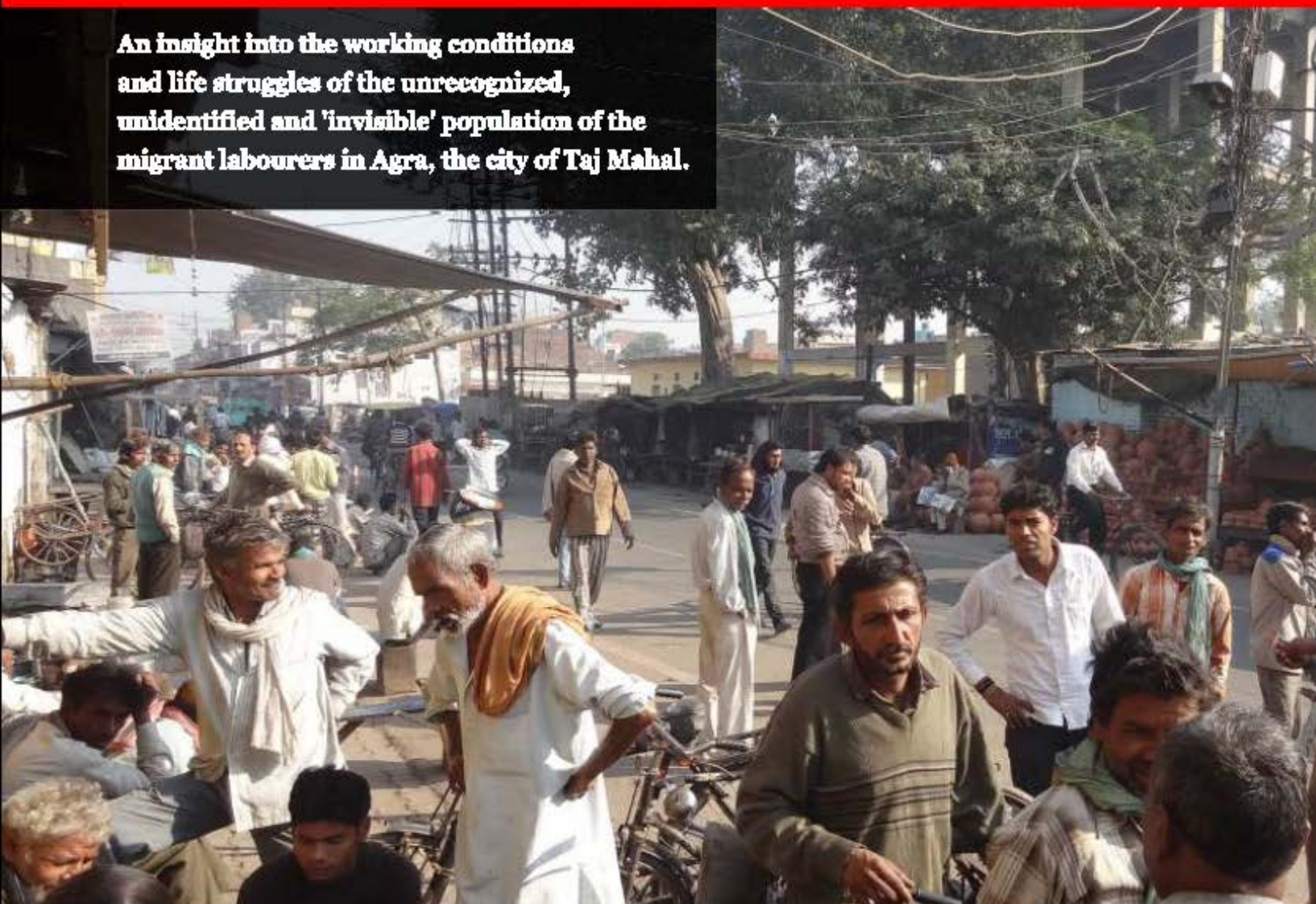


# LABOUR POSTS IN AGRA



**An insight into the working conditions and life struggles of the unrecognized, unidentified and 'invisible' population of the migrant labourers in Agra, the city of Taj Mahal.**



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## Preface

मैं निकला था  
 खरीदने सपने,  
 शहर में,  
 चौराहों पर  
 लगने वाली  
 मंडियों में,  
 लेकिन  
 श्रम की यह मंडियां  
 अड्डा तो हो सकती हैं  
 खरीद फरोख्त का,  
 मगर खो गयी है  
 कहीं अपनी पहचान,  
 पड़ोस की  
 गगनचुम्बी इमारतों के बीच  
 तलाशता फिर रहा हूँ  
 उन्हें  
 चंद कागज़ के  
 टुकड़ों के बीच  
 एक दरवाजे से  
 दूसरे दरवाजे तक .....

- संदीप खरे

Friends,

Urbanization is on a steep rise and census 2011 data too reveals a growing urbanization trend. Hundreds of rural men and women come to the city in search of work and better prospects for their children. This huge workforce is either unskilled or semi skilled and end up as rickshaw pullers, domestic workers or construction labour.

Construction workers constitute the largest section of the unorganized work force in India. The place where these people collect, interact and bargain with their prospective employers for the day/s is termed as *labour adda, labour chowk or labour post*. These places are generally the cross roads or road sides, mostly in the busy commercial spaces of the city and often on the target of the local police, shopkeepers and commuters as creating traffic congestion and obstruction of the normal city space.

The current study of labour posts in Agra reveals that more than 5000 labourers commute daily to the 18 labour posts in the city of Agra where as many hundreds more work at project sites and others go to worksites daily from their respective homes.

Like other cities, there is no provision of basic services at any of the labour posts and ironically in this historic city, the study team came across such labourers as well who are forced to beg to survive, in times of distress and no work.

Most of the labourers come from the socially backward and Dalit community which explains their ever declining and deteriorating socio-economic conditions and lack of other secured alternates for livelihood generation. This study is meant to provide a wholesome data and location of the labour posts in the city to the city planners and other stakeholders with a view that it would facilitate better planning on their end.

I would like to thank Dr. Sanjay for this wonderful report and also the team which collected the data. I would also extend my heartiest gratitude for Mr. Debabrat Patra, Regional Manager Action Aid Lucknow and Mr. Aravind Kumar, Program Officer Action Aid for their continuous support and guidance.

Hope this study provides a way out to plan for the labour posts in a holistic way.



(Sandeep Khare)  
Secretary

## An Overview

It goes without saying that India is a land of heterogeneous identities. The morphological composition though, may rely on a single and widely acclaimed vast constitution but the anatomical reflections of the Indian state clearly show and draw the fault lines between social India and economic India. Predominance of social India is historically directed and textually dictated. Dominance and subordination are the basic traits and characteristics of social India. It also holds true that those who are at the lower rungs in social India are the key forces in economic India, almost constituting its backbone but the irony is that these key forces are always placed and found at the receiving end. One of the basic consequences of the dominance and subordination of social India is to declare itself as the power house of the economic India. One of the attempts of this study is to understand and examine the linkage between both Indian structures.

Doubtless to say, India is a multi-structured economy where a number of pre-capitalist relations of production co-exist with capitalist, specifically imperialist relations. Corresponding to this multi-structural economy is a differentiated working class structure- the varied circuits of production, consumption and accumulation combine to produce a variety of forms of existence of the working class.

Contextually, the working class in economic India can be divided into four broad segments.

- 1- That which gets more than a family, i.e., more than the value of labour power;
- 2- That which gets a wage about equal to the family wage and can thus at a reasonable standard cover the full cost of production and reproduction of labour power;
- 3- That which is more or less able to cover the immediate cost of production of labour power, but has to depend on the non-capitalist sector in order to reproduce itself and/ or has to depress its standard of living in order to reproduce itself;
- 4- The most vulnerable and the pauperized section that is not even able to meet the immediate cost of production of labour power.

It is interesting to note that the wage demands of the upper segments are always supported, yet in the sphere of economic demands of the contract and casual labour that are important.

However, in taking up the demands of the most exploited section of the workers, it is easy to be lulled by the reformist illusion that such endeavor is by itself revolutionary. Obviously, this economic struggle must be linked with a central, political point-that even in order to earn a wage covering the cost of production and reproduction of labour power, it is necessary to put an end to the feudal and the pre-capitalist survivals and to break the imperialist strangle hold.

At the very outset the question arises- how far the composition of labour/working class is affected?

Firstly, it is affected by the caste, tribal or ethnic origins of the labourer in the pre-capitalist sector. Secondly, it is affected by the gender-based division of labour between male and female and the associated patriarchy.

More importantly, the policy makers or the planners and the so called revolutionary trade union movement must also take up the question of these inequalities within the labour class related to caste,

ethnicity and gender. Some may hold that to take up these sectional issues would divide the working class. But in fact the opposite is true: labour class solidarity cannot develop when these sectional issues of the most oppressed are ignored.

Through this study, an attempt has been made to micro-empirically examine the structure and behavior of the daily labour market in Agra city. Based on a sample of workers from the labour posts or job squares in the city, it shows that the labourers in this market represent pauperization of the lowest rungs of the society rather than a migration of choice for better wages.

Almost in all urban centres there are several labour *addas* or squares where daily-wage job seekers gather in the morning and eagerly wait for prospective buyers of their labour power. The buyers may be petty contractors or direct employers. The labourers compete among themselves to offer the lowest supply price of their labour power. They are hired for a day's work or for a few days' work. Majority of job seekers fail to get a job offer at the posts on a particular day. Either they return back to their respective places or even resort to hawking around the vicinity of the labour post in the hope of being spotted by prospective hirers.

Interestingly, such labour posts as was found in Agra have existed and do exist at different stages of capitalist development.

Historically speaking, in 19-century England it was the stage of relative surplus value extraction when similar markets appeared.

Way back in the last quarter of 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was noted by Marx:

*In the notorious district of Benthall Green, a public market is held every Monday and Tuesday morning, where children of both sexes from nine years of age upwards, hire themselves out to the milk manufacturers. The contract is binding only for a week.*

On comparative standards, between 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries of England and Agra respectively, nothing much has seemed to be changed. It is so because; in the present scenario the labourers standing at the posts merely get the maximum no. of 10-15 days to work.

### **Research Methodology:**

The methodological exercise for the study began with a census of all such labour posts in Agra city. Labour posts represent the daily labour market which showed that there are 21 labour post or Job squares of this kind in the entire urban area. We collected data from 18 posts. The selection was made on account of locational advantages. Nevertheless, the observed information from all the labour posts convinced us that the structure and behavior of all the labour posts were fairly identical.

For sampling purpose, it was necessary to have a reasonably good idea of the number of labourers in all the 18 posts.

This estimation was done on the basis of a week-long repeated survey of the labourers. While processing the data, each labourer was assigned a unique code to avoid double counting. Thus we estimated that the population size was 3600.

On the basis of the random sampling, 5 per cent of the population (180 persons) was selected. However, a few labourers (migrated and homeless) were also added to capture one labourer-cum-beggar and a beggar-cum-labourer. The schedule was pre-tested and finalized. It took nearly three

months to interview the sample workers. The questionnaire method was supplemented with participant observation and focused group discussion (FGD) at periodic intervals.

The present study conducted by **Vigyan Foundation** under the aegis of **Action Aid** is broadly an analysis of the structure, behavior and more importantly contribution of the labourers in the development of the city i.e. Agra. The labour posts demonstrate that labourers represent a class of migrants. The significant point is the migrant does not conform to the Harris-Todaro (1969) formulation on rural-urban migration. Our analysis relies on gender, caste and religious distribution along with their wage income, marital status, age group distribution and number of working days in a month. The study also focuses on the basic amenities at respective job squares. The basic argument of this study is that the labourers represent marginalization and pauperization of the weaker sections and it is a distress migration rather than Harris-Todaro choice migration in consideration of the rural-urban wage differential and the calculation of net gains.

### **Basic Propositions of Harris-Todaro Migration Model**

**Proposition 1:** Migration is in response to rural-urban differences in expected income. This assumes that the flexible rural sector wage ensures that there is no rural unemployment. So the potential migrants have two comparable wages, the urban wage sufficiently higher to take in to consideration economically rational optimizing behavior to maximize their expected gains from migration. This is how rural labourers get induced to migrate.

**Proposition 2:** Since the job search is not rural based, the potential migrants only have generalized information on job opportunity. So the migrants, on entering the urban sector, will for some time remain unemployed or take up for the time being casual and part-time employment. The model thus admits of the urban informal sector as a residual sector or a temporary reservoir for the migrants.

**Comparative Analysis of both Propositions:** of the both propositions, proposition 2 qualifies the first one as the model concedes that it was developed with the assumption of full employment or near-full employment in urban areas of the industrial economy, which is not the case in third-world economies like ours.

With these two propositions in hand, we now propose to examine their micro-empirical foundation on the basis of the field data generated through the survey of the labour posts in the grand old city of Agra. Empirical analysis is not out of the place in the Harris-Todaro Migration model. Todaro has himself suggested that the micro-propensity approach is more helpful to understand “who moves and why”.

1. Harris, J.R and M.P. Todaro (1970), “Migration, unemployment and Development: A Two sector Analysis”, *The American Economic Review*, vol. 60, No.1, March, PP126-142.
2. Todaro, M.P. (1970): *Internal Migration in Developing Countries*, International institute for Labour Studies, Geneva.

## Labourers at Job Squares/ Posts

### *In the heart of the City but unrecognized and invisible to the system of governance*

Right to be human is the basic principle of human rights law. For instance, Dalits in India have been deprived and denied of their basic rights and “existential needs”. The super structural diktants snatched away their rights to be human and plundered their dignity once and for posterity. Later with storms of struggles and movements they were able to regain their status of being human. In common parlance, *Dalit rights are human rights*.

If not in similar circumstances, the labourers standing tall in various pockets of the city have nothing to “connect” to the system of governance. At the same time, the concerned labour department has no records or in other words the labourers have lost their rights to get their even “recognition” by the department is unfortunately named after them.

The huge gap between unconnectedness of the labourers and unrecognized by the crucial department of governance reveals the status and value of labour power of a country which claims to be the largest democracy of the world.

Here is an example of a contemporary economy where there are other peculiar labour hire systems. For illustration, we refer only to Germany and Cambodia, which present two different stages of capitalist development.

**Germany:** In Germany, the potential daily wage labourers meet early in the morning each day at “arbeitsamt” (a government operated labour office), and the potential employers to assemble there in search of daily wage labourers. The arbeitsamt performs the role of liaison. The country also has an informal labour exchange system called neighborhood assistant system, which caters to job requirements of laid-off workers. Middlemen, called labour agents, do the liaisoning. This works as a credit building system, in that, for example, a plumber is hired by a piano teacher and 10 hours of plumbing job is exchanged for five hours of piano teaching at a future date.

**Cambodia:** Under the micro-employment generation programme with the technical support of the international Labour Organization and other international agencies, Cambodia has taken up massive road construction work. Because of excess labour supply, demand for labour is communicated on a day-to-day basis to the commune chiefs. The latter pass on the information to the communes asking the job seekers to report to the road construction site next morning. The labourers collect at the sites to offer their labour. Jobs rationing is done by a draw of lottery at the sites. The lucky ones get the employment for the day and the rest try their luck the next day.

In view of the above instances the question arises- is it not viable to formulate such policies which can support and protect the rights of Indian labourers. More importantly, if these labour posts are managed and regulated by local municipal bodies' majority of the problems which lead to pauperization of labourers may be resolved.

Local bodies such as Nagar Nigam can act as a regulating agency by registering the labourers and provide the required labour force to the employers on daily basis.

## Not quite citizens, not full citizens

In terms of its grandeur, prospering and historicity, Agra city is quite famous and known among one of the wonders of the world. But a closer look to the city *chaurahas* is a different story with a unique historically. This is not the tale of the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> century or so. This is a story of a modern democracy which fought tooth and nail for its freedom, and an independent national identity.

Our study in Agra reveals some troublesome facts which questions more than it shows the real face a population which is bereft of the basic amenities and hence without any identity.

The table illustrated below clearly shows the abysmal failure of the so called slogan of “Inclusive Growth” in its model of planning.

Remember the Approach Paper (Published in 2011, by Govt. of India) which was prepared after year-long consultations with civil society groups and others.

Inclusive was one word that came up time and again in the announcements of the Planning Commission on the Twelfth Five-Year Plan. “Faster, sustainable and More Inclusive Growth” was the slogan coined for the Plan. The much hyped Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) fairly concentrates on distribution of Aadhar Cards to its citizens. But the brutal reality in case of the labourers in Agra is heartening and deplorable. They are unrecognized and unregistered “citizens” of a city where they have been “living” if not surviving for more than three to four decades. Deprivation and denial of their basic identities is an assault to their existence and dignity. It is beyond the imagination of the system of governance or the government itself to recognize the labourers standing at the labour posts or squares in search of job, employment and work. The question may be posed here- why the labourers are not considered to be the part and parcel of the inclusive growth where as their contribution in infrastructural development is inseparable?

The data generated through field survey indicates that in a month the maximum no. of working days for any labourers is 10 to 15 days. Even their migration to the city is unable to feed their poverty.

Their unrecognisability forbids them to get any below poverty line card. Hence the labourers who do not get any work for maximum number of days in a month remain under nourished or rather unfed.

Again, we are reminded of the laughable affidavit that the Planning Commission filed in the supreme court, which claimed a person living in an urban area earning Rs.32 and a person earning Rs 26 in a village a day would not be counted as below poverty line.

**In the study, at some labour posts it was found that because of no work for days and even months, the labourers who are aged-enough are forced to beg and starve in the vicinity or in the entire city.**

Ironically, India presents a unique case of a country that, on the one hand, has the largest number of hungry people and, on the other, has inventory of food stocks rotting in the granaries. As per the World Food Program (WFP), “India is home to about 25 percent of the world's hungry poor. Although the country grows enough food for its people, pockets of hunger remain.

The disturbing scenario in case of labourers is that again their crises identity will push them at extremes because without recognition or identification they would not fall under the purview of the National Food Security Bill which has been put on the back burner. Consequently, thousands and lakhs of the unrecognized population of labourers will continue to sleep with empty stomach, tossing and turning all night dreaming for the day when eating food will not be a luxury any more.



## **In the name of Urban Development**

Since 2005, the central government has given significant amounts of money to the states to improve conditions for the country's urban poor, first under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) and more recently through the slow-moving Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY). Unfortunately, very few studies have looked at how effective these programmes have been in achieving their objectives. Our research in Agra suggests that money from the JNNURM did not (Won't in similar conditions) effectively address the needs of the city's most vulnerable migrant residents.

How this could happen in a programme explicitly designed for this purpose, and in a State which has been ruled by the so called representatives of the poor and marginalized for more than two decades?

## **MGNREGA and Migration: Rural-Urban Linkage**

With enforcement of the world's largest public works programme the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act from 2006-2012- is a significant innovation to evaluate policy delivery and the rural-urban linkage of migrated population.

Different studies have shown that it has provided livelihood and income security, decreased the incidence of poverty, increased food intake, reduced mental depression, positively affected health outcomes, and been successful as a self targeting scheme.-as the poorest and most marginalized communities have some work. In many states it has decreased gender differential in wages, increased real wages accompanied by an increase in an agricultural productivity and growth.

Despite these above positive developments the MGNREGA faces torrents of question- Has the MGNREGA really built assets, or has it just been a compendium of useless earth work? Has it created a lazy workforce that is affecting our work culture? Has it negatively affected agriculture by drying up the labour market? Has the MGNREGA become the biggest source of corruption in rural India? Has it failed to arrest distress migration? Has it helped household income, and reduced hunger in the poorest households?

### **Huria Bai- Profile of a Female Labourer**

Who are the female labourers seen prominently almost in every major town of Uttar Pradesh? What is the value of their labour? This case study attempts to raise these broad questions concerning female labour in India by presenting an individual profile: "Hurria Bai," a 36-year old female labourer belonging to the Scheduled tribe, living in a squatter settlement in Agra.

The principal strands of this profile are that "Hurria" is only one link in a long chain of non-agricultural and agricultural labourers stretching back to generations; that her children, despite whatever "education" they have been able to receive, will continue in the same occupation; that hunger, disease and indebtedness are an integral part of their life; that there is little prospect of anyone in the family breaking out of this vicious circle. Moreover, Hurria is also one link to understand, examine and expose the much hyped slogan of "A Safe City". Hurria knocks at our nervous system and at the system of governance which has failed to address the concerns of the marginalized sections such as Dalits, tribes, women and children.

Huria Bai is thirty-six year old “Koli” scheduled tribe, construction labourer, who lives in a squatter settlement on the outskirts of the city of Taj Mahal. She lives here in a small tent style hut with her husband and four children. She is less than 5 feet in height but well built. She is not very dark in complexion but usually wears cloths of very bright colours. A deep lemon yellow tight fitting blouse with a bright red and white checked *ghaghra* (similar to petticoat) and maroon *chunri* is her favorable ensemble. She prefers strong colours as they do not show dirt easily. Her teeth are all stained at the edges with areca nut juice, but still you cannot miss her beaming white teeth when she smiles. It is her pleasant temperament that makes her very approachable to one and all. Huria is more than 7 years old to this city when she along with her family migrated from “*Pagar ki Peni*” in Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh. Huria's is the last of the 7 huts which are in a semi-circular row facing the metalled road that passes by the squatter settlement.

Porlal, the 42 year old husband built the hut with Huria's help. When they decided to squat here seven years back they had to clear the bush and level the hard ground. They used the dug-out earth for the walls. The roof is made of dried sugar case leaves which have to be replaced every two years, unless it is swept off by strong wind cum rain even earlier.

Porlal too is quite short being only 5 feet tall. He usually wears a rather lost look. Four years ago, things were not as bad as they became afterwards. Porlal was still the main breadwinner of the family, though Huria worked all along. Porlal was working mostly loading and unloading trucks, granite stones or sand. He had to set out for work in the morning. He would present himself at the nearest petrol pump at the point where trucks stopped by. His job was to go in the tucks to the quarry along with other loaders, four or five in all per truck, load the truck with granite stones, and then go with the truck to the construction sites where the stones or the sands had to be unloaded. Usually, it involved long hours; Huria, therefore, never expected him till 8 in the evening. He used to earn Rs 250-350 per day, depending on the tonnage of stones loaded and unloaded during the day. Usually, therefore, he was able to give Huria Rs 100-150 or so on a working day. This amount is much more than what many other men bring back home from work. Huria was, therefore, able to run her house quite smoothly until one of their sons fell ill, was hospitalized, and eventually passed away.

Soon after her little son passed away, things started making a turn for the worse. Porlal started complaining of severe stomach trouble. He not only complained of pain but also had internal bleeding. He went to the nearby Sarojini Naidu Medical College. He did not show any signs of improvement as an out-patient. Eventually, he had to be hospitalized for more than one month. Huria's husband is seriously ill and now does not work. Huria lost her savings in medical expenses.

Huria in present circumstances is not having the same temperament which she earlier had. But now she is stronger than before. Huria with her hard labour has defied the common stereotype that women are secondary workers, less skilled or unfit for arduous labour. For Huria there are maximum 10 to 15 working days in a month. She earns Rs. 150 to 250 per day depending on the nature of work.

Huria is able to get, on average, 130 days of work in a year. The period when it is the hardest to get jobs is in the rainy season.

Huria wakes up rather early, around 5 O'clock and goes to use any corner behind the bushes for toilet. She narrates the bush area close to squatter settlement is not divided into male and female zones; she does have to worry about male intrusion on her privacy. Still, she prefers the early dark hours to finish with this daily routine. After she brings two vessels of water, she changes in to her clothes. She does not wear, or have, any foot wear. Nor does she have an umbrella. Huria has to work hard for long hours that when she comes home she is too tired but to feed her children and herself she prepares the evening meal. She is more worried about getting a job the next day at Loha Mandi, the daily labour market where she goes in the morning. Huria is a female labourer without any workers union but she is

identified as “bilaspuria” by her fellow labourers and employers. Like other labourers at labour posts Huria is deprived of both legislative protection and union support, leading to insecurity of employment.

## **Ramnaresh Yadav alias Mohammad Salim**

### ***Homeless but not hopeless***

Today's Mohammad Salim was born in a Yadav family belonging to Yashwant Nagar in Etawah district. 45 years old Mohd. Salim lost his legs after a stroke but fortunately he did not lose his voice and Labourious hands. Slumped on his wheel chair Salim narrates his story with tears in his eyes. Salim is the father of a son and two daughters who live with their mother in Delhi. Rukhsana, his wife also belongs to the same place. Mohd. Salim in Yashwant Nagar was known as Ramnaresh Yadav. He used to pull Rickshaw in the small town of Yashwant Nagar. Salim was in his twenties when he decided to marry Rukhsana whom he loved the most. Both agreed to marry but his family did not endorse it rather threatened him of dire consequences. Nothing distracted Raamnaresh Yadav and with the advice and consent of her beloved and her family he changed his faith to become Mohammad Salim, finally. Therefore, he was not only ousted from his family but he lost his ancestral property too. In search of job and employment Salim wandered from one city to another. Calcutta was his first destination before he finally landed in Agra. He worked harder and harder and managed to save some money for Rukhsana who was pregnant by the time. Salim's father in law gifted him a small piece of land in Delhi and eventually he managed to build a house there. Salim with his wife shifted to the new house. They lived happily for ten years. Suddenly Salim had a stroke and he lost his legs. Salim was a construction labourer in Delhi and his daily earning was 300-400. With the loss of his legs Salim lost the love and support of his wife, he says, for whom he adopted Islam. Salim is illiterate but offers *Namaz* daily which he learnt from his wife. The streets and pavements of Agra City are the new home of the homeless Salim. Salim is homeless but not hopeless. To reacquaint with his labour community, Salim is a peanut vendor at the labour posts. He also sells Beedies and tobacco. When asked about the night shelters in the city- he says “The care taker and his men charge Rs 10 per visit and fear of theft is always there.”

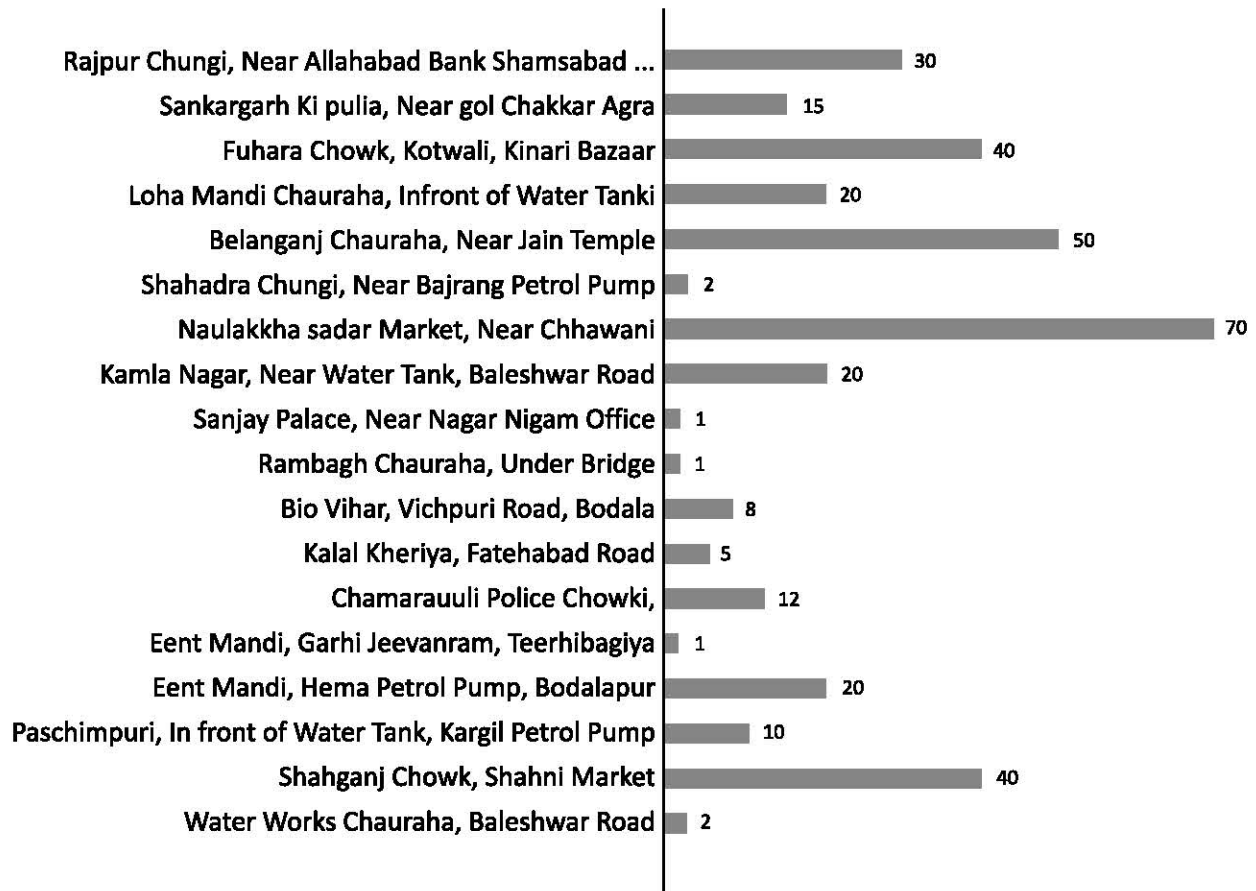
Mohd. Salim is spending his 7<sup>th</sup> winter out on Agra streets. Wrapping his frayed blanket tight around him Salim has no complaints with anyone, even to his wife. The stoicism and determination of Mohd. Salim is exemplary in many senses and meanings. He thanks “*Allah*” for what soever. He regards his wife who ditched him for his lameness. Salim is a fatherly figure for many of the labourers who live with him. Salim is against any type of addiction. On asking about his children, Salim responded-“*Jab dil rone lagta hai tab isi gari (wheel chair) se dilli nikal Jata hoon, Meri biwi ke ghar ke pas hi Suleman bhai ka karkhana hai wahi bachchon ko bulwa dete hain. Ladka aata hai, dekh leta hoon aur wapas ho jata hoon.*”

The story of Mohd. Salim is unique and identical. This is unique in its incidents but his misery and groaning condition of such homeless urban population is the darkest blot on the whitest edifice of democracy. They are homeless, so they have no identity cards. They are homeless, thus they are denied of basic amenities. They need adequate attention and response.

### General profile of the Labour Posts in Agra

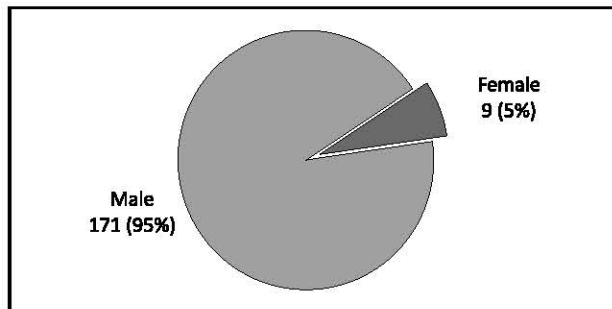
S.No	Name & address of the Labour post	Name of the Ward	Age of the post (in Yrs)	Estimated Number of workers	
				Male	Female
1	Water works Chauraha, Baleshwar Road, Agra	Trans Yamuna	2	30	0
2	Shahganj Chowk, Shahni Market, Agra	Shahganj	40	435	15
3	Paschimpuri, In front of Water Tank, Kargil Petrol Pump, Agra	Sikandara	10	200	20
4	Eent Mandi, Hema Petrol Pump, Bodalapur, Agra	Bodla	20	500	0
5	Eent Mandi, Gadhi Jeevan Ram, Tedhibagiya, Agra	Gadhi Jeevan Ram	1	200	0
6	Chamarauuli Police Chowki, 125 futa, Shamsabad, Road,	Barouli Ahir	12	60	0
7	Kalal Kheriya, Fatehabad Road	Barouli Ahir	5	150	0
8	Bio Vihar Vichpuri Road, Bodala	Etmadpur	8	80	0
9	Rambag Chauraha Under bridge, Agra	Tras Yamuna	1	35	0
10	Sanjay Palace, Near Nagar Nigam office.	Vazirpura	1	30	0
11	Kamla Nagar, Near Water tank, Baleshwar Road Agra	Kamala Nagar	20	400	50
12	Noulakkha Sadar market, Near chhawani , Agra	Chhawani Agra	70	495	5
13	Shahadra Chungi Near Bजारंग Petrol Pump,	Narayanpur	2	70	0
14	Belanganj Chauraha, Near jain temple, Agra	Belanganj	50	250	0
15	Loha Mandi Chauraha, infront of Water Tanki Agra	Lohamandi	20	190	10
16	Fuhara Chowk, Kotwali, Kinari Bazar, Agra	Kinari Market	40	330	20
17	Sankargarh ki puliya, Near gol chhakar Agra	Kedarnagar	15	210	15
18	Rajpur Chungi, Near Allahabad Bank Shamsabad Road, Agra	Rajapur Chungi	30	395	5
<b>Total</b>				<b>4060</b>	<b>140</b>

### Age of the Labour Posts (in Years)



#### Gender Distribution at Labour Posts

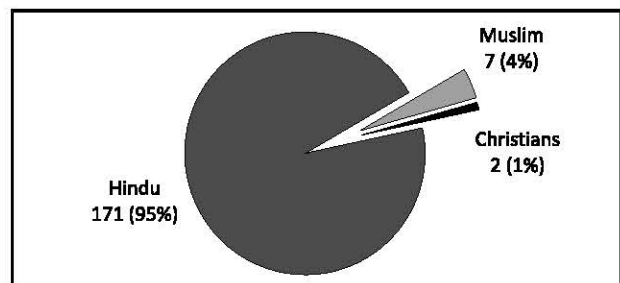
The labour posts in Agra City are male dominant and thus the presence of the female labourers is



minimal consisting merely 5% of the total strength.

#### Religious composition at labour posts

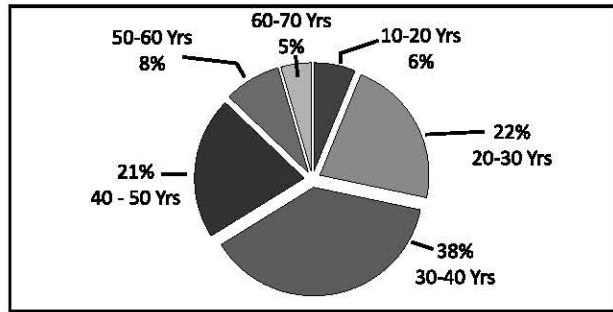
Though, the diversity in religious composition of labourers is clearly depicted in the illustrated pie



chart, but the majority of the population belongs to the Hindu community, followed by 4% and 1% Muslims and Christians respectively.

**Age group distribution**

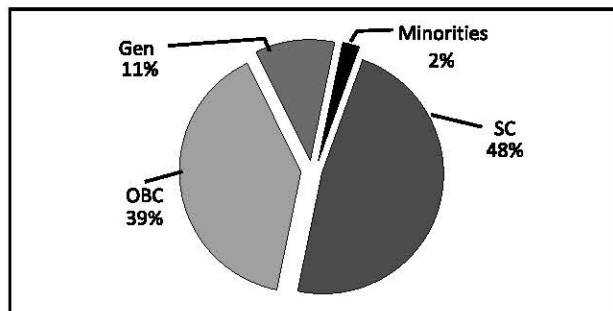
The lowest age limit at the labour posts is questionably as low as 10 years, whereas the maximum age reaches up to 70 years. Almost 60% of the labourers belong to the age group between 20 years to 40 years 8% of the population falls in the age group between 50-60



years. It was found in the study that the labourers who are aged are not generally hired. In case they are picked up, are given very low wages. Age and health are complimentary parameters which are taken in to account before hiring any labourer.

**Caste distribution at labour posts**

One of the most significant findings of the study is the representation and distributin of diverse social communities at Job squares. Approximately, 50% of the labourers belong to the Scheduled Castes. With in this category, it was also found that are 8 sub castes namely-

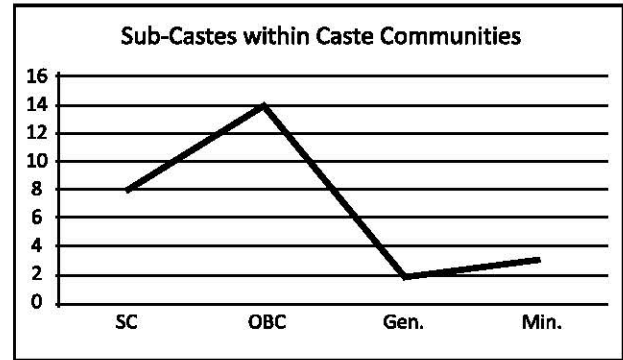


*Jatav, Ahirwar, Valmiki, Dhobi, Khatik, Koli, Mahhaur and Sikarwar.* Fairly low by 10% the other backward classes comprise almost 40% of the total strength. Upper Castes as generals consist of 11% with only 2% minorities. The figure and data rereads that these who are at the

lowest rungs in the social hierarchy are still at receiving and comprising almost 87% of the entire population of the labour market.

**Sub-castes within Caste Communities**

There are 12 Sub Castes within OBC category. Whereas the highest Caste categories in social hierarchy of the social structure are represented by Thakur and Brahmin with 11%



**Scheduled Caste:** 1.Jatav, 2. Ahirwar, 3. Valmiki, 4. Dhobi, 5. Khatik, 6. Koli, 7. Mahour, 8.Sikarwar

**Other Backsword Classes:-** 1.Ahir 2. Badhai. 3. Baghel, 4. Kushwaha. 5. Dhanag. 6. Kachhi.7. Nishad, 8.Nai 9.Lodhi,.10.Kumhar. 11.Manihar. 12. Rathore

**General:** 1. Thakur. 2. Brahamin

**Minority:** 1.Christion.2. Pathan.3. Chisti

**Educational Status of the labourers**

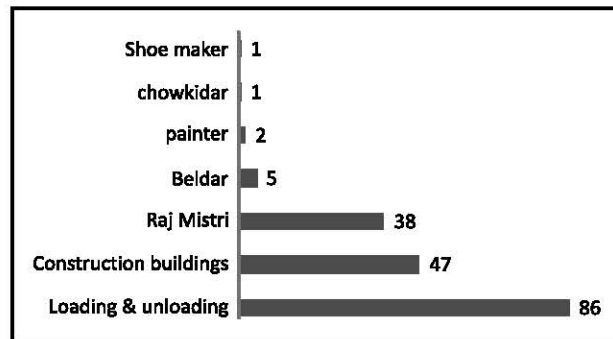
As a major social indicator in human development the impact of education is considered is the most significant part. As an important input and an outcome indicator it influences other development indicators like health, nutritional status, income and obviously the family planning. The table illustrated clearly shows that 50% of the labourers across all social communities are illiterate reelecting the poorest educational status of the labouers. Merely 20% of the respondents have attained primary level education where as 15% of than have received "education" up to upper primary level. 10% of the respondents have acquired matric education in comparison to 1.6% who is educated up to

intermediate. Not a single graduate was reported.

Edu. Level	SC	OBC	Gen	Min.	Total
Illiterate	47	36	10	02	95
Primary	13	18	04	01	36
U. Primary	15	11	02	00	28
High School	10	05	02	01	18
Intermediate	01	01	01	00	03
Graduate	00	00	00	00	00
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>180</b>

### Nature of work at Labour posts

The data tabulated below indicated that approximately fifty percent of the labourers are hired for loading and unloading of goods. Out of the total respondents 26.11% are involved in construction building and nearly three percent



work as helpers also called as *beldars* in building construction. Watchman ship and Shoemaking is also traced in the survey.

### Type of work & Wage rates

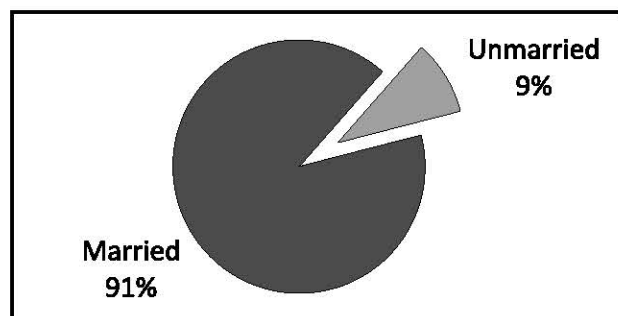
Let us turn to wage flexibility. The study found that the wage rate of unskilled male labourer ranges from minimum Rs 150 to the maximum Rs 300 where as skilled workers get higher wages. It is also known that the minimum wage law can be and is by-passed. It is well known that the setting of minimum wages in India suffers from several short comings such that they are less likely to impose a burden on employers. It has been found that minimum wages are not revised frequently. When revised, the new rates were often lower in terms than the pre-revision rates; in most cases the official minimum wages were below poverty-line wages (see-ILO-SAAT (1966): India: Economic Reforms and Labour

policies. ILO-SAAT, New Delhi).

Nature of Work	Wage Rate	Paid
Loading & unloading	250-300	200-250
Construction buildings	250-300	200-250
Raj Mistri	350-400	250-300
Beldar	250-300	150-200
Painter	350-400	250-300
Choukidar	150-200	100-150
Shoe maker	150-200	150-200

### Marital Status

It is clear from the illustrations below that more than 91% of the respondents are married in



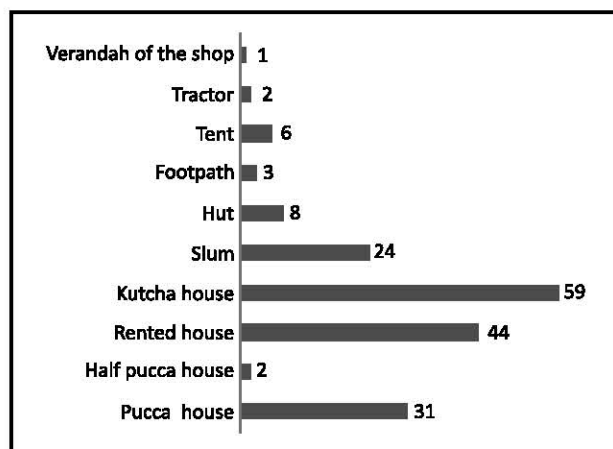
comparison to 9% unmarried male job seekers. Unmarried female labours were absent in the survey.

### House hold status of the respondents

Shelter and quality of housing are important inputs for human development. According to National Sample Survey, a house is classified a "Pucca" or "permanent" if the walls and roofs are made of *pucca* material. (Burnt brick, G first sheets or other metal sheets, stones or cement concrete, tiles, slate, line and stone, or RBC/RCC concrete (Reinforced cement concrete)). If the walls and roof are made of *Kutch* material (Grass, leaves, reeds, bamboo, mud, un-burnt brick or wood or thatch) the house is called as "*Kutch*" or "temporary". In all other cases, the house is classified as "semi-pucca" or "semi-permanent", that is, either the wall or the roof is made of *pucca* material and the other is made of *kutch* material.

The data categorises the shelter and housing

pattern of the labourers in ten different segments. Accordingly, 17.22% of the respondents have *pucca* houses with respect to *kutchha* houses which is more than 37% the second highest settlements are rented which simply indicates the strength of migrant workers. The fourth highest category is slums which is visibly invisible in all the cities and towns. In Agra 13.33% of labourers are bound to “live” in slums without any legal protection. They are unrecognized population so they do not have any proof or identification. Approximately, 5% go back to their respective huts. The nature and organization of housing pattern is a major indicator of migration of workers from rural to urban areas. However if we study the census

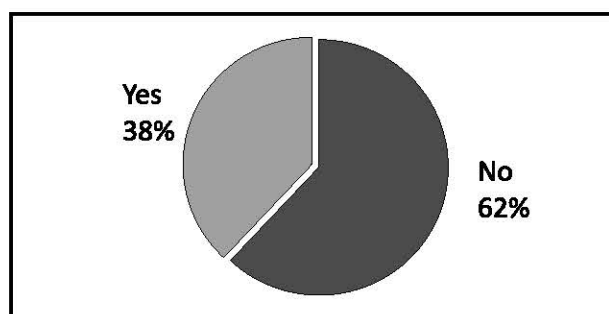


records, barring 1951-1961, the urbanization has increased every ten years. The study helps us to understand nature and context of rural to urban migration defined as “Rural push” and “urban pull” by British demographer Rensselaer in way back in 1848. Though migration is considered to be an economic phenomenon but we need to understand the sociology and historicity of migration. The study of migrant workers in Agra can be examined at three levels of spatial aggregation: (a) movement away from birthplace (or place of previous residence) but within the same district: (b) movement from one district to another district within the same state: and (c) movement from one state to another. Theoretically, the push factors make the place of

origin seem less attractive for reasons like unemployment, poor living conditions, political turmoil, unpleasant climate, natural disasters, epidemics and socio-economic backwardness. The Pull factors make the place of destination more attractive than the place of origin for reasons like better job opportunities and living conditions, peace and stability, security of life and property and pleasant climate. Above all, the study revealed that the major cause of migration was poverty & unemployment. Stature enhancement is another key factor for migration. Even today, we can see people from Purvanchal, Bundelkhand and Bihar of the Hindi heartland are migrating to earn a better livelihood. The question may be posed here-why is it that even after more than six decades of independence people from this region are forced to leave their home and hearth?

#### Identification of the Respondents

Chart shows that more than 62 percent of the respondents have no identification of their own. Since they are migrants, they are unrecognized and unidentified population. Migration is at once a source of expectation and disappointment. Every night will always be a dark one for migrant workers. Neither they have any ration



card nor do they have any benefits from government schemes and that is only because of their un-recognition and un-identification.

#### Registration of Labourers in labour office

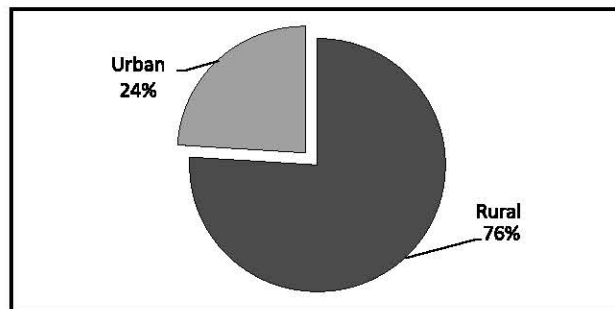
The data collected is more than enough to reveal the evasive nature of the labour offices. Not a single labourer is registered in labour office.



Labour Reg. card	Male	Female	Total
Yes	0	0	0
No	171	9	180

### Rural-urban Ratio

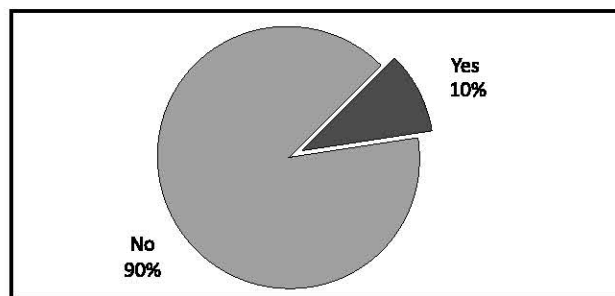
Rural-urban linkage is the cardinal point of the present study through which the various modes and patterns of migration can be evaluated and



understood. Our study reveals that in the city of Agra 76% of the labourers at different job squares belong to rural background in comparison to the urban-linked 24%.

### Registered Labourers under MGNREGA

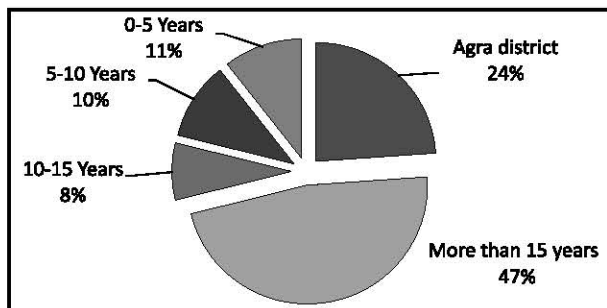
The disturbing data is only a mirror to the reality of world's largest public programme the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment



Guarantee Act. 90% of the labourers who move away from their native places in the same district are not registered under this act which speaks volumes about the implementation and functioning of the populist act.

### Duration of stay in the city

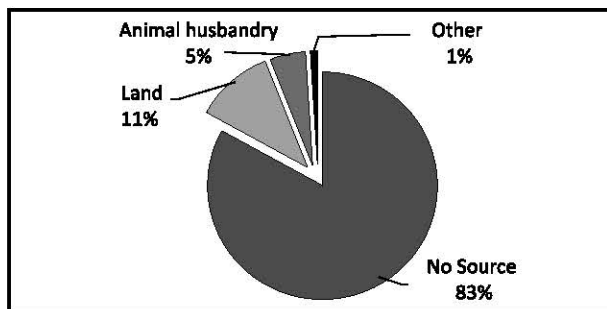
It is clear from the pie chart shown below that almost half of the labourers are migrants and they have been residing here and there in the city



for than 15 years. 24% of them belong to the same district; where as 10% of the respondents have been staying in Agra for 5-10 years.

### Source of Income

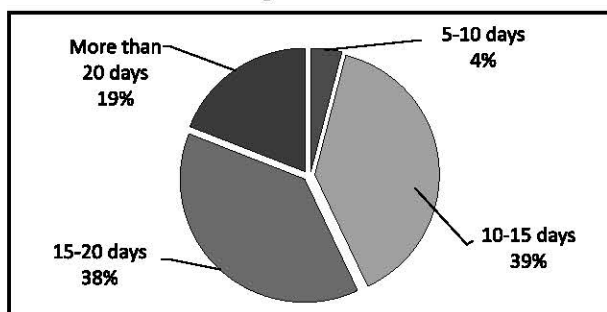
It is quite evident that more than 80 % of the respondents are without any sources of income.



Only 11% have the land where as 5% are engaged in animal husbandry.

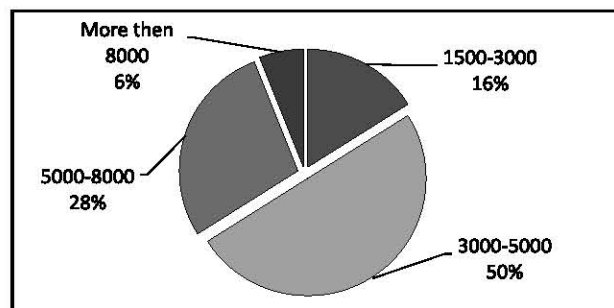
### Number of working days in a Month

Almost three-fourth of the labourers are able to get work for 10-20 days. The dearth of unemployment haunts them together even after migrating to the city. Only 19% say that they manage to get work for more than 20 days. No. of working days is directly proportion to their economic well-being.



### Monthly income

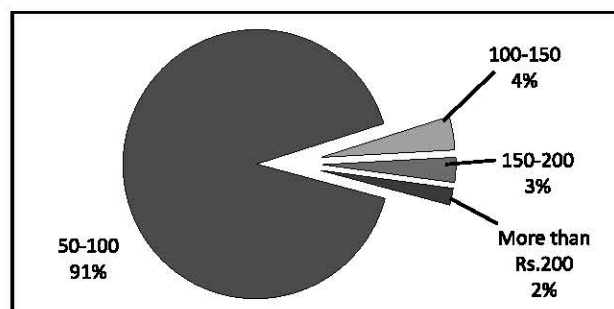
It is crystal clear from the table that 16% of the labourers are able to earn Rs. 1500-3000 per month. Distinctly 50% of them earn up to Rs.



5000 per month where as only 28% say that they earn Rs. 5000-8000 per month. Merely 6% say that they are able to earn more than Rs 8000 on monthly basis.

### Daily food expenses

Out of every 10 respondents I conceded that the daily expense on food of the family lies between Rs 50- Rs100. 4% of the labourers spend Rs 100



-150 daily, whereas merely 6 people are in condition to afford Rs 150-200 on their daily meal. It was also found that only 2% can spend more than Rs.200 for their decent living.

### Daily Sulabh toilet expenses

Expenses (Rs.)	No. of the respondent	Percentage
3-10	60	33%
10-15	0	0%
15-20	1	1%
>Rs 20	1	1%

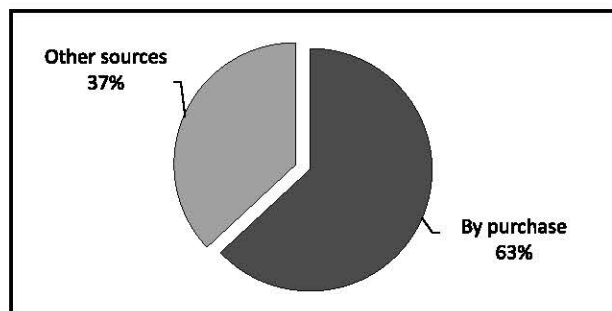
Self owned Toilet	6	3%
Open Place	112	62%
Total	180	100

### Basic Amenities

Basic amenities like drinking water, toilet and shade at the labour posts are a major concern for the labourers. Out of 18 labour posts not a single post has the drinking water facilities whereas only at 4 labour posts the Sulabh Toilet was found. Likewise, the labourers are compelled to stand in scorching heat of the sun as the shade at the posts is almost absent.

### Daily expenses on drinking water

Absence of basic amenities like drinking water facilities is a major concern for the labourers. In all weather conditions they are deprived of this basic need. The data shows that more than 60 percent of the labourers purchase drinking water

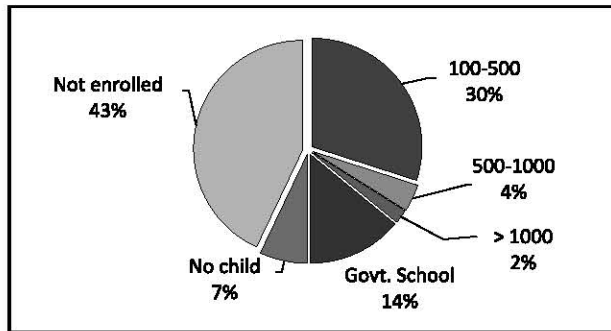


pouches or bottles from the market. Whereas rest of the population use sources like government hand pumps, tap water of municipal corporation or manage from nearby tea shops and hotels.

### Monthly expense on education

Education being a major indicator in human development is in worsening condition for labourers. As discussed earlier about the educational status of the labourers, it was quite evident that majority of them are uneducated rather illiterate. The crucial indicator in human development is a distant dream for them. Table reflects the status of expenses and the quantitative barometer of their awareness and consciousness. More than 40% of the labourers

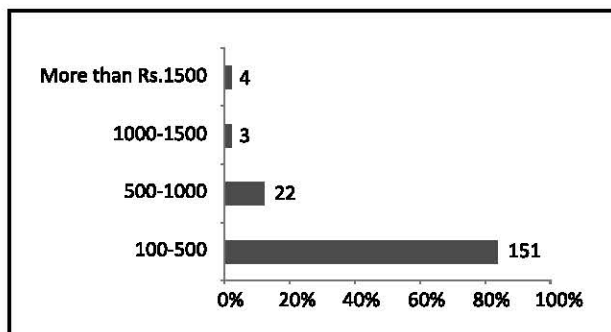
have not enrolled their children to any educational level. 30% say that they spend Rs



100- Rs. 500 per month on the “educational development” of their children.

### Monthly expenses on health

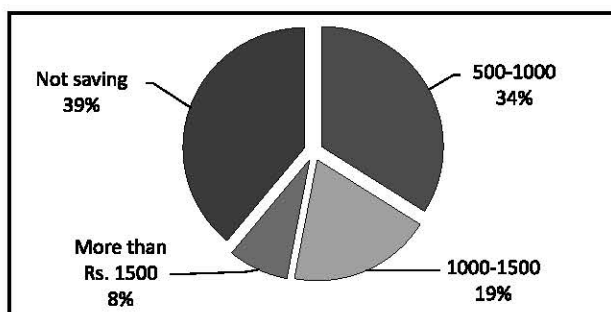
Health is too an important criterion for well being of human beings. The illustrations shown below are self explanatory. Almost 85% (151) of



the respondents spend a minimum and as low as Rs.100-Rs.500 per month. Out of 180 respondents only 22 people spend between Rs.500- Rs1000 on their healthy living.

### Monthly Saving

As per the monthly savings of the labourers is



concerned it was found that saving is negligible. Almost 40% have no saving. 34% respondents are able to save Rs 500- Rs1000 per month. 19% of them manage to save Rs 1000- Rs1500 per month. And only 8% are there who can save more than Rs 1500 per month.

### Awareness about government schemes and programmes

The data is an eye opener to the policy makers and planners in the planning division. More than 95 percent of the labourers standing at labour posts do not know anything about government schemes and programmes. Majority of the labourers are engaged in construction of buildings but only 3 respondents are aware of the construction Workers Act. Shelter homes in Agra are the centres of muscle power and economic dominance. The illegal charges at these “homes” forbid the homeless to make an entry there. The much acclaimed “*Aam Aadmi Bima Yojana*” which was started on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2007 (the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi) is unreachable to the labourers of the unorganized sector. Out of 180 respondents only 7 people are aware of this insurance scheme.

Awareness	Y	N	Total
Construction worker Act.	3	177	180
Reg. in construction worker act	0	180	180
Know about shelter home	7	173	180
Govt. insurance schemes	7	173	180

## Suggestions & Conclusions

### Suggestions:

Following are a few suggestions concerning Labour problems and protection mechanism-

- ❖ In order to address the pathetic and poor conditions of the Labourers and the labour posts/ labour *Chaurahas*, identification and recognition of the same must be the first and fundamental step.
- ❖ The government owned night shelters in the city are either non-functional, or illegally possessed. The poor management of the night shelters is a hindrance to the dispossessed Labourers who could be its 'beneficiaries'. In such cases it would be more in their interest to ensure proper management of the shelters so that they can live a healthy decent life.
- ❖ Labour laws constitute an essential component of Labour Policy in India aimed at imparting certain basic rights to Workers/ Labourers as enshrined in our Constitution. Though the objectives of regulatory exercises should be to facilitate the growth in any enterprise but along with it, should promote employment, offer sufficient protection to workers and it must ensure social peace. Our study in the Agra Labour Market recognized and found that for maximum Labourers employed in the unorganized sector there is an urgent need to protect their interest by providing them the minimum living Wage, improved regulatory activities, basic Social security and improved health and safety facilities.
- ❖ The living standards of the daily Labourers need urgent attention since they have no security of job and are often deprived of the basic rights under various labour laws.
- ❖ It is also suggested that the local bodies such as Nagar Nigam (Municipal Corporations) and *Nagar Palika Parishad* (Municipal Councils) should play the role of a regulating agency. Hence forth, the local bodies should keep the records and do the liasoning for various job requirements.
- ❖ In case of Labourers and the labour requirements, the local bodies should function as an autonomous agency thus free from any external agency.
- ❖ The social and economic policies of the government should address the problems of female labour force in our country. In our study, female labour force participation is low than their male counterparts. The reason why females' labour force participation is low is that females take the principle responsibility for housework. It is important to recognize in this context that in a country like ours, housework contributes much more to family welfare than it does in high income, developed countries. Family welfare schemes must be re-structured keeping this in view.
- ❖ A majority population in labour markets is of migrants who are forced to leave their villages. Exodus of Labourers who are landless and thus poor, also indicate towards our agricultural growth system and land distribution policy. The ineffective legislative strategy of land reforms has been the principle reason for exodus. Thus, in order to curb the poverty of the landless Labourers effective and productive land legislation is urgently suggested.
- ❖ The study found that most of the Labourers were able to get work for 10 to 12 days in a month. The question is: What do the poor do in some 220-240 days during which they remain unemployed and unutilized. How do they survive? What are their coping mechanisms? If the policies of the government are unreachable for this segment of workers then they are the natural victims of poverty, hunger, indebtedness and loss of dignity sponsored by the state itself. Thus, it is strongly suggested that effective measures are needed to make these policies reachable and productive.
- ❖ For an effective implementation of labour laws it is essential to strengthen the enforcement machinery by way of increasing the manpower, improving infrastructure, etc.
- ❖ More importantly, it is also essential to launch a campaign in order to sensitize and spread awareness

of the various labour laws enshrined in our Constitution. Further, the labour posts in the city may the most appropriate place and be the major centers of education of various government schemes and programmes too.

## Conclusion

- ❖ The public image of policymakers, planners and professional politicians and their art and craft has always been lower. It has been so because the low and the lower images are directly proportional to the pathetic conditions of those populations whose contributions are almost unavoidable in the so called “growing Indian economy”. Even their nomenclatures are well directed if not motivated. In other words, they fall in to different categorizations such as 'informal', 'unorganized', 'unidentified' and obviously 'unrecognized'. It seems as if the new economic policy which came in to existence in India in 1991, created not only a different economic environment but a different nomenclature as well.
- ❖ A torrents of questions may be posed here- what is the correlation between accessibility and sustainability?, what is the interrelationship between percentage of economic growth and the sources of livelihood?, how far the rise in census is related with the hunger of millions?, what is the linkage between the prosperity index of the affluent minor groups and the human development index of the disadvantaged and excluded millions? Is it not a silent struggle between the dominating economic policy and the dominated people who are categorized as '*dihari mazdoor*' or daily Labourers?
- ❖ The greatest assault of this struggle is that the dominating policies are cruel and inhuman in their composition and operation. The daily Labourers are trapped between the old and the new economy. The insecurity in their lives has prevailed by and large under both the economies. The building blocks of the infrastructural development have been used as a device within both sectors. The Labourers are the victims of the highly unequal distribution of incomes and ownership of assets and resources in India.
- ❖ The daily wage Labourers may be considered as the smallest unit and as a vantage point which could and should drive us to understand and educate about the discriminatory tendencies and policies reflected in a new phenomenon of the rich, by the rich and for the rich. Doubtless to say that the Labourers are the most vulnerable sections of the society. Our study in the Agra labour market reveals that almost half of the population belongs to the dalits who have migrated in search of job and employment. They fall short to the persistent problems in major sectors such as health, education; water and sanitation leave alone their roofless- ness. In countries such as India, it is well known that the lack of adequate unemployment benefits, insurance and other worker protection typically means that open unemployment is not a viable option and workers have no choice but to keep engaging in same activity, often very informal and low paying.
- ❖ As stated earlier, the daily wage Labourers get only seasonal employment at source, the average duration being 3-4 months. Analysis of the data on employment duration at destination, that is Agra, also suggests that there is only seasonal employment in the daily labour market. Even in terms of wages the Labourers are discriminated as their wages are much less than those fully integrated in to the capitalist sector. How unprotected are the Labourers representing the sample of our study can be understood from the startling revelation that almost cent per cent of them have no awareness of the Labour Department of Uttar Pradesh government. Similarly, awareness about unions is almost negligible too. Needless to say, several labour laws have been mentioned earlier and that are applicable to the casual Labourers as well. Despite the existence of several complicated laws, the economically crippled conditions and social exclusions of the Labourers are likely to continue if the right measures are not initiated. The problem is not just one of identifying the socio-economic causes of the malaise. What is needed is action on the ground!

## Annexure

A look at the key labour legislations:-

**Labour laws enacted by Central and enforced by both the Central as well as the State Governments.**

- ❖ The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986.
- ❖ The Building and other Constructions Workers' (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996.
- ❖ The Building and other Construction Workers Cess Act, 1996.
- ❖ The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970.
- ❖ The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.
- ❖ The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979.
- ❖ The Labour Laws (Exemption from Furnishing Returns and Maintaining Registers by Certain Establishment) Act, 1988.
- ❖ The Minimum Wages Act, 1948.
- ❖ The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961.
- ❖ The Payment of Wages Act, 1936.
- ❖ The Personal Injuries (Compensation Insurance) Act, 1963.
- ❖ The Personal Injuries (Emergency Provisions) Act, 1962.
- ❖ The Plantation Labour Act, 1951.
- ❖ The Trade Unions Act, 1962.
- ❖ The Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923.
- ❖ The Employment Exchange (Compulsory Notification of Vacancies) Act, 1959.
- ❖ The Children (Pledging of Labour) Act 1938.
- ❖ The Bonded Labour system (Abolition) Act, 1976.
- ❖ The *Beedi* and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966.
- ❖ The Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act, 2008.



## About Vigyan Foundation ...

Vigyan Foundation is a right based non-government charitable organization which has been working with the community for the rights of the deprived and the most vulnerable sections of the society, be it children, women, slum dwellers or the homeless community. Vigyan Foundation emerged as a creative and collective response to the needs of the people so as to passionately advocate for the rights of the deprived and the most vulnerable sections of the society. Vigyan Foundation was formed in 1988, and registered as a society under the Society Registration Act, 1860.

Our objective is to create such an oppression-less, non-discriminatory society where all the citizen have access to equal rights, freedom and opportunities in ways that enable them to live safe and dignified lives and thereby get opportunities to express their creativity. The mode to achieve this is through raising collective voices in sustainable manner.

Vigyan believes in strengthening the dignity of people and enhance their capacity to raise their voice to access their basic rights through formation of community based organizations / issue based alliances to advocate for the pro-poor policies. According to this point of view Vigyan Foundation team is working in urban slums, marginalized or homeless. Our goal is to empower groups of women, children, youth and unorganized sector and to expand them in a federation for alliance building. It is our strong feeling that while working in a group it is a logical fight back for initiation of community issues. In rural areas the focal point for work is in education and health.

Through Urban resource centre, Vigyan Foundation publishes study materials for advocating different issues from time to time.



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