migrants.

In Gujarat, the Mamta card is available for not only residents but also interstate migrants. ANMs conduct surveys that collect information about family members, pregnancy status, etc., which is entered into the associated IT system called e-Mamta.

After verification, a unique number is generated for the mother and the child who are then eligible for services (Hadial 2021). The e-Mamta cards and the associated database helps in tracking migrants and devising strategies for the distribution of THR from the Anganwadi centres near their workplace (Talati et al. 2016).

The scheme receives technical support from a 24*7 helpdesk to resolve issues with login ID and passwords, receiving timely SMSs, removing duplicate data etc. (Hadial 2021). It also helps in providing better services and creating awareness about available services. For migrants, there is continuity in terms of service delivery through the unique tracking number, and any duplication is resolved (E-health Network 2016). However, the multiplicity of cards across different schemes was identified as a possible avenue for confusion for those working on ground as well as for departments. Identification requirements for availing of the Mamta card (ration card issued in Gujarat) were also highlighted as a barrier for migrants. However, government officials stated that the card is now being issued in Hindi in addition to Gujarati language for the benefit of migrants.

Digital literacy for AWW

In Dharavi, Mumbai CSOs initiated programmes to enable digital literacy among and create linkages between workers and ICDS provisions. Pratham, a CSO working in the education sector, curated a programme aimed at increasing digital literacy among AWWs. The programme included training in using applications, such as Zoom, to undertake their work. This was especially relevant during COVID-19, since AWWs were able to use digital means to access the Common Application System (CAS) and report data virtually. In extension, CSO Sneha aids the ICDS programme by identifying construction workers and linking them to AWWs, who are then better placed to include them within the mandate of the programmes.

Gujarat: Dhanvantri Rath redeployed for COVID-19 care

The Dhanvantri Rath is a mobile van service providing non-COVID-19 essential healthcare services across Gujarat. It has an Ayush Doctor, paramedics, and nursing staff along with a local medical officer from the Urban Health Centre. These vans provide OPD services for non-COVID-19 essential services and field medical consultations to people including malaria and dengue tests (PIB 2020a). In Surat, Dhanvantri services were also used to treat migrants. The Surat Municipal Corporation started Dhanvantri Rath services in July 2020 to carry out rapid antibody tests for COVID-19 and distribute ayurvedic and homoeopathic medicines at public places in Surat.

Push towards migrant incorporation in urban areas

In Surat (Gujarat), migrants were reported to have access to food and ICDS services because of their spatial positionality in the city: an initiative of the Surat Municipal Corporation has led to the clustering of Anganwadis in migrant-dense areas. Incentives have also been aligned for frontline workers to include migrants by mandating personal visits for registration and providing cash incentives to ASHA workers and other health officials for expansion of coverage. Consequently, it was reported that migrants were able to access the benefits of Janani Suraksha Yojana, ICDS, and other similar schemes.

Migrants were also reported to have access to the PMMVY scheme, subject to them producing medical documents and hospitalization certificates. Government officials reported that institutional delivery in Surat was high because many hospitals were providing free deliveries and also because they are connected with the Chiranjeevi Scheme. Migrant children born in Surat were reported to have birth certificates issued by the Surat Corporation, even if parents did not have local identification, because of a strong online registration system, under which the hospitals were mandated to register all births. During the pandemic, the Surat Municipal Corporation partnered with CSOs to enumerate power loom workers and connect them to health services. When Anganwadis were closed in 2020, AWWs provided services related to immunization and nutrition at some of the labour camps.

Day care on construction sites

Day-care facilities for children of construction workers in Gujarat have been led by CSOs and occasionally builders, with limited linkages to the existing urban public health centres and ICDS (Desai 2020, p. 47). The BOCW Welfare Board in 2016 started a project to set up Anganwadis at construction sites that had been active for at least three years and employing 100 workers with over 30 children in the 3–6 years age group (CLRA 2019, p. 25). While the proposal to run these along the ICDS guidelines did not succeed because of lack of training of staff and issues with maintaining documentation, they were recently used as points for distribution of THR kits from the WCD. The initiative was kept alive by CSOs and developers in the form of privately run creches at construction sites in Ahmedabad (CLRA 2019, p. 25). The creches have been identified as important for the safety of older children, but because contractors do not allow women to take frequent breaks to visit the creches to breastfeed, they are less suitable for infants. Employers have seen the positive impact of providing on-site creches on women workers' productivity, but the number of sites with creches remains low.

Similar initiatives through CSOs such as Mobile Creches are also widespread in Maharashtra, especially for construction labour. However, there is scope for a more institutionalized state-led response for early childhood care by strengthening the Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme, which seems to have been defunct in recent years.

Quarantine management during the COVID-19 pandemic

The mass exodus of migrants from India's cities during the 2020 national lockdown posed multiple challenges, and quarantine centres organized by the various state governments were the first tier of relief distribution for returning migrants.

In Chhattisgarh, COVID-19 management included creating temporary shelters at the GP level. The women and child development department worked closely with these shelters to take care of pregnant women and children. The state provided ready to eat rations and free health check-ups. AWWs were at the forefront of these

initiatives in the rural areas. The Department of Health Services set up proactive health screening and testing at the quarantine centres, which at the peak held 10–11 lakh returning migrants. At the isolation centres for COVID-19 patients, there was a strict protocol for admission, prophylactic treatment and COVID-19 awareness. Post release, people were tracked and traced, at scale.

In Gujarat, specific initiatives were taken up for pregnant women among the return migrants, including separate quarantine and care centres to facilitate safe delivery. Since the Anganwadi system was not fully operational during COVID-19, GPs were mobilized to deliver ration to pregnant mothers, in coordination with ICDS centres. The Surat Municipal Corporation set up systematic treatment, quarantine and care facilities, where any COVID-19 positive persons detected at check posts through Rapid Antigen Testing were taken to the designated COVID care centres located in schools and community halls. These facilities were managed by CSOs, with infrastructure being provided by the Corporation. For migrants who were returning to their home states, free medical facilities were provided in these COVID care centres as well. In the case of migrants who came back to the city after the first surge of the pandemic, testing was provided at the city check-posts, and they were informed about the free food services running in the city.

In Maharashtra, CSO interventions were notable during the pandemic in terms of distributing food relief. Being a destination state, it had witnessed a large outflow of migrants from the bus terminus and train stations, and some intermittent testing was observed through field COVID-19 centres (Singh and Bhalariao 2021). Additionally, local quarantine centres were set up at the village level to facilitate the isolation of intrastate return migrants. Testing and isolation remained challenging in slums in Mumbai, where many migrants remained through the pandemic.

Key takeaways

- Capacity enhancement of AWWs, especially digital training, infrastructure improvements in the coverage and staffing of Anganwadis, and improved remuneration of AWWs will substantively improve the delivery of pregnancy, antenatal care and early childhood nutrition services for migrants by improving their capacities to track, sensitize and coordinate with source/destination Anganwadis.
- Urban ICDS infrastructure and capacity needs special attention in this regard, with a focus on institutional convergence and coordination with ULBs. Surat's experience demonstrates that leadership by municipal corporations can achieve some convergence and rationalization, to the benefit of migrants.
- Portability features such as MCPC/Mamta cards greatly ease the ability of circular migrants to access benefits under the ICDS and state schemes. By promoting pro-active communication in high out-migration locations, it is possible to encourage beneficiaries to report movement to Anganwadis; further, provisions could be made to provide adequate instructions, information and referral. In this, digitization efforts such as the e-Mamta card in Gujarat are commendable but require coordination with source states to be effective.
- Data from the ICDS and health system can potentially help build a robust understanding of circular migration. Enhancing the use of the POSHAN Tracker for documenting migration could reap benefits beyond the obvious ones of improving the delivery of health and nutrition services. This will require inter-ministerial coordination at the Central government level, where the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) is the nodal ministry for migrant issues.

In Odisha, the state government financially empowered GPs to set up 14-day quarantine-cum-isolation centres for returning migrants during the first wave. In addition to this, Temporary Medical Centres (TMCs) were set up at the GP level where testing and immediate medical facilities were available. The village sarpanch had been provided with the executive power of a District Magistrate to spend money for developing school or community buildings as quarantine centres. About 7125 TMCs were set up in 6,798 GPs, which had 227,000 beds (Chhotoroy 2020). In the wake of the second wave, these TMCs were reactivated at the Zilla Parishad/Block level (Express News Service 2021). The quarantine centres offered free food to migrant labourers, who were also paid 2,000 as interim financial relief. Several CSOs helped in documenting information of migrants at the source in specific sectors of distress migration such as brick kilns, which could be shared with the District Labour Offices for the easy rollout of benefits in future. The CSO relief work centred around different socio-demographic and occupational segments, e.g., interventions for women, children or persons with disabilities. The Ganjam district administration appointed 'COVID Bandhus', which included recovered patients, who assisted the district administration in persuading symptomatic individuals to go for testing, counselled positive patients, and spread awareness about the infection (Mohanty 2020).

In the case of UP, the state government facilitated COVID-19 management by transporting their workers from other states and entry points (e.g., railway stations) to their home districts. Quarantine centres were set up at the GP level, where the village *sarpanchs* were instructed to facilitate free food and isolation. In urban areas such as Lucknow and Ghaziabad, free ration and food distribution centres were operational for migrants at the destination, during the first surge.

In addition to a few specific instances in Gujarat and Chhattisgarh, specific quarantine or relief arrangements for family migrants, especially children and women, were rare. Respondents pointed to inadequate care for pregnant women and young children. Systematic facilitation for the departure of interstate migrants from destination states, with coordination with source states, would have eased some of these issues. Capacity issues at the local level were also noticeable. GPs were not always able to enforce the quarantine of returning migrants effectively. There were also gaps in the documentation and registration of return migrants for social security schemes.

3.4 Labour and livelihood

Migration and child labour

Child migrants contribute up to a fifth of children in the workforce in India. The NSS 2007–08 shows that while children who move with families are reported as family migrants, about 6.5 per cent (0.98 million) are in fact found to be working. Children in poor rural households see themselves as economic agents contributing to the household and thus migration of adults and children are part of rural household livelihood strategies (Waddington et al. 2003). According to NSSO 2007–08 estimates, about one-tenth of the child migrant population (1.7 million in rural areas and 1.5 million in urban areas) are found to be working as per their usual principal activity (UPS), which goes up to 13 per cent (4.1 million) if the usual subsidiary activity (USS) is counted as well.⁹

These figures are complicated by the fact that India does not have a universal legal prohibition on child labour. The Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 prohibits work, except in family enterprises outside of school hours, for children below the age of 14, while allowing adolescents older than this age to work in non-hazardous enterprises. This age is also dovetailed with the age for compulsory schooling under the RTE Act, 2009.

Workforce participation of younger children may be under-reported in NSS data, given the illegality involved. This study finds that the presence of migrant children in the sugarcane cutting industry is not recorded by the agriculture officers, creating a knowledge gap that leaves them out of welfare services.

Participation of children in the workforce increases sharply beyond the legal employment age of 14 years. While just 1.2 per cent of migrant children younger than 14 are found to be working as per their UPS, this rises to 20 per cent of the child migrant population within 15–19 years. However, workforce participation of younger children may be under-reported in NSS data, given the illegality involved. For instance, this study finds that while there is a presence of migrant children in the sugarcane cutting industry, their presence is not recorded by the agriculture officers. This creates a knowledge gap and subsequent lack of provisioning for these children in welfare services.

Seasonal and circular migration, in particular, severely impacts children who most often have to work alongside their parents (NIUA & UNICEF 2020). These children are part of family labour streams in certain sectors of the economy: it is not uncommon for contractors to pay cash advances to households for work in labour- and migrant-intensive sectors such as brick kilns and agriculture. Such families find themselves trapped in not only poor working and living conditions but also a cycle of intergenerational debt (Guérin 2013). Parents may also use children to improve their bargaining position with contractors in a situation of bonded labour (Bhukuth 2005). Children are assigned specific tasks in these family labour situations: for instance, in brick kilns and cotton farming, children are considered docile workers and deployed to specifically perform tasks that require small hands and nimble fingers, e.g., piling mud or flipping bricks in brick kilns, and cross-pollination of cotton seeds in agriculture (Ghosh 2019; Khandelwal et al. 2014; Venkateswarlu 2004).

Rural employment guarantee under the MGNREGA

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (MGNREGA) provides at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in

each financial year to all rural households whose adult members volunteer for unskilled manual work. The MGNREGA is implemented through panchayats as nodal institutions and as per its operational guidelines, is aimed at ensuring inclusive growth in rural India through social protection, livelihood security and democratic empowerment (para 1.2). It provides an important source of livelihood for many families in rural areas. The MGNREGA operational guidelines provide for a crèche at worksites where five or more children below the age of 6 accompany women workers. In these cases, one of the women workers is to be appointed as caretaker and paid an equal wage as the others (para 7.12.4).

Rural livelihoods provisions under the NRLM

The National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), intended to create sustainable livelihood options for the rural poor, was leveraged to address the employment and income concerns of returning migrants. A considerable thrust of the mission is on federating women-led self-help groups (SHGs) at the village and block levels and facilitating them to form livelihood groups through financing and skilling.

Urban livelihoods provisions

The National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM) has a specific component called Shelter for the Urban Homeless, which is relevant in providing shelter and basic services for destitute families and individuals. Homeless shelters are vital for child labour, who are estranged from their families, children in women-headed households who have fallen through the cracks and other situations of destitution, and migrants who are not eligible for subsidized public housing at destination.

Some states are experimenting with urban employment guarantees to help informal sector workers in cities, but it is not clear yet in what way the eligibility criteria and implementation guidelines will include

migrant communities. In the aftermath of the national lockdown and building on the success of the Jaga Mission, which focuses on granting land title and infrastructure upgrading in settlements of the urban poor, Odisha introduced a scheme called MUKTA, for providing employment to urban poor through the involvement of women SHGs. Chhattisgarh was able to leverage skills mapping to connect approximately 15,000 return migrants to industrial jobs in the state.

Street vendors are an important component of the urban informal workforce. They are regulated by the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 and the rules and schemes framed thereunder in various states. Under the Act, a survey of vendors is to be carried out by ULBs, based on which vendors are eligible for registration and licences for carrying out vending legally. The Act permits children above the age of 14 to register themselves as street vendors and receive licences for vending in urban areas. After the nationwide COVID-19 lockdown, the Central government announced a scheme for street vendors titled SVANIDHI, under which vendors who had been surveyed and registered by ULBs could receive subsidized credit for restarting their businesses, which had been affected due to the lockdown (PIB 2020).

Provisions under labour laws

Migrant workers are provided for under various legislations, of which three are notable. The Interstate Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979 makes contractors responsible for ensuring adequate wages and working conditions. The Unorganized Sector Workers' Social Security Act, 2008, though not specific for migrants, allows for states to create an affiliated UWSS Board, through which benefits can be disbursed. For example, Gujarat has a UWSS Board that registers and provides

welfare benefits to workers in specific occupations and trades but leaves out several groups of unorganized workers. The BOCW, who form a significant portion of the migrant workforce, are eligible for registration and social welfare benefits with state-level welfare boards under the BOCW (Regulation of Employment & Conditions of Service) Act, 1996 (Roy et al. 2017). Registration is available to all workers aged 18–60 years who have worked for at least 90 days in the preceding calendar year. Benefits vary between states, although some standardization has been introduced by a Central Government Model BOCW Scheme notified in accordance with directions of the Supreme Court, which includes scholarships for children of registered workers and support for childcare facilities at construction sites. During the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, several state BOCW boards provided DBT cash transfers to registered workers. Inadequate registrations overall, and specifically of migrant workers has been an issue as well as their ability to access benefits when in a different state from that of registration. In some places, CSOs have played a role in facilitating registration.

All three of the aforementioned legislations have since been subsumed under the new Labour Codes which were yet to be brought into force at the time of the conclusion of this study. The implications of this legal change on workers and the

Key challenges

- Migrant workers have limited recognition within the legal framework. While the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored migrants as a key category, legal and administrative frameworks are yet to offer clear definitions and provisions for them.
- Migrants faced problems receiving DBTs and other benefits owing to low registrations in the BOCW and UWSS boards.
- Interventions at source such as the expansion of the MGN-REGA and the NRLM to returning migrants showed promise, but it is unclear how they would be leveraged in the long term for circular migrants.

Odisha provided working capital to SHGs under a Special COVID-19 Assistance Package to revitalize the livelihoods of SHG members and returned migrants. For example, 500,000 community gardens were facilitated to promote dietary diversity, helping rural families sustain themselves.

existing system are unclear at present. Overall, this is a period of flux in the landscape of labour legislation as the states are in process of adopting the new Labour Codes.

Initiatives

Expanding employment guarantee
In the wake of COVID-19, the Government of India increased allocations to the MGNREGA, envisaging that migrant workers returning to villages would benefit from this move. States such as Odisha and Chhattisgarh increased the number of guaranteed days of work to 200, while UP issued about 9.2 lakh new job cards to returning migrants.

In Chhattisgarh, the MGNREGA was identified as a means to mitigate migration. Timely identification and enumeration of migrant families on the MGNREGA muster roll are expected to play an important role in deterring migration from hotspots and providing employment in source states. Here, the potential role of the Gram Sachiv and CSOs was highlighted in the process of immediate identification, enumeration and access to the scheme. A total of 612,025 families in the state were provided work for more than 100 days in the financial year 2020–21, and 18.4 crore person-days employment was provided in Chhattisgarh during this period, an increase of 135 per cent over the preceding year.¹⁰

In UP, officials reinstated the objective of MGNREGA as a deterrent to urban migration, and further highlighted the state's role in providing job cards and MGNREGA enlistments to the returning migrants during the COVID lockdown. In UP, 9.21 lakh return migrants were given new job cards and a total of 12.52 lakh migrants were enlisted in MGNREGA during the pandemic.

Support through livelihood missions

Departments of rural development and MSME converged efforts to sensitize GPs to facilitate local entrepreneurship among

returning migrants under the NRLM. This was necessary because many returning migrants chose not to work in agriculture or MGNREGA, since such manual jobs hamper their long-earned social status in the village. The NRLM has also been streamlined to facilitate home-based work by women by forming SHGs among women and left-behind wives. One such initiative was mask-making, which was popular and useful during the pandemic. The rural development department is treating it as their flagship scheme, and there have been initiatives to link this scheme with the MGNREGA. There are dedicated staff for the NLM up to block level, who facilitate training and financing to these SHGs.

In Odisha, 156.14 crore was provided as working capital to SHGs under a Special COVID-19 Assistance Package to revitalize the livelihoods of SHG members and returned migrants. For example, by converging the NRLM and the MGNREGA, the state facilitated the creation of 500,000 community gardens to promote dietary diversity, helping rural families sustain themselves.

Odisha has also focused on support to the urban poor in specific ways, with possible benefits to intrastate migrant households. Building on the success of the Jaga Mission, which focuses on land titling and infrastructure upgradation in urban informal settlements, the Odisha government introduced the Mukhyamantri Karma Tatpara Abhiyaan (MUKTA) scheme for providing employment to the urban poor through the involvement of women SHGs federated under the Deendayal Antodya Yojana of the National Urban Livelihood Mission (DAY-NULM). The state government has facilitated the creation of SHGs among vulnerable households, including migrant workers, with the intent to enable skilling, livelihood generation and financial inclusion. The impact on migrant households is an aspect to be studied in the future.

The focus of the Chhattisgarh government in terms of the NRLM is mostly in relation to women. However, its goals have minimal linkage to youth skill development in any of the states. The state government acknowledges though that the youth must be skilled to work in the service sector, e.g., retail, and soft communication skill-building and associated processes should be part of the new skill development programmes.

CSO interactions in UP reveal a mismatch of the job training initiatives and entrepreneurial push for the youth in the state. They pointed out that while the districts of UP are diversified in terms of economic activity, and there is a scheme called 'One Districts-One Product'¹¹ in place under the 'Make in India' initiative, these business initiatives are not merged with the larger planning and execution of skill training and NRLM in the state, which results in significant aspirational youth out-migration. Similarly, during skill mapping of return migrants in UP, parameters were not well-defined and employers were not integrated into the system. Migrants were unable to provide formal certificates of skills as most of them did not have such paper documentation and were thereby excluded from the process. There was also not enough sensitization and education at the GP level to execute this initiative.

Migrant resource centres at destination

Source states have set up Migration Resource Centres (MRCs) in destination areas to support migrants with scheme access, grievance redressal and cultural connections. For instance, the Odisha government's Department of Labour has set up an MRC in Thiruvallur district with the help of the Panchayati Raj Department of Tamil Nadu, which facilitates skill updating for Odia labourers at destination. Similar initiatives are also planned by Chhattisgarh as part of a new migration policy.

Shelter homes for migrants

In Gujarat, the SUH scheme under NULM is implemented with 91 shelter homes in

38 cities. The shelter homes have facilities such as ventilated rooms, common cooking space, and cooking gas services, as well as toilet and bathing facilities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, nodal officers were appointed to provide sanitizers and other equipment, and the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) started 30 additional shelter homes for migrant workers, where they provided food, medicines and other facilities.¹² CSOs such as Aajeevika Bureau and Hunarshala worked in collaboration with the AMC to create a database and ensure that migrants can avail of government services and schemes (Marvada, undated). However, family migrants found it challenging to avail of these SUHs because there are no family shelters, only dormitories. The proposed Affordable Rental Housing Complex scheme is a possible solution for family migrants.

Easing BOCW registrations

In Chhattisgarh, BOCW registrations were eased during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 90-day stipulation of working under the same employer was waived off and self-certification was introduced in the place of certification by employers or contractors. During this period, the Department of Labour in Chhattisgarh collected data of 2.5 lakh returning migrants and planned skill mapping for them. They have also been able to find local employment for some of them in the industries.

In UP, the rural development department is trying to integrate the NREGA data with the BOCW, to get an idea of how many workers with NREGA job cards are also registered in the BOCW. The objective is to facilitate easy identification of unregistered workers under the BOCW and escalate their registration. Further, to facilitate the registration of unorganized construction workers who are not usually contracted regularly through large contractors or builders/industry owners, three significant changes in the registration process were made during the COVID-19 pandemic: (i) For new registrations, there was a full fee-

In Uttar Pradesh, the registration of unorganized construction workers in the BOCW was facilitated during the COVID-19 pandemic through registration fee waivers, increasing the registration periods and by allowing self-certification for proof of employment.

waiver till 31 March 2021, and a reduced registration fee thereafter; (ii) the periodicity for renewal of registrations increased from one to three years; (iii) the certification of minimum 90 days' work from the employers/contractors was replaced with a self-affidavit on stamp paper. Registration has been made easier and, while availing of benefits still requires workers to get the employer's recommendation, even informal and unorganized employers and contractors can now certify.

The COVID-19 pandemic also necessitated online registration through Customer Service Centres (CSCs) and 'Apna Seva Kendras'. This technological intervention simplified the earlier manual process, which required facilitation by CSOs, who would camp in the labour sites, collect all the forms, submit them to the Department of Labour, collect ID cards from the department and distribute them to the labourers. The new online single-window process has benefited labourers, who can apply and receive their cards away from their workplace. The state has also facilitated BOCW registrations for interstate migrants and several registrants are interstate migrants from MP, Bihar, Bengal, Assam, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh.

Another issue that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic was linking bank accounts to BOCW accounts to get the facility of cash benefits, especially for older beneficiaries. This was achieved remotely using Aadhaar and mobile, with CSO resource persons following up with them regarding the process of registration and subsequent receipt of benefits through a WhatsApp group created and maintained by the Department of Labour. This is an example of state-CSO co-production using technology that can facilitate migrants.

One of the schemes operated by the UP BOCW welfare board is a cash transfer scheme for newborns, called *Sishu-hit-labh aur Matritwa-hit-labh*, under which one can get 20,000 for a male child and 25,000 for a girl child. If both the husband and wife are registered, then in addition to the cash transfer, the woman is also given one month's salary (calculated based on the daily wage rate). Hence, the scheme takes into account and encourages family-labour registration.

In Gujarat, the BOCW cess funds were appropriated by the Department of Finance and then reallocated through state budgets, which has led to the exclusion of workers who are not covered by other schemes.

Key takeaways

- Source states expanded the MGNREGA to provide employment support to returning migrants during COVID-19 and supported SHGs to promote entrepreneurship among them under the NRLM.
- States have eased the registration process for the BOCW, and while this works well for DBTs, streamlining the varied schemes across states would require effort if interstate migrants are to benefit in the long term.
- MRCs and help desks at destination are a growing trend that will require bilateral agreements among states that have long-term source-destination linkages.
- Shelter homes, though necessary to prevent homelessness and destitution, might not be suitable long-term solutions for circular migrants; states would need to plan for worker dormitories and hostels, where services can also be delivered more efficiently.

3.5 Data collection initiatives

Data collected at quarantine centres

All three source states collected data about returning migrants, usually at quarantine and isolation centres that had been set up in GPs. In Chhattisgarh, three departments worked side by side in quarantine centres. The health department provided medical check-ups as well as COVID-19 screening, testing and isolation. The WCD ensured nutrition and care for pregnant children and women, while rural development collected data. It is unclear what precise information was collected at the quarantine centres, but officials admitted that this static information was inadequate to plan interventions for a context as dynamic as migration. UP

made similar efforts, but GPs had no clear directives on how to collect data from the quarantine centres nor the requisite training from higher levels of government. In Odisha, the role of real-time data in facilitating safe migration and reducing vulnerabilities for migrants is well-understood and data is collected by GPs. Source and destination state governments also have data about the transportation of migrants in 2020. For example, we know that 1.54 lakh migrants returned to Chhattisgarh via Shramik trains. While data on their destination states is available, gender-disaggregated data is not.

Skill mapping

Source state governments conducted skills mapping of returning migrants with the intention of facilitating connections with livelihoods and employment within the state. Odisha mapped 5 lakh migrant workers, Chhattisgarh 3.5 lakhs and the UP government 23.5 lakh migrant workers. While these efforts did not yield the desired results, with many migrants going back to their destinations post the lockdown, the data sources could serve to understand linkages between skills, destination choices and sectors of work. CSO representatives in UP shared concerns over the ability of the skills-mapping exercise to capture the nature of skills possessed by informal sector workers. This was because parameters for mapping were not fixed and government officials demanded proof of skills, e.g., certifications, which migrant workers did not have. Workers' descriptions of the tasks they performed at work were also not easily captured by the categories of skills that the

surveyors had in mind, which drew from a more formal understanding of work.

Village-level databases and migrant registers

There are multiple ways through which migration is captured at the GP level by the grassroots workers. Some of these are school registers, through which benefits such as scholarships are disbursed. In Jalna, Beed and other districts of the Marathwada region of Maharashtra, school records were used to allocate financial incentives for the caregivers of the left-behind children, for a scheme that has since been discontinued. The PHC birth-registration and visits register, maintained by ASHA workers, who provide last-mile health benefits and similar data from the Anganwadi system, are also available to be used. However, there appear to be no efforts to read these databases together.

Specific to migration, Odisha has attempted to maintain registers at the GP level to document the movement of seasonal migration. Chhattisgarh has also attempted such a *palayan panji* (migration register) system for the past few years. In Chhattisgarh and UP, where the MGNREGA has been seen as a means to mitigate migration, respondents suggested that timely identification and enumeration of migrant families on the MGNREGA muster roll can play an important role in deterring migration from hotspots and providing employment in source states.¹³ Here, the potential role of the Gram Sachiv and CSOs was highlighted in the process of

Odisha: Multistakeholder safe migration initiatives

In Odisha, CSO Udyama worked with local panchayat and governance bodies to issue unique identity cards. In this programme, out-migrants were given an identification card with relevant details, which was signed by the panchayat and a representative from Udyama. The intent of the card was to equip migrants with identification, which promotes safe migration and reduces the instances of harassment and exploitation during the commute and at the destination state.¹⁴

Aide et Action initiated a programme with UNICEF to conduct pre-departure orientation in source areas to create awareness about the necessary documentation to be carried, safe travel measures, and service providers who help in the migration process.

immediate identification, enumeration and access to the scheme.

Interviews highlighted the lack of capacity and agency of a panchayat Pradhan at ground level in terms of collating data, especially in the absence of guidelines provided by the GP Development Plan or block-level administration. Moreover, clear directives are not available regarding the utility of this data. Migration registers have not been particularly successful, possibly because migrants fear exclusion from local social welfare schemes if they register. Chhattisgarh's Migrant Worker's Policy, which awaited notification at the time of writing this report, plans to improve the system with the help of Shram Mitras from rural communities, who will act as intermediaries to facilitate registration as well as service delivery.

CSO surveys

Due to a lack of active baseline data, CSOs rely on their own surveys in their area of operations. CSOs working with migrant communities collate quantitative and qualitative data in the migration hotspots of the states that experience high immigration/emigration, notably with the poorest of poor or vulnerable groups whose ease of access to services is unequally skewed. For instance, four out of five CSO interviews in Odisha noted their area of operation

in the erstwhile KBK region, which has historically been recognized as an extremely impoverished region with a high out-migration rate due to distress.

Government-CSO collaborations for data collection

CSOs are active in providing on-ground efforts to aid the access of services to workers in areas where the state's capacity is limited; however, unlike the state, they are limited in their capacity to document these. Findings highlight a need for better linkage and synchronization of data and efforts between the state and CSO, wherein the two create an enabling environment to reach the most vulnerable communities and aid service delivery. A few instances from our research highlight the potential of these linkages.

In Ghaziabad (UP) and Odisha, the Department of Labour worked with CSOs to enable workers to register under the BOCW by assisting in self-affidavits. This enhanced the state government's ability to make direct benefit transfers to many more construction workers during the lockdown. In source states, CSOs collected data and operated migrant helplines during COVID-19. In instances of trafficking and bonded labour, especially, CSOs were able to leverage their networks to reach out to concerned authorities in the destination state to create a safe passage home for these migrants. Government-CSO collaborations could be particularly useful in improving data enumeration on child migration, child labour and left-behind children.

Role of IT

The introduction of IT-enabled data collection methods could facilitate the collection, collation and integration of information on a real-time basis. The online migration register introduced by the Chhattisgarh government is an attempt at this. This register can be filled through an application, which is mailed to around 10,000 panchayats and 2,000 urban wards to track the migration of the individuals and their families in real time.

Key takeaways

- COVID-19 has shown the potential of enumerating migrants at the GP level. Training and capacity enhancement, as well as sensitization among migrant households, are needed to improve these efforts.
- Data collection, whether at the GP level or through intermittent surveys, requires inputs from multiple departments to cover the complexities of the migration experience; in particular, the invisible nature of children and women's labour and their lack of access to social protection are under-reported areas.
- State governments can collaborate with CSOs to build robust datasets reflecting the ground reality.
- The role of digital technology is crucial, and adoption within the government system is highly dependent on training, capacity-building and incentivization.

4. Examining portability in scheme design and implementation

India's social protection and welfare framework, and associated schemes and programmes, are **embedded within the logics of universalization and eligibility**.

While some elements of welfare, such as education and health, are framed as universal and grounded in rights-based legal frameworks, eligibility criteria such as domicile/residence are prerequisites for access to a majority of schemes.

Despite universality, circular migration between source and destination requires mechanisms to transfer benefits across locations. Portability also encompasses means that help migrants avail of schemes at destination.

The social protection and welfare infrastructure in India is split under the mandate of the Central and state governments. The **divide between Centre and state is a formidable marker** in understanding the inclusion design of the schemes. Even as the impulse of Central schemes is inclusionary, state schemes tend to exclude interstate migrants by asking for documentation to prove domicile/residence. We also see variations in how states implement Central schemes. For instance, Odisha effectively uses sub-components of the SSA to provide seasonal hostels for left-behind children of seasonal migrants, while UP does not. These responses are shaped by the context of migration in each state and equally by the way migration is perceived and framed within the policy discourse.

Lastly, the **rural–urban axis is vital to understanding migrant incorporation in social protection** and welfare.

While a strong sedentary bias serves to include migrants at source, usually rural in classification, urban areas tend to exclude migrants due to weak governance mechanisms, inadequate infrastructure and state capacity, as well as localized nativist

politics. Interviews highlight that scheme design, implementation and delivery processes and institutional arrangements all factor into improving the portability of benefits for migrants, whether they lay claims to them within or across state borders. In particular, interstate circular migrants face barriers to access because the onus is continually on them to prove their domicile status in destination states.

Despite the renewed focus on the portability of schemes across state borders, learnings from this study highlight that portability systems require a deeper understanding, across Centre–state, rural–urban and source–destination axes. In this section, we analyse the portability of social protection and welfare across three aspects of policy and schemes: (a) design and intent; (b) institutional arrangements for implementation; and (c) eligibility and identification.

4.1 Scheme design and intent

Inclusion by assumption

Despite certain welfare domains in India such as health and education being visualized from the lens of universality, incorporation cannot be assumed. Ground narratives point out prominent barriers in migrants' eligibility and access to these schemes, often because mechanisms for portability have either not been conceptualized or do not function. For instance, while every child in India has a claim to free education benefits under the RTE, in reality, migrant children face access barriers in availing of benefits to the schools in destination states. They may struggle to learn in a language that is unfamiliar to them, to procure transfer certificates, and or providing identity proofs such as Aadhaar cards. Even when SSA allows for round-the-year enrolment of children, migrant children fall through the gap because they

The rapid privatization of welfare services, such as health and education, in cities inhibits access to services for the urban poor, including migrants. Urban policy frameworks exclude migrants, leading them to rely on market access to resources, such as rations, for which they are actually eligible.

are not enumerated in out-of-school surveys conducted at specific times of the year, when they may not be present.

Similarly, we find contradictory accounts regarding migrant women's access to health schemes at destination states. Despite the logic of universal access, pregnant migrant women face barriers in fulfilling the eligibility conditions in accessing benefits under the Janani Suraksha Yojana. Overall, while government officials describe a strong thrust on migrants' inclusion under the mandate of schemes as equal citizens, practitioners and CSOs point to barriers in eligibility that migrants, especially children and women, face. Scheme design requires building in portability to align with the intent of inclusion.

Designing for portability

The erstwhile RSBY has been widely acknowledged as a good attempt at designing portability. The scheme enabled migrants from split households to benefit from the healthcare entitlements both at source and destination through the means of the RSBY card (Srivastava, 2020). These features have also been carried forward to the Ayushman Bharat scheme, though registrations happen in source locations on account of the SECC database. Interviews suggest that the portability features are not necessarily well-understood.

The ONORC scheme envisages the Aadhaar-seeded ration card as a portability mechanism, implemented through biometric identification. Interviews in Odisha highlighted the dangers of excluding populations located in remote areas of the country, with 'Dark FPSs', i.e., FPSs located in remote areas with poor connectivity, an issue that was also noted by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Food, Consumer Affairs, and Public Distribution in its report on the scheme submitted in March 2021 (Lok Sabha Secretariat 2021). However, there was a lack of clarity regarding the ONORC's coverage of split households. Even if migrants are able to

procure ration cards in destination states, in some cases this has meant a cancellation of their ration card at the source, thereby complicating the benefit availability at the source for their family members. The PDS also needs to cater for intrastate migrants, in terms of its design.

Rural-urban differences

While the idea of the vulnerable beneficiary has been vividly studied and absorbed into policy design for rural areas, there has been a major gap in understanding and designing policies for the disenfranchised migrant poor in urban areas (Srivastava 2011). Hence, schemes for rural and urban areas remain starkly different in their imagination. For example, despite a large rural employment guarantee programme (NREGA), an equivalent urban counterpart has not been designed despite large-scale under-employment and poverty though Odisha has set a trend in getting the urban employment guarantee scheme MUKTA off the ground. Similar initiatives have been followed in a few other states. This reinforces the fact that sedentary bias is a strong driver for rural livelihood schemes.

During the 2020 migrant crisis, urban areas struggled to provide welfare services to stranded migrants, because 'rural migrants were never imagined as part of urban social protection'.¹⁵ The rapid privatization of welfare services such as health and education in cities further inhibits the access to services for the urban poor, including migrants. In particular, the lack of ideation of migrants in the urban policy framework has led migrants to rely on market access to resources such as ration, which they are otherwise eligible for as beneficiaries of the state. Furthermore, access to schemes in urban areas is extremely sparse due to limited welfare infrastructure.

Rationalizing societal norms and best practices into scheme design

Schemes have often failed to capture the complex lived realities of the beneficiaries or have set up policy objectives that involve

nudging changes that are too far removed from migrants' realities. A practitioner from Maharashtra provided the example in which the mandate of the PMMVY scheme was restricted to provide benefits only for one child, whereas both the urban and rural realities highlighted the presence of more than one child in the household. The utility of the scheme was thereby limited by design.

Similarly, under the PMMVY, teenage and adolescent girls cannot access maternity benefits in cases of pregnancy, because the scheme design reinforces the societal norm of mothers as married women. In tribal communities where societal norms are less rigid about extra-marital relations, and where teenage pregnancy instances are high, this results in healthcare being denied to a vulnerable segment of the population despite clear mandates to improve maternal health and reduce infant mortality. In contrast, Odisha's MAMATA scheme guidelines adopted a more sensitive approach, providing an explicit exemption for particularly vulnerable tribal groups from the two-child norm.

Intersectional vulnerabilities

These design barriers are further accentuated when addressing intersectional vulnerabilities posed by the compounding of the axis of disability, gender, caste along with migration. Persons with disability as well as migrant women face access barriers in availing of social protection and welfare schemes. Policy frameworks have visualized women's migration from the lens of associated and marriage migration, thereby eclipsing their lived realities as workers and impeding access to work-related social protection in destination states.

Beyond the axis of identity, migrants in destination also face overlapping vulnerabilities of their identity with the informal nature of their work and settlement, which further complicates their ease of access to basic services and welfare. In contrast to existing

policies, interviews from Chhattisgarh highlighted the state's interest in designing schemes, which address the intersectional vulnerabilities of caste and gender presented in manual scavenging work.

Challenges to policy design

Efforts to understand migration in the policy realm have, so far, been placed within the mandate of labour. Several schemes under the Department of Labour currently put the onus of registration and worker welfare on the industry or employer. However, many migrants fall outside this mandate due to the fragmented structure of the informal economy and the difficulties associated with holding employers accountable. There is a need to move beyond migrants' identity merely as workers to that of equal right-bearing citizens. The impulse of source states to implement relief schemes that incentivize return migrants to remain home poses a broader challenge to policy design: should policy reinforce source–destination divides or facilitate safe migration?

While policies are not inherently exclusionary, movement of individuals – especially across state borders – creates barriers for them to be eligible for and claim social welfare, owing to domicile requirements. The current growing debate on nativist policies further reinforces the divide and pushes the already impoverished further into the vulnerabilities associated with casualized work and circular migration. Our research highlights the need for an integrated approach to policy and scheme design, which also addresses migration as an intersectional axis of vulnerability and makes space for need-based interventions.

4.2 Institutional arrangements for implementation

Our research highlights that migrant workers fall through the gap in the state welfare imagination due to challenges in

Under the PMMVY, and adolescent girls cannot access maternity benefits in cases of pregnancy, because the scheme design reinforces the societal norm of mothers as married women. Thus healthcare is denied to a vulnerable segment of the population despite clear mandates to improve maternal health and reduce infant mortality.

Labour departments do not have a presence below the district level, making it hard for them to intervene at the GP or municipality level, where the interface between citizens and the state is located.

policy implementation, which are caused by fragmented institutional responses to the multidimensional issue of migration and varying institutional capacity present in source and destination areas.

Weak nodal department

Labour is the nodal department for migration-related matters in all the states we studied; correspondingly, the MoLE is charged with migration-related policy matters by the Government of India. However, labour departments have traditionally categorized workers in the binary of organized and unorganized, and state intervention has focused on organized workers, who come squarely under the purview of labour laws.

Labour departments are also notoriously understaffed. Moreover, they do not have a presence below the district level, making it hard for them to intervene at the GP or municipality level, where the interface between citizens and the state is located. During the COVID-19 migrant crisis, GPs found themselves without much guidance about specific vulnerabilities of migrants, especially children and women. A labour-focused institutional approach makes it more challenging for state governments to respond to the complexity of migration, because other departments that require to be involved are not fully aware of the contribution they can make.

While their mandate involves enterprise-level compliance issues and industrial relations, state governments have no appetite to discipline industry. On the contrary, it is important to appease industry when they are trying to establish a competitive advantage to attract investments from a relatively small group of investors. Thus, destination states have often prioritized industry over labour rights. As the economy shrunk and employment fell drastically across India, COVID-19 exacerbated the labour surpluses. With more than sufficient numbers of workers back at destinations post COVID-19's

first wave, industry has not had to follow through with improvements in the living and working conditions of workers or enhance their access to social protection. A conflicting narrative, which outlines the role of industry in bringing back migrant workers, ironically underscores how the state conveniently leaves dealings with workers into the hands of the private sector.

Fragmented institutional response

Migration policy can hardly be developed in a standalone fashion. State government departments have varying levels of awareness about migration and distinct mandates for incorporating migrants into schemes and initiatives. In Chhattisgarh, WCD officials reported that they did not consider migration while implementing schemes, but were exposed to migrant-specific issues while working alongside labour and health departments at quarantine centres during the lockdown. Women and children among circular migrants are relatively worse off in terms of accessing institutions and their schemes, as most departments do not categorically factor in the intersection of circularity with gender in their implementation. Despite the literature establishing that children of migrants require special attention, for instance, they are more likely to be malnourished (Ravindranath et al. 2019), these interconnections have not been made. The same was true for the social welfare department in the state as well as the SC/ST welfare department in Odisha, who declined to speak to us, citing migration as a 'completely new subject' for them. In Gujarat, an initiative to document migration among tribal workers by the tribal development department has also not really taken off, as migration is not a familiar lens in their regular work.

Migration's multifaceted and complex nature requires a converged response, but states' institutional structures vary in this regard. In Chhattisgarh, we found that the

State Planning Commission was playing this role during the pandemic, bringing together special inter-departmental teams as well as roping in consultants and CSOs to think through policy solutions. In Odisha, CSOs played a notable role in coordinating between different stakeholders and departments to create an effective and efficient model to bridge gaps in scheme implementation and delivery for migrants. Here, the CSO partnered with the local GPs to create unique identity cards to enable safe migration and prevent migrants from being harassed during the journey and at the destination.¹⁶ Odisha also has a department dedicated to convergence, which can potentially play a greater role in institutionalising portability for intrastate migrants.

The lack of formal institutional mechanisms for collaboration also emerged as a challenge in negotiation with other states during the migrant crisis. According to a senior bureaucrat in Chhattisgarh, 'Interstate coordination during COVID-these were semi-formal. We can write but the officer on the other side can choose not to respond...we used personal relations, friendships ... but this is not always possible.'¹⁷

Urban governance and management systems

In the multi-tier rural governance structure, public officials and frontline workers at zila parishads, panchayat samitis, and gram panchayats are accountable for healthcare schemes including the ICDS. Upon migration to urban areas, accountability wavers due to the lack of an urban counterpart to the institutional structure. The lack of ground-up accountability for social protection and welfare services in urban areas creates a systemic disincentive in the institutional delivery for these programmes. On the other hand, a strong municipal government can benefit migrants, even without specific measures for incorporation or portability. For example, migrant children born in Surat

are likely to be institutionally delivered and have birth certificates because of strong online registration systems.

Failure to institutionalize

During COVID-19, many schemes for migrants were implemented on an ad hoc basis, without due systemization, for temporary periods. For example, some destination states made exemptions within the existing schemes such as PDS to include migrant workers without ration cards.¹⁸ However, the lack of institutionalized processes causes variance in the implementation strategy across state lines. Last year, both the ICDS and PDS saw ad hoc lists being created, which integrated migrants within the scope of the schemes. However, the implementation of schemes was noted to be informal and contingent upon the benevolence of institutional actors. Similarly, many promising pre-COVID-19 initiatives including language facilitation for migrant children and mobile creches do not get adequately institutionalized, funded and streamlined. Failure to institutionalize holds state governments back from scaling up initiatives that can address key problems in social protection and welfare delivery.

Weak state-society relations

Across the five states, there is considerable variance in how state governments and CSOs interact with each other. Maharashtra has had a longstanding tradition of CSO-government collaboration, which is evident in their initiatives for migrant workers. However, there have been limited inroads in the migration and social protection space. In contrast, while Gujarat has had a presence of strong CSO network, their programmes and relief efforts were often appropriated by the state during COVID-19, causing some friction in the state-CSO relations. In Odisha, there is an increasing acceptance of CSO contributions by the state and mature partnerships are evolving. During the pandemic, CSOs moved beyond their role in consulting and knowledge sharing

Many promising initiatives, such as language facilitation for migrant children, do not get adequately institutionalized, funded and streamlined. This holds state governments back from scaling up initiatives that can address key problems in social protection and welfare delivery.

Migrant children's access to schemes in destination states is stymied by their reliance on their parents to furnish proof of identity. This is particularly problematic when adolescents migrate on their own.

to programme delivery and outreach. In UP, too, the Department of Labour seems to have roped in CSOs to register migrants for schemes.

The role of labour intermediaries such as contractors remains weak in facilitating social protection access. In Odisha, while provisions exist for contractor registration, the uptake is abysmally low even in the highest out-migration areas. While CSOs push for greater employer accountability, a more systemic change is needed in the state-employer dynamic to enable migrant welfare.¹⁹ In areas where state capacity is limited and employer-worker relation is highly informal, CSOs play an important role in creating awareness about workers' rights and welfare.

Capacity and training

Our findings highlight the limited capacity states have in the implementation of social protection schemes and programmes.

There is an urgent need to enhance awareness and sensitization about migration-specific issues and increase the degree of ownership in scheme implementation through systematic training of implementers such as ASHA workers, AWWs, GP officials and block-level administrators. Chhattisgarh's Mitani system is an example of how community members can be trained to build capacity in key areas; similarly, offering small payments to intermediaries for scheme delivery is also an emerging response to tackle the capacity issue. These require institutionalization and scaling.

A key objective of training must also be reducing the sedentary bias. In source states, the study notes a reluctance in acknowledging and registering migration at ground level, as it was seen as a bad outcome. Inadequate remuneration to frontline workers as well as larger budget allocations to staffing and training could go a long way in addressing vulnerabilities and preparing for future crises.

4.3 Eligibility and identification

Documentation and identification

Circular migrants bear the burden of re-registration and need to establish themselves as beneficiaries with every movement between the destination and source, to prove their eligibility and claim benefits. Though the shift to Aadhaar has simplified the identity documentation requirements for an average citizen, we find that migrants face impediments in accessing and utilizing Aadhaar to its fullest efficiency across state borders. In particular, migrant children's access to schemes in destination states is stymied by their reliance on their parents to furnish proof of identity; this is particularly problematic when children and adolescents migrate on their own to other districts or states. For interstate migrants, the contingent eligibility criterion of proving domicile status limits access to social protection and schemes in the destination state.

In addition to identity, there are other conditions that most migrants are unable to fulfil in destination states. Interstate migrants face issues with furnishing documents such as residency proof, bank accounts and ration cards as proof of eligibility. These barriers are stronger in the case of circular migrants, who are systematically discounted due to the duration of their stay in the destination. Interviews highlight pregnant women's inability to access cash transfer and maternity benefit schemes even where eligible, due to the lack of proper bank documentation. Domicile documents and proof of minimum durations of stay are also necessary for accessing urban homeless shelters in some states.

Even where portability mechanisms are in place, migrants face issues in procuring the correct documentation to claim services, e.g., transfer certificates or letters from source states, which would enable their claims to admissions in destination schools. Interviews from

Maharashtra highlight how migrant women face barriers in accessing even basic requirements such as water due to their inability to furnish no-objection certificates from landlords in informal settlements at destination. Similarly, migrants face issues in proving their status of work or employment certificates needed to open bank accounts in destination states, especially when the nature of work is informal or seasonal.

Issues with access

Many migrant workers remain excluded from the provisions of the UWSS or BOCW Acts, where employers or contractors are responsible for registering workers or certifying minimum periods of work. In instances where migrants serve as daily wage workers or contractual labour under subcontracting, employers' incentives to hide workers from registered payrolls restrict the latter's access to the welfare schemes. This is due to the casualization of work and limited institutionalization of contracts.

Migrants' access to labour entitlements and associated benefits remain contingent on their social contract with employers in different occupations. While the recurrent flows of migration to brick kilns create a degree of trust and relation between the employer and worker, this varies in sectors such as the cutting industry, where movements are more transient. Interviews from Gujarat and Maharashtra highlight that when migrants are located in peri-urban worksites, they are unable to access services such as the ICDS and PDS due to physical distance and a lack of linkage to worksites or labour camps.

Another disincentive for short-term migrants is the time and opportunity cost associated in accessing welfare services. Though access can be eased by intermediaries at both source and destination, this comes at an additional cost, which disincentivizes registration for schemes. For children who migrate seasonally, a mismatch with the calendar

year makes it hard for them to continue education, which can push them into the workforce at an early age.

4.4 Challenges for scheme delivery

Institutional and infrastructure barriers

Migrants' terms of incorporation are often unfavourably skewed due to infrastructural and institutional barriers. In part, this is caused by a systemic lack of awareness of migrant issues. Interviews with WCD departments highlighted that the specific problems faced by migrant women did not feed into delivery mechanisms for schemes. Moreover, the informal nature of livelihoods and settlements where migrants reside create barriers to accessing government schemes, even when eligible. The distance of infrastructure such as schools and health centres from such settlements affect the uptake of programmes.

CSOs further highlight negative attitudes in service delivery among frontline workers. In the case of health provisions in destination states, there are instances where ASHA workers and AWWs are reluctant in registering migrant workers as the long-term inability to track their movement translates to bad performance outcomes, thereby disincentivizing the inclusion of migrants.

While health schemes carry the scope to incorporate migrants in destination states, institutional capacity to deliver is stretched thin. Urban destination centres such as Mumbai are chronically short in their capacity to cater to the healthcare needs due to the inadequate primary healthcare centres and Anganwadi infrastructure compared to the population density, especially in urban slums where many migrant workers reside. The mismatch in demand and supply of services is notable in accounting for low levels of enumeration for the schemes, which results in continual disenfranchisement of citizens in urban areas.

Migrants located in peri-urban worksites are unable to access services such as the ICDS and PDS, which are not well linked to worksites or labour camps.

For circular and short-term migrants, the temporality of migration constrained their knowledge of scheme availability in the destination states. This was manifested in migrants failing to carry relevant documentation that would enable them to access social protection.

Enumeration and disenfranchisement

Many states reported issues in identifying out-of-state beneficiaries for schemes, as the interpretation of scheme delivery varied across states. Conflicting guidelines, advisories and directives between Central and state schemes created barriers in scheme delivery and inhibited portability of benefits for migrants. In other instances, there was a lack of enforcement of employers and contractors' liability to enumerate and register migrant workers with the relevant departments and facilitate their access to schemes. This is particularly so in the case of seasonal and circular migrants and where multiple intermediaries and practices of subcontracting obfuscate accountability. Intermediaries avoid registering themselves or their hires to avoid responsibility and the processes of re-registration every six months, which is complicated due to the nature of circular migration. While schemes such as the Ayushman Bharat have come out with detailed operational guidelines on enumeration, similar clarity is not available elsewhere.

Scheme awareness

Scheme uptake is also dependent on levels of awareness within institutions and among beneficiaries. In particular, for circular and short-term migrants, the temporality of migration acted as a restraint in migrants' knowledge of scheme availability in the destination states. This was manifested in migrants failing to carry relevant documentation that would enable them to access social protection at destination. A notable exception was highlighted in the case of intrastate, long-term and generational migrants, who were more aware and better positioned to access schemes due to a stronger social network at their destination. In the case of migrant women, it was noted that there was limited awareness of schemes due to the fragmented nature of schemes across departments. Further, persistent experiences of violence and neglect by the state inhibit informal workers and dwellers

of informal settlements from approaching the state for information.

4.5 The role of data

The absence of credible data has been a longstanding problem for policy response towards internal migration in India, particularly in incorporating marginalized migrants. The inadequacy of public datasets such as the Census and NSS and the limited implementations of data collection provisions under labour laws became glaringly apparent when these were unable to inform policy responses to the COVID-19 migrant crisis. Learnings from the five states in this study highlight that the COVID-19 experience has established a demand for more calibrated and functional data that reflects the complexities of migration. Data is not only important to provide a factual basis to shape policy narratives and directions; respondents from all states highlighted that the current need for data is not merely from a lens of enumeration but also to create more efficient schemes and enhance scheme delivery for migrants.

Modalities of data collection

Earlier, we described how source states and CSOs curated databases to capture migration in the wake of the migrant crisis, to improve relief efforts and service delivery and map skills to match with employment. However, states are envisaging future data collection on migration in different ways. While Chhattisgarh envisions data registration of migrant workers through a portal driven by incentivized intermediaries, Odisha lays importance on voluntary registration. Destination states also emphasize data registration of migration to be a voluntary process, without perverse disincentives, such that migrant workers register with the trust that their remaining family won't lose their benefits at the source upon migration.

Need for dynamic datasets

Across states, informants highlighted the significance of data innovation and

data utilization at all levels for effective governance. Innovative data sources, e.g. railway ticket sales data and bus pass schemes, while useful, have not been conceptualized as viable indicators to understand migration (Chandrasekhar et al., 2017). In tandem, learning from the shortcomings of the COVID-19 crisis, states and practitioners highlighted the need for data, such as time-series data and dynamic datasets, to capture the complexity of movement as well as data to understand the well-being of migrants across the indicators of multiple welfare indices.

Asynchronous datasets

Interviews highlighted a persistent gap in the nature of data being gathered. While government data is dense and across multiple indicators, it is not successful in providing a sense of the lived reality of migrants. In contrast, CSOs provide a more grounded sense of migrant reality in their datasets but are limited by geographical and funding constraints. Within the state, interviews highlight competing and contradictory objectives of data collection in departments with no inroads on the synchronization of different data sources. These limitations feed into scheme design processes and result in poor attention to implementation mechanisms, especially portability.

Digital identities as opportunity

Respondents highlight that the intervention of digital identities, especially in the form of Aadhaar, provides a unique opportunity for broadening the terms of inclusion for migrants. While the digitized Aadhaar data is already used to maintain the databases on social benefits and facilitate cash transfers, a further linkage with tracing mobility can better facilitate the inclusion of circular migrants in the formulation and delivery of schemes.

What data hides

Data inadequacy is not merely the lack of factual information. Data structures and data collection mechanisms can emphasize

some aspects and hide others, reproducing biases and perceptions in the policy based on such data. We find at least three areas where this seems to be the case, with devastating impacts on vulnerable populations.

First, the meagre information that official data sources provide on circularity plays a key role in the invisibility of migrants and results in the failure of schemes to provide safety nets for them, especially in destination states. Moreover, for effective governance of schemes for migrants, the data must capture migration as a comprehensive ecosystem, rather than viewing the phenomenon in silos of labour, disaster management or trafficking. While migration from a labour lens does provide information on flows and patterns, such data lacks clarity on the complexity of gender dynamics and child migration.

Second, even when captured through the lens of labour, data fails to capture the nuances of gender-segregated labour markets and migration (Neetha and Rajan 2018). Many women and adolescents fall through the gap in the labour market, as data on informal work, such as domestic and associated work in construction sites, is not adequately captured, thereby creating a lacuna in understanding their welfare needs and requirements in the destination states. Women, in particular, play a significant role in negotiating civic amenities for the household in destination states; these lived realities also remain uncaptured. At the same time, data on child and adolescent migration remains unequivocally seen through the lens of trafficking, ignoring the complexity of child migration and creating a knowledge gap that leads to a subsequent lack of provisioning for such children in the welfare services. Barring a few targeted interventions such as seasonal hostels in Odisha and Maharashtra, and mobile creches in Pune and Gujarat, the coverage of child migrants both in data and schemes remains limited.

Many women and adolescents fall through the gap in the labour market, as data on informal work, such as domestic and associated work in construction sites, is not adequately captured. Women play a significant role in negotiating civic amenities for the household in destination states. These lived realities also remain uncaptured.

State-wise variations in policy response

Taken together, we find that source states are more invested in the needs of migrants, including children and women. However, they remain less aware of the need to have portability mechanisms in place for intrastate migrants. In interviews, government officials assumed that intrastate migrants could avail of most schemes and would also have support from social networks; however, this assumption is not empirically supported. COVID-19 has highlighted their role as destinations; for instance, metropolitan cities such as Lucknow and Ghaziabad in UP and industrial areas around Bilaspur in Chhattisgarh also attract interstate migrants from neighbouring states.

Approaches to migrant incorporation vary considerably, even among the source states. Odisha has had a long history of addressing migration-related issues, with interventions in the Kalahandi Balangir Koraput (KBK) Region dating back over two decades. Thus, their approach has already shifted, from a purely sedentary one to facilitating safe migration – as can be evidenced by migration registers, language interventions, seasonal hostels, etc. In recent years, Odisha has maintained a significant focus on poverty alleviation through housing and land upgradation, and its recent move to enhance urban livelihoods is likely to benefit intrastate migrants as well.

In Chhattisgarh, we find that the migrant crisis revealed new facets to the migration issue and engendered a rethink about policy response. Building on a pre-existing universal approach to social protection and welfare, the state is focused on ensuring better livelihood opportunities and quality of life at source while building responses towards facilitating safer migration. A new migration policy – which, at the time of writing this report, is yet to be notified – is pushing for a dynamic database of migrants and a labour portal, which will be the bedrock for addressing grievances as well as connections with schemes through labour resource centres at the block level. The policy also envisaged interventions in collaboration with destination state governments and labour unions.

In UP, containing migration appears as a clear policy objective, with a thrust on skilling and employment at source to contain distress out-migration. At the same time, they see the out-migration of skilled migrants who send remittances as beneficial to the state but want to anchor in their political loyalties. The migrant crisis appears to have sensitized state officials towards the large amount of intrastate migration, but interviews did not indicate a corresponding thrust on enhancing portability.

In sharp contrast, destination states, while acknowledging interstate migration, see their responsibility limited to extending ‘universal’ types of entitlements such as health and education. In part due to nativist discourses, there is little effort towards going the extra mile to incorporate migrants; child labour and women’s work remain undercounted and under the radar. Destination states also tend to absolve themselves of responsibilities toward labour, relying on employers and contractors without adequately holding them accountable. With the state stepping back, the gap is filled by civil society and, sometimes, by private employers. CSOs use a rights-based framing to advocate for migrant workers’ rights and entitlements but have limited success in nudging the state to take responsibility. However, COVID-19 has been a wake-up call for destination states, which have recognized the contribution of migrant workers to their labour market and economy. In addition to relief efforts and the extension of social welfare services, states such as Maharashtra have stepped up the registration of various categories of workers. Clarity on migration policy from the Centre could expedite these efforts.

The source–destination binary, while useful, is not adequate to frame portability interventions. The specific experiences of states play a role in shaping their efforts towards making schemes portable so migrants can access them. We also find that portability has to be ensured through the scheme life cycle from design to implementation to monitoring and evaluation.

Third, despite high out-migration, a persistent sedentary bias limits the recognition of these outflows, e.g. the use of outcome data from schemes such as MGNREGA to report low levels of out-migration. In contrast, at the destination states, the presence of migrant workers is well-known but their incorporation is inhibited by a lack of enumeration. Bhagat (2011) and Kundu (2009) highlight that while migrants remain an active part of the urban workforce in the destination states, their inclusion in the policymaking remains marginal due to the overwhelming sedentary bias that persists in state visualization of data and schemes.

Converging fragmented data collection efforts

Migration is a multi-dimensional issue that merits a broad imagination. Currently, instead of developing a holistic view of migration data, states employ a fractured lens, in which data is collated and maintained in scheme-wise silos. State governments hold information on migration in multiple databases across various departments that are independent of each other. Moreover, some departments are less aware of migration, and their datasets might not contain migration-related variables. Fragmentation also perpetuates the invisibility of vulnerable segments from databases.

Ad hoc data collection processes at different levels of government and CSOs,

and interviews highlight the need for a more systematized and converged effort for data collection across departments. Convergence in data collection and service delivery across the departments of labour and WCD and CSOs could integrate data on work and family migration, and improve the states' ability to address precarious family migration in sectors such as construction, brick kilns, stone quarries, salt pans and agriculture.

Curating GP level databases provides an interesting avenue for convergence and for curating relief responses for mobile populations. Interviews highlighted initiatives where data from existing schemes was modified to enumerate beneficiaries for relief responses, e.g., in Maharashtra, school registers for scholarships were used to disburse financial incentives for caregivers of left-behind children. Practitioners also highlighted the scope of convergence between MRCs, GPs and Anganwadis to enhance scheme delivery for mobile populations in both source and destination.

Currently, initiatives for data collection and scheme delivery are fragmented in their approach, with a lack of clear directives; imagining convergence within the different layers of an institution with data imagined from a more ground-up approach can provide an avenue for effective data utilization and enhanced coverage in the future.

State governments hold information on migration in multiple databases across various departments that are independent of each other. Convergence of data combined with a ground-up approach can provide an avenue for effective data utilization and enhanced coverage in the future.

Expecting political gains in lieu of social welfare schemes, politicians in source states support migrants in strengthening documentation and tend to underplay mobility. In contrast, politicians at destination have no incentives to extend special considerations for migrants who vote elsewhere.

5. Conceptions of internal migration

Conceptions, ideas and narratives play an important role in shaping policy. Through discourse analysis of primary data, this section lays out the key ways in which government officials, CSOs and development practitioners perceive and conceptualize migration.

The study finds that bureaucracy continues to hold on to established narratives on migration, e.g., the sedentary bias, partly because there is no systematic updated information about migration. They are also reluctant to acknowledge and investigate new trends because these might upset longstanding political and social beliefs and necessitate a return to the drawing board on migration-related policy. In places where there have been minimal inroads in capturing these trends, the different lenses used by departments seem to create a fractured and unsynchronized picture of the phenomenon.

However, the COVID-19 migrant crisis made it very difficult to ignore new facets of migration as the bureaucracy came into close contact with stranded and returning migrants at isolation and quarantine centres, while organizing transportation among other things. At the same time, CSOs, activists and development practitioners are deeply committed to specific vulnerable groups among migrants. Their close-up view of migration lends energy and nuance to advocacy, but they often miss the connections with broader migration trends, which are important to developing contextual and workable responses for the mid to long term.

5.1 Migrants as political constituents

Migrants are important political constituents for source states. Political parties see them as vote banks and facilitate transportation for migrants to return during elections, especially local and state elections. The COVID-19 migrant

crisis seems to have made migration-related issues visible at the GP level, among elected officials and politically aware residents, but this heightened awareness might be short-lived. In April 2021, CSOs in Raipur had organized special events in the form of Janata Darbars, to present the viewpoints of migrant workers to politicians and leverage this window of heightened awareness.

Local politicians support migrants in strengthening their identification and documentation in their source villages on an ongoing basis; therefore, they can overlook their mobility and assume them to be permanent residents at source. State governments use similar logic in extending social protection; implicitly, they expect political gains in lieu of support via social welfare schemes. Conversely, states such as Chhattisgarh, which have focused considerably on social welfare schemes, perceive these efforts as contributing to containing distress-driven out-migration. Because of this underlying – and obviously circuitous – political logic, mobility as a factor is largely ignored and the problems arising from migration are swept under the carpet. By the same logic, governments at destination states have no political incentives to extend special considerations for migrants who vote elsewhere.

Key informants often deployed the language of nativism to highlight distinctions and rifts between locals and migrants. Nativism was sometimes framed in a rights and duties discourse. A senior official in Gujarat, while claiming that migrants are treated ‘as equal citizens of the country’ felt that they ‘*don’t take ownership of the city ... they want all their rights, but they don’t do their duties towards the city they are staying*’.²⁰ CSOs, too, point to tensions between migrants and locals at their destination. Some respondents expressed nativism as a factor of labour market opportunity,

with locals perceiving their own labour as marginalized in favour of migrants, who are preferred because of lower wages and the willingness to work long and uninterrupted hours without the fear of protests and collectivization.

Senior officials interviewed as part of the study conceded that complex issues such as migration need political will to reform governance systems from within. The government system has its inertia and is not cut out to admit failure and go back to the drawing board. This makes it slow to respond, as seen during the crisis, and also inflexible. Moreover, because bureaucrats are frequently rotated across departments, they are unable to have a deep understanding of specific issues and need to rely on expert advice from the outside. These tensions make it hard to make significant reforms. Many solutions during the migrant crisis came from personal efforts and connections, rather than from systemic interventions. A senior bureaucrat in Chhattisgarh claimed that they *'cannot do it (act quickly) from the government type of thing ... if you want to do something innovative ... you need the flexibility... you need multiple actors like CSOs, government, panchayats'*.²¹

5.2 Women and children peripheral to the state's imagination of migration

Respondents widely acknowledged that the role of children and women in migration is not taken on board. Migration continues to be seen through the lens of male migration and child labour is particularly neglected in the policy discourse. However, this understanding was unsettled by returning migrants. For example, Chhattisgarh found that 30–40 per cent of returning migrants were women, many of them accompanied by small children.

Bureaucrats' imagination of children in migration came across either in the context of trafficking or as indirectly

impacted by migration; we found them generally empathetic towards the impacts of migration on children. *'Children suffer the most. Their childhood is compromised, and they find it very difficult to adjust to a life of continuous movement,'* a UP government official explained.²²

Development practitioners we spoke with emphasized the challenges of tracking and documenting children who move with their families and the challenges associated with ensuring health, nutrition, education and safety, especially among young children. However, this sort of detailed understanding did not emerge among government officials. Conversely, state-level WCD departments were focused on issues of maternal and child care, but less aware and unprepared to deal with migrants. In the particular case of short-term circular migration, children and women were noted as less likely to be enumerated in schemes around education and ICDS because of systemic resistance in enumerating them as programme beneficiaries. Overall, CSOs feel that governments do not have well-targeted schemes for children and women and that state governments depend on CSOs to do the committed hard work with these segments.

5.3 Distress migration and the 'keep them home' impulse

In source states, governments continue to view migration from the perspective of containment and prevention. This stems from the belief that migration is an act of distress and desperation by people, who would prefer to remain in their villages if employment opportunities were available locally. Respondents often articulated the village as home, as a safe space. According to a Department of Labour official, *'They may want to earn in the city, but at times of distress like the pandemic, they rush back to the villages ... they would be willing to stay in the village if they find proper employment there'*.²³ In Chhattisgarh's tribal belt, families live with the added fear of youth being recruited

CSOs feel that governments do not have well-targeted schemes for children and women and depend on CSOs to do the committed hard work with these segments.

Migration policy needs to pay attention to 'historical linkages ... linked partly with skill and partly with caste-based social networks.
- Policy consultant in Chhattisgarh

by Maoists and, therefore, urge them to migrate out for a living. In Odisha, a special project was initiated by the government to specifically retain migrants and reduce distress migration from districts such as Balangir, Bargarh, Nuapada and Kalahandi.

Across source states, policy interventions such as the MGNREGA and NRLM that focus on rural employment and livelihoods are seen to be useful in containing distress-driven out-migration. CSO interactions highlight the resistance in the system to acknowledge migration, lest it is interpreted as a failure of existing livelihood programmes. The exercise of mapping the skills of returning migrants, which was conducted in UP, Chhattisgarh as well as Odisha, was also intended to connect them to local livelihoods. The limits and challenges of creating source-based employment are well-recognized. Yet policy actors seem to want to hold on to this narrative as a validation of a longstanding belief that policy is meant to prevent distress migration. This narrative is somewhat countered by the recognition of aspiration as a driver of migration. Cities are seen to be attractive due to better opportunities for paid work, despite relatively precarious living conditions.

5.4 Skills and identity factor into distress

Equally, the distress–aspiration spectrum is seen as a function of skill. The respondents characterized certain sectors, e.g. brick kiln, construction and agricultural labour, as low-skilled work, which also corresponds to a seasonal pattern of mobility. Industrial work and certain profiles in construction (such as plumbing and electricals) are considered semi-skilled work. These profiles correspond with higher incomes and longer stays at destination. Thus, distress is equated with more frequent mobility and low wages, and is also characterized by exploitation and wage theft by employers. On the other hand, those with some skills are considered to be able to attract higher

wages; thus, semi-skilled labour is seen to migrate of their own volition. For instance, while the narrative of distress is ubiquitous in interviews from Odisha, semi-skilled workers migrating from coastal and southern parts of the state to prawn and packaging industries are not described as distress migrants. *'Where there is exploitation and cheating, people go into a distress mode of migration'*, a CSO representative in Odisha explained.²⁴

As outlined earlier, distress migration is spatially distinct; bureaucrats and CSO representatives do articulate distinct corridors and districts of out-migration. Distress is also closely related to identity, with SC and ST populations far more vulnerable. This is corroborated by scholars such as Deshingkar, who counters the skills narrative by pointing out that migrants are often segmented into exploitative work because of discursive constructions and stereotypes associated with their identities. For instance, tribals and Dalits might be considered 'lazy', 'untrustworthy' and 'needing to be controlled' (Deshingkar 2017, p. 3). A policy consultant to the Chhattisgarh Planning Commission acknowledged that migration policy needs to pay attention to *'historical linkages ... linked partly with skill and partly with caste-based social networks'*.²⁵

5.5 Blurred distinctions between distress migration and trafficking

The narrative of distress is also closely intertwined with that of trafficking, especially for children and women. We found that elements of exploitation and lack of agency among trafficking victims overlapped closely with features of distress narrative; terms like trafficking and distress migration were often used interchangeably. While some government officials perceive forced migration for sex work and child labour as trafficking, CSOs were clear that trafficking is not limited to children and women but includes labour movement of young men as well.

Some working definitions of trafficking emerged from our interviews. A development sector professional we spoke to defined it as a situation in which people leaving their villages do not know where they are going, for what purpose, who is employing them, what their wages will be and what facilities they will have at the other end; *it is a movement into the unknown*. This is enabled by the common practice of splitting up groups at an intermediate point, such that they lose contact with relatives or acquaintances who might have started the journey with them. Trafficking is, therefore, far more invisible and tedious to track than migration, requiring a distinct policy response.

5.6 Aspirational aspects acknowledged

Other than economic reasons, officials acknowledged the role of social discrimination in encouraging migration. Migration allows for anonymity, allowing people to pursue livelihoods and lifestyles that they are unable to in their villages owing to caste-based restrictions. Women and youth are especially attracted to the idea of freedom. In Chhattisgarh, CSO representatives described how the aspirations of tribal youth are shaped by technology, through circulating videos that depict city life and trigger out-migration for low-skilled service sector jobs. They construct narratives that often hide the harshness of city life, which circulate back to youth back home, continually driving aspirational migration.

A senior bureaucrat in UP described how living in urban locations changes the behaviour and material choices of migrants, who start thinking of themselves as better than their rural counterparts. After several years working in the city, migrants are no longer able to do hard agricultural labour. Respondents mentioned that migrants feel as if they are ‘neither here nor there’, a theme strongly captured in the literature on agrarian studies,

circularity and belongingness (Gidwani & Ramamurthy, 2018; Shivanand, 2019). Nevertheless, familiar and repetitive pathways of migration can enable migrants to reduce dependence on labour intermediaries, offering a little more agency in migration choices.

The chance of a better life for their children is also a significant factor. Migrants’ aspirations are not just for their own future, but often intergenerational. *‘About 10 per cent of the migrants I interacted with (during the crisis) were ensuring a quality education for their children in the city. About half of the migrants were convinced that a city-based education would help them escape hard labour and poverty in the future. The rest did not see education as valuable but recognized that work opportunities were only lucrative in places far from their villages’*, a CSO representative in Chhattisgarh explained.²⁶

While distress (push) and aspiration (pull) are often framed as oppositional to each other in the literature, in practice, they are understood as interconnected. There is some understanding that those who are initially driven to migrate by distress start, over time, viewing the city as a space of emancipation and an escape from the confines imposed by caste and patriarchy. Overall, the distress lens has been useful to identify geographies, groups, sectors that require particular policy attention but it is not a useful metric to understand individual and household-level decisions, which might well be driven by aspirational elements. Migration decisions are not governed purely by economics, and are often shaped by aspirations of social emancipation; caste and gender play an important role here.

5.7 The safe migration narrative

We found some evidence that state governments have scrutinized their approach to migration in the aftermath of the migrant crisis. In source states, interactions with return migrants during

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Beyond interventions at source and destination, there appears to be an emerging consensus that facilitating safe channels of migration should be a key priority.

the 2020 crisis revealed the shortcomings of the 'keep people at home' approach, which is intertwined with the notion of self-sustaining rural economies. Bureaucrats acknowledged that even if rural opportunities are strengthened, *'people will not stop migrating because of the element of aspiration'*.²⁷ The return of migrants to their destination locations after the lockdown appears to have driven home this idea of the inevitability of migration and steered the policy discourse in the direction of safe and facilitated migration.

Civil society and multilateral organizations working in the space of labour have repeatedly reminded policymakers of the importance of establishing safe channels of migration. A recent ILO report, released shortly after the migrant crisis, invoked the relevance of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration for internal migration as well (Khandelwal et al. 2020).

In this imagination, state and non-state actors see their key role as facilitators of safe migration processes, which involves four key elements:

- Documentation: Migrants should be enumerated and documented in state government databases.
- Identification: Migrants should possess requisite identification to gain all state entitlements at source and destination.
- Information: Migrants should know where they are going, what the working and living conditions will be at destination.
- Recourse: Migrants should have access to helplines and resource centres they can approach for support and at times of distress, which will ensure that they are rescued from dangerous situations and given safe passage home, and can also obtain legal aid in situations such as abuse and wage theft.

6. Recommendations

In a country as vast and diverse as India, it is axiomatic that there cannot be a single solution to all migration-related issues. Consequently, it is important to recognize contextual differences and local requirements in designing solutions to facilitate access to social protection for migrant children and their families. Nevertheless, some overarching principles are prerequisites to more specific interventions. These are primarily centred on scheme design, institutional arrangements, delivery processes and migration data. We highlight them here before moving on to specific thematic recommendations.

6.1 Scheme design

Currently, state visualization of data and schemes is overwhelmed by sedentary bias, where migrants' inclusion in the policy imagination of destination states remains marginal, while at source, policies and schemes have been designed to facilitate rural livelihoods.

- To combat this, it is essential for migrant source states, where migrants have the highest political capital, to recognize the aspirations of migrants and facilitate safe migration instead of reinforcing sedentary bias.
- Correspondingly, destination states must recognize the contribution that migrants make to their workforce and economy and seek to actively include them in social protection schemes.
- Programmes and schemes related to health, education, food security and livelihoods at the state level must adopt inclusive and nuanced approaches to fulfil the rights of migrants and their families.
- Identifying a basic set of rights that all citizens must have access to, irrespective of their migrant status, would be the first step towards achieving this (MoHUA 2017). The Government of India must work towards reaching a consensus among states on outlining and jointly recognizing this basic set of rights; corresponding guidelines on scheme design may be evolved thereafter.

A second issue regarding inequities faced by migrant workers in availing of social protection has been the overwhelming focus on labour in the policy imagination, where migrants are seen merely as workers, overlooking their overall identities as citizens. This imagination largely excludes women and child migrants on account of low women's workforce participation and the invisibilization of

child labour. Moreover, several schemes place the onus of registration and worker welfare on the industry or the employer, further excluding informal migrants lacking regular employment, who fall outside this mandate.

- There is a need to move to an understanding of migrants as equal rights-bearing citizens, not just as providers of labour in need of employment protection (which remains a separate concern).
- Our research highlights the need for an integrated approach to policy and scheme design, which addresses migration as an intersectional axis of vulnerability and makes space for need-based interventions.

Finally, scheme design, especially in the context of reproductive and sexual health, does not always take into account local sociocultural realities. These schemes are often linked with other aspects of public policy, such as family planning programmes, as a result of which they create incentives that are not necessarily aligned with ground realities and end up excluding people such as unmarried women and teenage mothers who are often also from the most marginalized social groups.

- A sensitive and locally tailored approach, such as exemptions from the two-child norm given by Odisha to particularly vulnerable tribal groups, will go a long way in including these individuals within the system and improving maternal and child health.

6.2 Institutional arrangements

An important aspect of ensuring that migrants receive targeted social protection is to make government departments aware of their presence as a vulnerable group. Due to the labour-focused policy imagination described earlier, several other departments we interacted with during this study were ignorant of migrants' needs or did not see themselves as the custodian of migrants' welfare.

- There is an urgent need for mainstreaming migration in the policy discourse across departments and creating awareness of migrant vulnerabilities and their lived realities, especially for children and women.

Effective implementation of schemes migrants, who are vulnerable and likely to slip through the gaps of mobility, requires targeted identification and tracking of beneficiaries as they move.

- This will only be possible through convergence between different departments and by removing the fragmented reality of scheme implementation, wherein efforts made by different departments and agencies are not coordinated towards maximizing social protection coverage.

While states are already making bilateral arrangements, the Central government has a significant role in rationalizing multiple source-destination linkages, standardizing modalities for interstate collaboration, and mediating bilateral dialogue. When it comes to the portability of CS schemes, the Centre also plays a role in ensuring rationalization of fiscal resources.

- In a previous report on redesigning financing for social protection, CPR proposed a special intergovernmental fiscal transfer mechanism to ensure a coordinated response to social protection during the COVID-19 crisis (Aiyar et al. 2020). The report had imagined an empowered national body, similar to the Interstate Council that would, among other tasks, be responsible for devising a coordination mechanism for handling payments linked to interstate migrants. This would include reconciling invoices raised by destination states to source states and facilitate the sharing of best practices.
- The Draft Policy on Migrant Workers, being prepared by the NITI Aayog's CSO Standing Committee Sub-Group on Migrant Labour,²⁸ also envisages an institutional architecture with a special cell on migration to coordinate between Central ministries, as well as interstate and inter-district coordination committees.

State governments also need to facilitate collaborative arrangements with CSOs and employers to ensure migrant incorporation.

- We recommend a graded approach, whereby states focus on increasing the accountability of large employers in fulfilling their legal obligations towards migrants who, though circular, are likely to have more stable relationships with contractors and employers.
- Labour departments would need to be strengthened so that they can take a proactive approach to ensuring that employers implement legislation and facilitate linkages to work-related social protection, such as the BOCW and the Employees' State Insurance Scheme.

CSOs can play a key role in ensuring access to social protection and welfare services for migrants whose work is linked with small employers and contractors, many

of them informal enterprises, as well as in areas where state capacities are limited.

- CSO interventions to include these vulnerable and invisibilized workers might require support from state governments and benefit from institutionalized collaborative mechanisms.

6.3 Delivery processes

In contemporary times, IT systems and data have become an important aspect of scheme implementation, especially for identifying beneficiaries and target groups that have to be tracked over time. This framework can also be effectively used to track migrants across spatial and state boundaries, and ensure that they continue to remain covered by the social protection infrastructure.

- A first step would be to ensure continuous budgetary allocations for IT interventions that streamline migration data across multiple levels of government in states, potentially building up to national migration data systems. This is already being carried out in village-level data systems for the ICDS through the CAS (Paul & Kapur 2021) and PDS-outlet level data management for the ONORC, and must be strengthened.
- At the same time, safeguards must be implemented, to prevent the exclusion of individuals on account of IT system gaps and identification failures, which have been well documented (Khera 2019; Muralidharan et al. 2020).

Convergence at the local level is also required for GPs and MRCs to efficiently collate, prepare and track the information at ground level.

- Efforts such as the GP Development Plan can be leveraged for this convergence and related data collection, which is centred at the GP level and then to be integrated at block, district and state level as parts of an annual implementation plan.
- This may also facilitate the creation of real-time migration databases, possibly using some of the data collected as part of the repatriation of migrants during the COVID-19 national lockdown in 2020 (Lok Sabha Secretariat 2021a).

The final aspect of effective scheme delivery for social protection centres on the beneficiary: in terms of awareness, feedback and grievance redress system. Respondents in our study highlighted that there is a need to create not only awareness among the beneficiaries but also a system of trust and awareness among the different levels of institutions to ensure a more enabling environment. This is especially true of vulnerable groups such as migrants,

who may be wary of approaching the state due to historical experiences of discrimination or exclusion.

- In this area, our findings show that CSOs can play a vital role in not only aiding an understanding of ground realities but also bridging data gaps in the current knowledge base through their surveys and data from remote areas and communities.
- Similarly, employers and contractors could be explored for service delivery to their workers, possibly in collaboration with CSOs.
- Close coordination and liaison between line departments and CSOs on the field could serve as an effective feedback mechanism for the functioning of welfare schemes, thereby enabling better coverage of social protection measures.

6.4 Data

- States should comprehensively review their data systems to include gender and caste-disaggregated data on migration. This will involve mainstreaming migration across departments: building awareness, identifying components of schemes and programmes that link with migration; and incorporating migration-specific variables in Management Information Systems (MIS) of schemes. Simultaneously, Central and state-level surveys must also include questions on migration.
- For data collection systems at source, such as village-level registers, panchayat officials and migrant communities are required to be sensitized about the benefits and assured that they will not lose entitlements at source.
- States must build IT-enabled data systems to converge multiple scheme databases, e.g., ICDS, PHC, MGNREGA muster rolls and school enrolment records and village-level migrant registers – to track circular and seasonal patterns on a broader level and facilitate portability for beneficiaries. UP's effort to converge the BOCW and the MGNREGA databases is a start.
- In cities, ULBs and district administrations must make corresponding efforts to enumerate migrants in local records, in collaboration with CSOs. For instance, ration distribution lists from the 2020 lockdown can be starting points for collating migrant databases, and resources for continuous updating should also be factored in.
- State governments must set up sustainable collaborations with CSOs and employers to co-develop dynamic databases on migration; towards this, efforts must also be made to harmonize disparate kinds of databases and triangulate data from disparate data sources.

6.5 Education

Care for left-behind children at source

- Source states must strengthen and expand hostels in source districts to reduce school drop-out rates among children of seasonal migrants. On the lines of Odisha's seasonal hostels, it should be possible to converge funds across schemes to ensure adequate infrastructure and staffing for hostels, and use SMCs under the RTE to ensure community oversight. States can also consider using hostels as hubs to converge schemes related to healthcare delivery, health insurance, skill development, etc.
- States must consider extending enrolment in hostels (and RTE support) up to the age of 18 years, to encourage children of migrants to complete their education.
- Drawing on Gujarat's experience, SMCs may be involved in tracking migration patterns of children in migrant households, for improved planning and support.
- Drawing on Maharashtra's experience, states can also consider setting up community-embedded kinship care models that involve supporting caregivers of left-behind children. DBT may be used for financial support, with monitoring through SMCs.

On-site education facilities

- States must collaborate with CSOs and employers to set up systems for on-site alternative learning schools in all areas where migrants live on-site, especially when they are in rural or peri-urban locations far from regular schools.

Portability mechanisms for school enrolment and language facilitation

- Drawing on Gujarat's experience with the Migrant Card and online tracking through the MMS software, states must introduce simple portability systems that allow children of seasonal migrants to access schooling at source and destination. These systems must allow for the transfer of basic information about the child's learning history and competence, and remove the need for excessive documentation.
- Destination and source states must work together to ensure language facilitation for children of seasonal migrants to continue in school. Odisha's experience of sending Odia language teachers and books to Tamil Nadu and Gujarat's experience of using Bal Mitras familiar with migrant languages in Tent STPs have shown potential for language

facilitation. These must be institutionalized and scaled up, under the SSA, across other source-destination state pairs. The onus of setting these up must lie with destination states, while source states must provide the resources required.

6.6 Food security

The expedition of the ONORC scheme by the Government of India in the wake of the COVID-19 national lockdown and migrant crisis is an important step towards ensuring the portability of food rations under the NFSA. However, since the scheme is new, some issues have emerged in the study. The following recommendations aim to address these issues and provide a framework for smoother implementation of the scheme to provide full portability benefits to migrants. Overall, we recommend that the ONORC should be carefully monitored to iron out such issues that may arise as uptake of the scheme becomes more widespread.

- States can conduct drives or camps to ensure that all eligible NFSA beneficiaries, especially in migrant-intensive districts, are issued ration cards.
- The implementation of portability of benefits through the ONORC now obviates the need for migrants to attempt re-registering themselves or transferring their ration cards to destination locations. The national-level de-duplication further removes the need for multiple levels of verification. Consequently, once a ration card is issued in a state, it must not be cancelled or transferred at any point, except in the case of the death of the beneficiary. A ration card holder should be able to retain their ration card even after migration without the need to re-apply, transfer, surrender or submit additional documentation.
- At present, PDS shops in remote areas with chronically poor internet connectivity ("dark FPS") are effectively excluded from the ONORC. Alternate offline mechanisms should be devised to cover these areas.
- Awareness regarding the ONORC should be improved among all stakeholders, including beneficiaries and FPS owners at the GP/ward level in migrant-intensive districts at both source and destination. This will enable greater uptake of the scheme, which has so far been sluggish. Detailed operational guidelines, user guidelines and FAQs for beneficiaries should be made available on the official website and widely disseminated on the lines of other Central government schemes.

- In cases where ration cards are seeded with Aadhaar, the possibility of Aadhaar-based authentication without requiring the production of ration cards should be explored. This will obviate the need for beneficiaries to carry multiple documents while migrating and resolve issues relating to the loss of cards in transit.
- There is a lack of clarity on whether the ONORC facilitates portability for split households. Respondents in our study provided varying and contradictory answers and experiences. The system and guidelines should clearly provide for availing of ration separately by different members of the family who may be in different locations.
- Since the ONORC is restricted to NFSA beneficiaries, source states providing food security to those not covered under NFSA should arrange for similar portability of these benefits through bilateral arrangements with destination states on identified migration corridors.
- Adequate safeguards must be incorporated within the scheme to prevent the exclusion of individuals on account of IT system gaps and identification failures.

6.7 Health and child nutrition

The ICDS scheme most directly impacts young children and pregnant and lactating women, especially from marginalized groups, and it is thus of critical importance to children in migration. While the scheme is universal, interactions with CSOs, academics and government officials revealed several gaps that migrants fall through. Some of these are larger issues with the ICDS system, which are beyond the scope of this report, including strengthening governance, infrastructure, and regularizing services of AWWs and ASHA workers. Other, more specific recommendations regarding facilitating portability in the system are detailed here.

- Convergence problems among various departments for child health and nutrition were reported in urban centres, which impacted effective interdepartmental collaboration and service delivery. Despite efforts such as the POSHAN Abhiyaan by the ICDS, promoting a multistakeholder approach, institutional responses tended to be fragmented. To address this, institutional responsibility for the ICDS at urban destinations should be given to municipal bodies as a means for effective convergence.
- The loss of continuity of ICDS coverage due to breaks in tracking beneficiaries with each migration needs to be specifically addressed. Strengthening

the CAS/POSHAN database will provide an effective real-time database for groundworkers to track maternal and child health and improve Anganwadi services to migrants overall.

- In this regard, digital literacy programmes for AWWs conducted in collaboration with CSOs have proven successful in Mumbai and can be replicated in other states.
- This database should also be integrated with MCPC systems operational in various states to enable interstate portability.
- Destination states should consider providing training and incentives to AWWs and other frontline workers for covering migrants as a priority group. Source states must train frontline workers to assist migrating beneficiaries by providing contacts of AWCs at destination by leveraging the CAS/POSHAN database.
- Source states must carry out sustained awareness building and training campaigns among pregnant women and family members, to instil the importance of carrying the relevant documents while migrating. Incentives provided by schemes such as the PMMVY, which also face the same issue, can also be dovetailed into this process.
- A significant issue for migrants, especially in peri-urban and urban destinations, is a lack of physical access to Anganwadis, since these areas often do not account for migrant populations, which may be floating, in setting up the ICDS infrastructure. Consequently, even beneficiaries who are aware face difficulties in accessing their entitlements. Solutions to this issue will have to be locally evolved and could include:
 - Municipalities conducting surveys of migrant populations to determine appropriate locations for Anganwadis (Surat);
 - Initiatives in collaboration with CSOs to educate migrants at source about the location of Anganwadis at destination (Odisha);
 - Provision of Anganwadis or creches at construction sites (Ahmedabad) and brick kilns (Odisha) in collaboration with employers and CSOs; and
 - Convergence with other institutions such as the building and construction workers board for providing mobile Anganwadi services to migrant labour camps and worksites (Gujarat).
 - A push to revive and integrate the Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme with ongoing efforts could also provide a fillip to early childhood care across states

- The closure of Anganwadis due to the COVID-19 pandemic was reported by respondents across states to be a severe blow to efforts at improving maternal and early child health. While a few states such as Chhattisgarh and Odisha made arrangements for support for returning migrants, through registration at quarantine camps, home visits by AWWs and provision of take-home rations, the crisis exposed the inability of the system to deal with disaster situations and highlighted the need for greater resilience. Making the ICDS more dynamic by expanding its services to migrants and other floating populations could improve its overall ability to deal with crises involving sudden displacements of people.

While the Ayushman Bharat programme expressly includes portability within its framing and seeks to provide universal healthcare to a large vulnerable people, interviews during our study revealed a lack of clarity about its benefits and accessibility. Since the scheme automatically enrolled a large number of people based on previous eligibility criteria, several beneficiaries may not be aware of their entitlements. There is a need for concerted awareness programmes among target populations, with a focus on highlighting the portability aspect of the scheme so that migrants can make use of it effectively.

Finally, several state health schemes provide benefits that are restricted to residents of the states. It may be possible for source and destination state pairs in migration corridors to explore bilateral MoUs or other arrangements for providing these services across state boundaries, on a reciprocal basis, with cost sharing and tracking of beneficiaries. Similar initiatives in the education sector have been described earlier in this report and proven to be successful. For insurance-based tertiary care, source states can also consider empanelling hospitals in destination areas on the lines of Odisha's BSKY.

6.8 Livelihoods

Migrant households are suffering from considerable livelihood uncertainty in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and require support at source as well as destination.

Employment generation and support

- State governments should ensure that left-behind women from migrant households are prioritized for issuing job cards and ensuring work under the MGNREGA. Left-behind women may also be supported through SHGs federated under the NRLM.

- Migrants spending longer periods of time in their source villages should also be sensitized about the availability of livelihood opportunities under the MGNREGA as well as targeted skilling and placements under the NRLM on the lines of UP.
- State governments should consider urban employment support programmes, especially where significant intrastate rural–urban migration is observed. Odisha’s MUKTA scheme offers a good model of convergence with other state schemes.

Enhancing registration

- Taking cues from UP and Chhattisgarh, state governments should ease barriers and maximize the registration of workers under the BOCW and UWSS boards, with a special emphasis on interstate migrants. Local facilitators such as Shram Mitras in Chhattisgarh may be employed for this purpose.
- UP’s use of a cash transfer as an incentive for family labour registration could be a good precedent for registering *jodi* workers into the BOCW scheme, thus visualizing women’s work.

Preventing child labour

- States should consider extending provisions of the RTE (along with hostels and associated infrastructure) up to the age of 18, to deter early entry into child labour.
- Child labour has become an increasing problem in the aftermath of the pandemic. To address this, there must be a stronger vigil on employers and contractors, and helplines and grievance redressal mechanisms must be rolled out by states. Here too,

collaborations between source and destination states in identified child migration corridors need to be strengthened to improve the effectiveness of rescue operations for children forced into labour.

- Rescued children must be re-integrated into the education system with close monitoring at the panchayat/block level to ensure that they do not drop out. They also need to be connected to all social protection schemes that they are eligible for, at source and destination.

Shelter

- Shelter is an essential component to ensure stability, for migrants to maximize livelihood opportunities. Interstate migrant workers must not be barred from using shelters under the NULM (SUH) on account of weak documentation. Shelters must be expanded to provide facilities essential for survival including cooked meals, safe storage for ID papers, sanitation, linkage with PDS and Ayushman Bharat, etc.
- In municipalities that see a lot of family-based migration, states must also set up adequate family shelters or in the alternative, facilitate the setting up of affordable rental housing facilities under the Affordable Rental Housing Complexes scheme component of the PMAY-HFA.
- States should minimize forced evictions of slum dwellers and support in-situ upgradation and improvement of tenure security in informal settlements, to augment affordable housing for migrants and the urban poor.

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Suggested Citation

Centre for Policy Research & UNICEF India (2021) Assessing the portability of social protection and services for children affected by migration: A study across five Indian states. UNICEF, New Delhi.