



# LABOR POSTS IN MEERUT

## Preface

Friends,

Urbanization is on a steep rise and census 2011 data too reveals a growing urbanization trend. Agriculture as a sector has witnessed decreasing government investment and the highly hyped ambitious government scheme MNREGA too has failed to curb the rural-urban migration. 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.

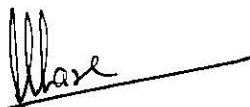
Construction workers constitute the largest section of the unorganized work force in India. The place where these people collect, interact and bargain with their prospective employers for the day/s is termed as *labour adda*, *labour chowk* or *labour post*. These places are generally the cross roads 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 present study tries to capture the conditions prevalent at these unrecognized labour posts and also tries to investigate the broader reasons for migration and coping strategies of the workers. The idea is to put forward the demand for recognition and regularization of the labour posts as these are the labour stations and should be given adequate space in city planning just as fruit/vegetable market, rickshaw stand etc.

Moreover, these labour posts need to be equipped with shade, water and toilet facilities as well as crèche and health posts. Undoubtedly this work force is behind the entire shining city infrastructure and deserves to be acknowledged and provided the basic facilities. Non-provision of services is equivalent to denial of their human rights. 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 Ms Jyoti Awasthi for this wonderful report and also the Vigyan 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 ActionAid 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

***References from key national and international legal documents highlighting the concern for the labourers including building and other construction work and the need of immediate and legal intervention and welfare measures for improving their life and working conditions:***

1. It is estimated that about 8.5 million workers in the country are engaged in building and other construction works. Building and other construction workers are one of the most numerous and vulnerable segments of the unorganised labour in India. The building and other construction works are characterised by their inherent risk to the life and limb of the workers. The work is also characterised by its casual nature, temporary relationship between employer and employee, uncertain working hours, lack of basic amenities and inadequacy of welfare facilities. In the absence of adequate statutory provisions, the requisite information regarding the number and nature of accidents is also not forthcoming. In the absence of such information, it is difficult to fix responsibility or to take any corrective action.

(As quoted in 'The Statement of Objects and Reasons' in The Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996)

2. In view of the circumstances explained above, it has been considered necessary to constitute Welfare Boards in every State so as to provide and monitor social security schemes and welfare measures for the benefit of building and other construction workers. For the said purpose, it has been considered appropriate to bring in a comprehensive legislation by suitably amplifying the provisions of the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Bill, 1988 which was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on the 5<sup>th</sup> December, 1988. It has also been considered necessary to levy a cess on the cost of construction incurred by the employers on the building and other construction works for ensuring sufficient funds for the Welfare Boards to undertake the social security Schemes and welfare measures.

(As quoted in point no. 3 of 'The Statement of Objects and Reasons' The Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996)

3. Lack of labour protection for migrant workers undermines protection generally for all workers. The many international labour standards adopted over the years by the International Labour Conference of the ILO are important for safeguarding the dignity and rights of migrant workers. In principle, all international labour standards, unless otherwise stated, are applicable to migrant workers. These standards include the eight fundamental rights conventions of the ILO identified in the 1998 ILO



Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work; standards of general application, such as those addressing protection of wages and occupational safety and health, as well as the governance conventions concerning labour inspection, employment policy and tripartite consultation; and instruments containing specific provisions on migrant workers such as the Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181), the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) and social security instruments.

(as quoted in <http://www.ilo.org/migrant/areas/international-standards-on-labour-migration-and-protection-of-migrant-workers-rights/lang--en/index.htm> , 'International Standards for the protection of Migrant Workers' International Labour Organization.)

4. Whereas the ILO was founded in the conviction that social justice is essential to universal and lasting peace;

.....Whereas economic growth is essential but not sufficient to ensure equity, social progress and the eradication of poverty, confirming the need for the ILO to promote strong social policies, justice and democratic institutions;

.....Whereas the ILO should give special attention to the problems of persons with special social needs, particularly the unemployed and migrant workers, and mobilize and encourage international, regional and national efforts aimed at resolving their problems, and promote effective policies aimed at job creation;

.....Whereas, in seeking to maintain the link between social progress and economic growth, the guarantee of fundamental principles and rights at work is of particular significance in that it enables the persons concerned, to claim freely and on the basis of equality of opportunity, their fair share of the wealth which they have helped to generate, and to achieve fully their human potential;

(as quoted in ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up Adopted by the International Labour Conference at its Eighty-sixth Session, Geneva, 18 June 1998 (Annex revised 15 June 2010) <http://www.ilo.org/declaration/thedeclaration/textdeclaration/lang--en/index.htm>)

## Rationale of the Study

According to the Census 2011 provisional tables, the total count for workers in India is around 40 crores with 31.3 crores as main workers and remaining as marginal workers. Out of the main workers, largest share belongs to agriculture workers, which is counted at 176979000 or 17.6 crores. Construction workers in census form a small share of around 3.7% which is 1.15 crores. It is well known that agriculture workers migrate in large numbers during lean seasons to work as construction workers in the developing cities. These workers engage in semi skilled and unskilled category of construction work. With the focus of development shifting to urban centres and resulting in infrastructure boom, this is becoming the trend.

The Construction Industry accounts for about 40% of the development investment of India during the last 50 years. It contributes 5.1% to GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and 78% to Gross Capital Formation. About 16% of India's Working Population depends on Construction Industry for their livelihood

After a decade long struggle and advocacy by unions of construction workers and various associated groups, the President of India promulgated the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Third Ordinance, 1996 (Ordinance 25 of 1996), on 10th June, 1996 and thus the construction workers were awarded their due right to protection and welfare in this country.

Seventeen years have passed, barring a few states like Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Delhi, construction workers are miles away from availing their rights. Neither the situation of their labour posts have improved nor their own conditions. The labourers still stand on road sides known commonly as labour chowks and wait for their turn to be picked up for work, many a times due to work insecurity they agree to work on half the usual daily wage. There are incidences when they come back without getting their promised wage for one reason or another and due to ignorance about any place for registering their complaints, they do not get due justice. Sometimes they come back with injuries received during work and yet do not get any medical support from either the employer or the government as neither the labour posts have any provision of First Aid kits nor do the places of rest i.e. shelter homes have any such measure available for the migrants.

It is very clear that in spite of a Law under the Constitution of India, construction workers are miles away from their dues and there is therefore a strong need to gather evidence of lack of implementation of welfare measures for construction workers as prescribed under the said Act and advocate for their proper implementation and also speeding up the process of formation of unions

<sup>1</sup> Data tables available on [http://censusindia.gov.in/Census\\_And\\_You/economic\\_activity.aspx](http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/economic_activity.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> Speech by Vice President of Construction Workers' Federation of India at Brussels on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> April 2007 during the 16<sup>th</sup> Congress of World Federation of Trade Unions <http://www.wftucentral.org/?p=773&language=en>

## About the Study

This study was conducted in the city of Meerut with the key objective of understanding the situation of construction workers with respect to the benefits that they are accessing under the Building and Other Construction Workers' Act 1996, improvement in their life and work conditions as envisaged in the Act.

Two short studies were undertaken to gather evidences in this regard:

1. Status of basic amenities provided by the government at the Labour Posts
2. Socio economic condition of the construction workers in present time and assessment of impact on their lives with the advent of the Act for their welfare.

## Methodology

Under the coordination of Vigyan, the study was conducted in Meerut with support of a local organization called Bharat Uday Educational Society. The study teams were given an orientation on the issues of construction workers, the key promises made in the Building and Other Construction Workers' Act 1996 and the need of the study. Besides this the questionnaire was explained to the team members and field tested before finalisation.

For the study purpose, two questionnaires were prepared one to understand the situation at labour posts and other to closely examine the socio economic situation of the labourers engaged in construction work.

The study teams administered the questionnaires in the field between August - September 2012

# Report and Analysis

## Labour Posts in Meerut

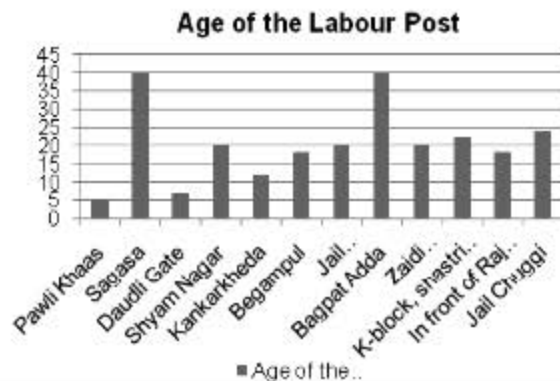
Name and Address of the Labour Post	Name of the Ward	Age of the Post (years)	Estimated Number of Workers	
			Men	Women
1. Pawli Khaas, Modipuram, Muzaffarnagar Road	Ajanta Colony	5	200	200
2. Sagasa Near Hapur Adda	Sagasa	40	1200	1200
3. Daudli Gate Modipuram Road, (near Titu Chaiwala tea stall )		7	500	500
4. Shyam Nagar, Shyam Nagar Bhopal Ki Kotthi	Shyam Nagar	20	700	700
5. Kankarkheda (in front of Ambedkar Maidan)	Kankarkheda	12	600	600
6. Begampul (in front of Police Chowki), Near Kutchehri Road	Meerut Cantt	18	800	800
7. Jail Chuggi, Qila Road	Sarvoday Colony	20	800	800
8. Bagpat Adda (in front of Metro Plaza)	Maliyana	40	5500	-
9. Zaidi Farm, Manzoor Nagar	Nauchandi, Zaidi Farm	20	2000	-
10. K-block, Shastri Nagar, Hapur Bypass	Shastri Nagar	22	4500	-
11. In front of Raj Mandir, Modipuram (Meerut Muzafarnagar Road)	Modipuram	18	4800	-
12. Jail Chuggi	Saket	24	3300	



### Age of the Labour Post

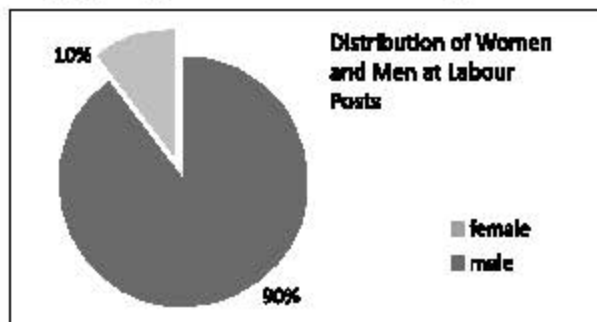
As per the study findings, there are 12 Labour Posts in Meerut city. These labour posts are spread across the city and most of them are recognised as labour posts since a long time. As the graph below suggests, 2 posts one at Sagasa and the other at Baghat Adda are the oldest and have been there since about 40 years as per the information received during the field study. Except Pawli Khaas and Daudli Gate which are the newest to come up in Meerut in the last decade, rest all 8 are in the range of 10 to 25 years old.

### Distribution of Women and Men at Labour



### Posts

Roughly 90 percent labourers standing for work at



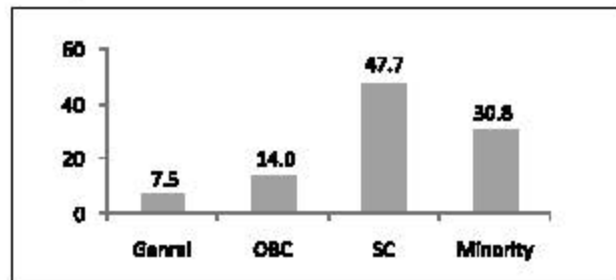
labour posts in Meerut are men and remaining 10 percent are women as per the study findings.

### Distribution of caste groups among Labourers at Labour Posts

As shown in the graph below, majority (about 41%) of the labourers standing for work at the labour posts across Meerut come from the

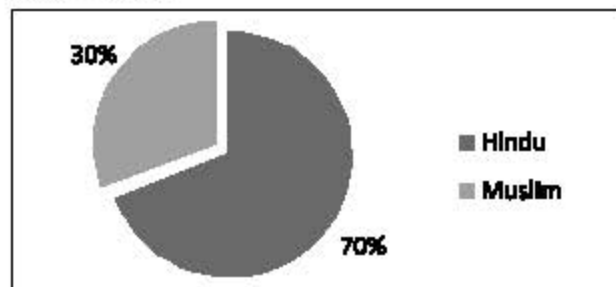
Scheduled Caste Community. This is followed by the representation from the minority community at about 32 percent. OBC and General communities are represented by 14 percent and 7.5 percent respectively.

### Religion wise Distribution of Labourers at



### Labour Posts

Labourers following Hindu religion are about 70 percent while remaining about 30 percent follow Muslim faith.



### Representation of Community Groups among the labourers standing at Labour Posts

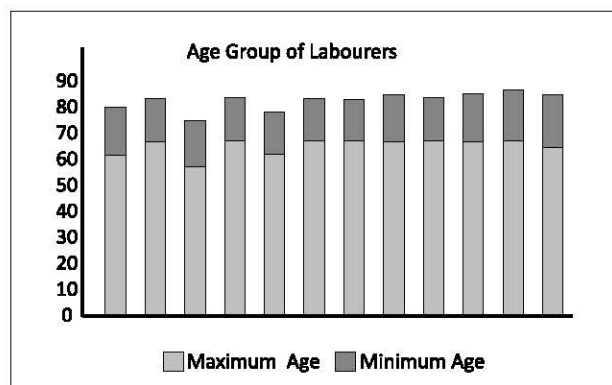
An enquiry into this was made and it was learnt there is representation of following caste groups among the labourers standing across all labour posts in Meerut.

*Kumhaar, Bhadhbhoje, Julaahe, Qureshi, Dheewar, Harijan, Dhobi, Tel, Naal, Gadaria, Fageer, Jatav, Rajput and Brahmins.*

Again if the various community groups are seen, most of them are those that have traditionally associated with some special skills like washing, hair cutting, making earthen ware, weaving, doing stone work, grinding oil seeds,

### Distribution of Age groups represented by the Labourers at Labour Posts

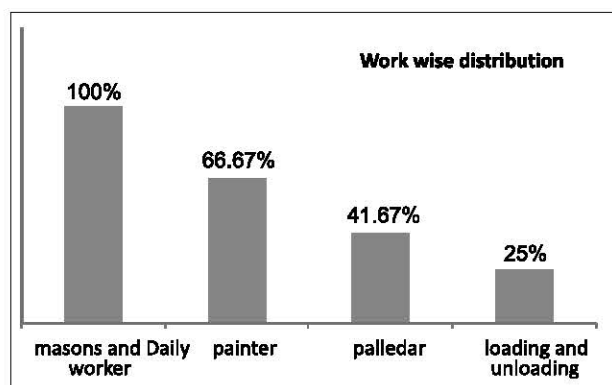
Almost all the labour posts present the same picture. There are much more number of elderly labourers at



the posts than the young adults. If an average age of labourers standing for work across Meerut Labour posts is drawn from this picture it shows that more labourers fall in the middle age of 30-45 years while many elderly in the age of 45 till 60 years are also working.

### Work wise distribution of Labourers across all Labour Posts

The graph showing work wise distribution of



labourers standing across all labour posts of Meerut suggests that though the number of unskilled labourers is very high in the city for eg. Baghpat Adda alone reports about 3500 such labourers similarly the labour post inform of Raj Mandir and Jail Chungi, the number of skilled/specialized workers like Masons and Painters is very low at such points. As far as loaders and unloaders and Palledras are seen these are also concentrated in only three locations in the city namely Baghpat Adda, In front of RajMandir and Jail Chungi. All these figures as emerging from the study indicate to the fact that more and more people have either remained unskilled

without any upgradation in their capacities and/OR similarly more unskilled hands are joining the work in absence of any pre obtained skill.

### Average Wage Rate of various workers at Labour Post

The data collected during the study in Meerut shows that on an average Masons are getting per day wage in the range of Rs. 300-450/- while Painters are earning a daily wage between Rs. 250-400/- that is almost similar to what Palledars and Head loaders are earning on an average basis per day. Labourers are paid the least. They earn somewhere between Rs. 200-350/-, while at the K Block Shastri Nagar Labour post an income as low as Rs. 150/- per day has been reported in the study. The exception again is the data from Zaidi Farm Labour post where some of the labourers have reported to earn between Rs. 350-450/- per day.

Type of Worker	Average Daily Wage Rate
Mason	Rs. 300 – 450/-
Painter	Rs. 250 – 400/-
Palledars and Head Loaders	Rs. 250 – 400/-
Labourers	Rs. 150 – 300/-

### Availability of Basic amenities at Labour Posts

**Shade** - The data obtained from the study shows that none of the labour posts has any provision for shade and the labourers stand out in the open braving all weather conditions. In 5 Labour Posts there are either some trees or the labourers stand in the verandahs of the market areas and hence get some relief. If one looks at any special provision made for the labourers to stand in dignity and wait for their work, there is nothing to this effect.

**Drinking Water** Out of the 12 labour posts, 6 have provision of public handpump for taking water. 5 posts have provision of municipality tap while at one labour post there is no such provision for public drinking water.

**Toilet Facility** Out of the 12 Labour Posts in Meerut, only 3 have a Community Toilet Facility nearby the Post. Remaining 9 do not have any such facility either at the post or nearby and hence labourers when in need use space.

### **Special Facilities for Women Labourers**

There are no special facilities for women labourers like child crèche facility/ space for rest etc. In absence of any toilet in most of the labour posts in Meerut, it becomes more challenging for women.

### **Visit by any official from District Labour Department**

- In order to understand whether the district labour department officials have ever visited the Labour Posts to meet the labourers and also initiate any process of labour registration, the study team inquired about the same at all the labour posts. The response to this query has been in negative. In ten labour posts the labourers informed that no such visit has ever been made by any person from labour office and in two places the labourers were ignorant about the same.

### **Expectations of Labourers for their own betterment**

**Any Discussion on forming a union of your own** Further the labourers at the different labour posts were asked during the study whether they have ever discussed about forming a union of their own among themselves. Again the response received from across the labour posts has been negative. No such discussion has ever emerged among the labourers.

**Will the labourers join any unionisation process if initiated** There is a unanimous agreement by the labourers across all twelve labour posts in Meerut. Everywhere people are willing to join in such a unionisation process.

**Requirement at the Labour Post** An open question was asked to labourers at all the twelve labour posts about what according to

them is required at this place where they stand to get work every day.

<b>Name of the Labour Post</b>	<b>Requirement suggested by the Labourers</b>
Pawli Khaas	water, toilet, shade, union
Sagasa	health facility, night shelter
Daudli Gate	shelter, water
Shyam Nagar	Exclusive space for adda, security, community toilet
Kankarkheda	unionization, shade
Begampul	toilet, union, police support, night shelter
Jail Chuggi, Qila Road	Exclusive space for adda
Bagpat Adda	Exclusive space for adda, toilet, fixed wages
Zaidi Farm, Manzoor Nagar	toilet, shade, night shelter
K-block, shastri nagar	Exclusive space for adda, 25 days work, fixed wages
In front of Raj Mandir, Modipuram	water, toilet, exclusive space for adda
Jail Chuggi	toilet, employment, registration

**Any major Incidence occurred at the Labour Post that affected the lives of the Labourers**  
In order to know if there has been any incident

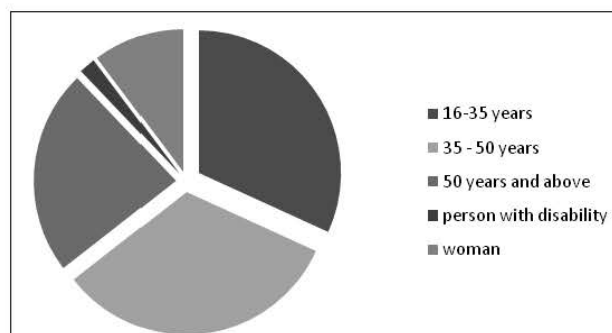
that has negatively affected the lives of the labourers at the labour posts an enquiry was made. While respondents of ten labour posts could not recollect any major happening at their labour posts, labourers at Zaidi Farm Labour Post informed that once a labourer had met with an accident, further inquiry into this incidence could not reveal much. Labourers at K Block Shastri Nagar informed of police harassment which they said has been a regular feature for some time.

### Socio Economic Profile of the Labourers standing for work across twelve Labour Posts of Meerut

In the second part of the study, a detailed individual questionnaire was administered to labourers across all the twelve labour posts. The selection of these individuals was random, however efforts were made to get representation of all age groups, caste groups and purposely reach out to women labourers in order to understand their issues in depth. Thus, in all, 108 individuals were covered in this section of the study. Following is a detailed analysis of the queries made to them and responses received thereof.

#### About the Respondents - Nature of the Respondents

Out of the 108 individuals reached during the

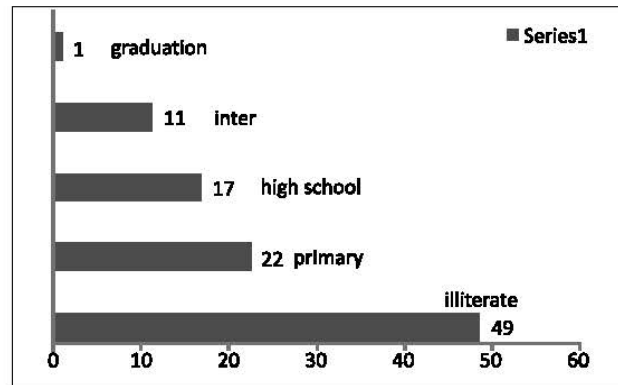


study, there was an equal number of people coming in age groups of 16-35 years, 35-50 years and 50 years and above. A small fraction of them were women, ten in number and there were

two persons with disability also covered under the study.

#### Educational Status of the respondents

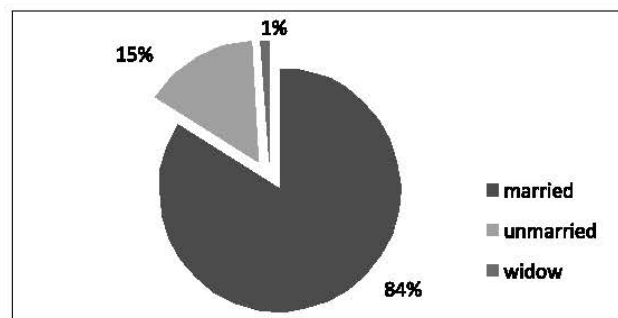
While almost half of the respondents were illiterate, one of them was educated up to



graduation level as well. Falling in the middle are the ones who have taken primary education (22 percent), High School (17 percent) and 11 percent are Class Twelve pass as well.

#### Marital Status of the respondents

As good as 84 percent respondents were married, 15 percent were still unmarried and 0.9



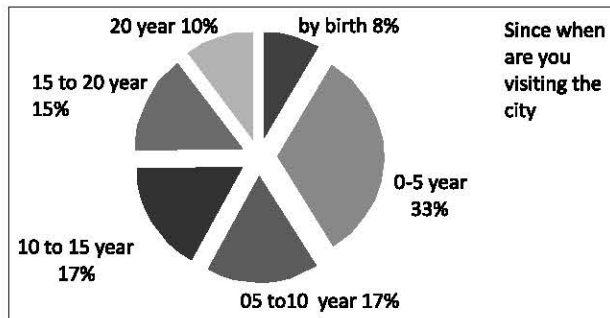
percent was widowed. This also shows the possibility that many of the youth falling in the age group of 16-35 years were still waiting for their marriage while almost all other age groups were with families.

#### Type of Labour work

##### Since when are you visiting the city

As is clear from the pie above, a larger part of the respondents (33 percent) has been visiting the

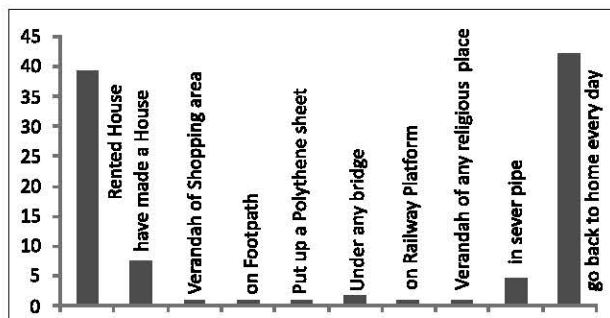
city for work since past 0-5 years only. An equal part of 17 percent respondents have been coming to Meerut for about one or two decades. A small portion of ten percent respondents have



association with this city for over two decades now while about 8 percent of them said that they have been coming to the city since birth.

### Place of stay in the city

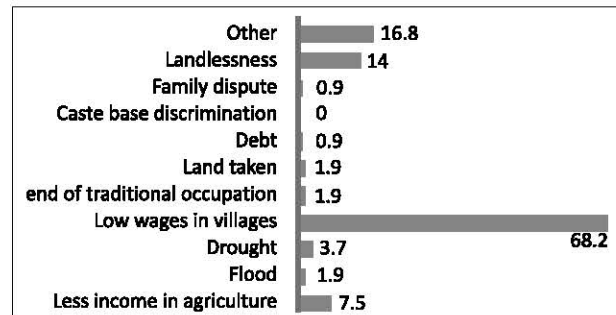
As the graph shows, almost half the respondents have taken house on rent in the city. Very small



fractions are staying in different conditions like sleeping in verandahs of shopping area, on footpath, under a polythene sheet on roadside, under the fly over/ bridge, on railway platform/ bus station, in the verandah of any religious place. A little bigger fraction in comparison to these have made their abode in sewer pipes as well. However equal proportion of respondents i.e. about 42 percent go back to their native home every day. It has also been learnt that most of the labourers in Meerut city come from neighbouring rural sides of the city and therefore instead of living as homeless in the city, they prefer to go back home every evening.

### Reasons for coming to city for work

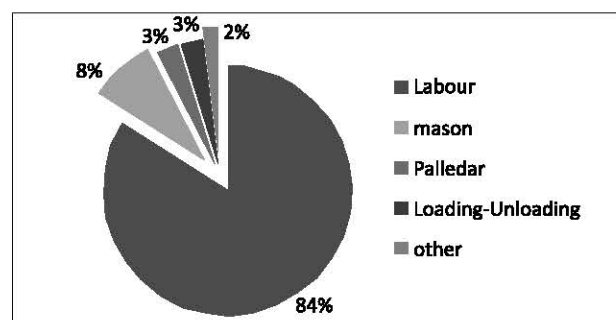
In order to understand the reasons behind people from rural areas coming to cities in search of



work, certain set of queries were made. The respondents largely (68.2 percent) said that the wages in rural areas are very low and therefore to augment their income and earn better they come all the way to the city. Another relatively big section of respondents is those who reported that landlessness is the reason why they have to seek work in the city. 7.5 percent respondents said that there is less income in agriculture and therefore they look forward to work in city to meet the ends at home. A very few respondents stated family dispute, as the reason for their coming to city. End of traditional occupations in village and loss of land to land acquisition process are also some reasons why people are coming to city in search of work. None of the respondents reported that caste based discrimination was any reason for their coming to the city.

### Type of Work

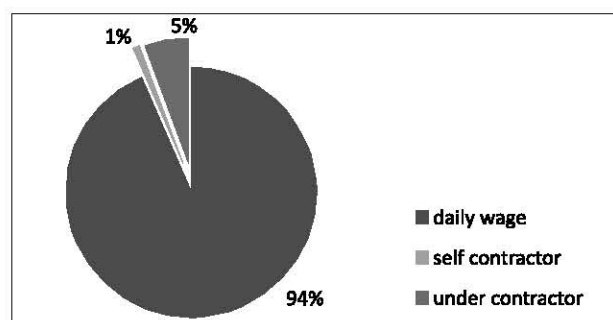
Out of the 108 respondents reached through the study, a large majority of about 85 percent are





working as daily waged labourers. Following this are Masons that form about 9 percent of the lot while small fractions of the respondents were palledars, doing loading unloading work and a marginal one was into miscellaneous work.

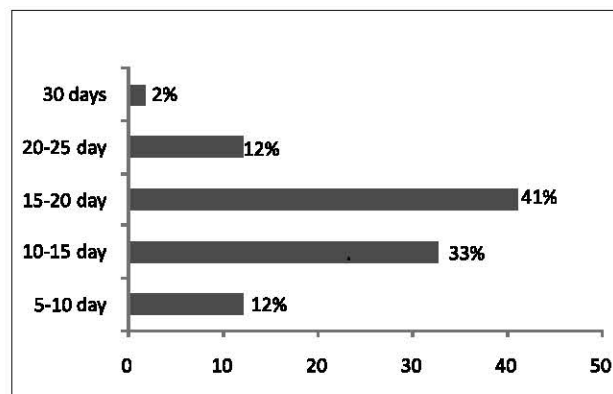
### Nature of Work



As far as nature of work done by the respondents is concerned, again a huge majority of 93.5 percent respondents work on daily basis. Out of the remaining less than 7 percent, only 5.6 percent works under any contractor and less than one percent works as contractor.

### Days of work available in a month

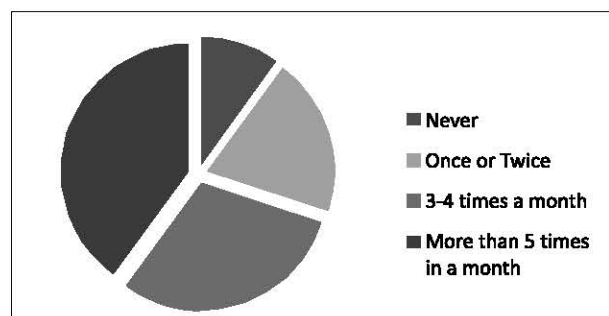
To this query, about 41 percent respondents said



that in a month they roughly get 15-20 days of work. Another 33 percent said that they get 10-15 days of work. 12 percent respondents said that they get work between 5-10 days while similar proportion said that they get 20-25 days. A very marginal fraction of respondents (2 percent) claim to get work throughout the month.

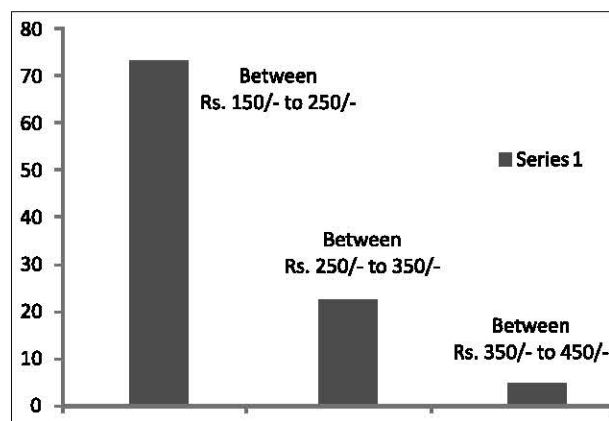
### How Many Times the Payment Gets Stuck

Though the pie above shows that a big chunk of respondents (about 43 percent) have not faced



such a situation where their payment was not given at the day end, a slightly bigger chunk admitted that their payment has sometimes got stuck for one or two days. 7.5 percent respondents said that they face such situation three to four time a month while a very marginal fraction said that they have faced this for more than 5 times.

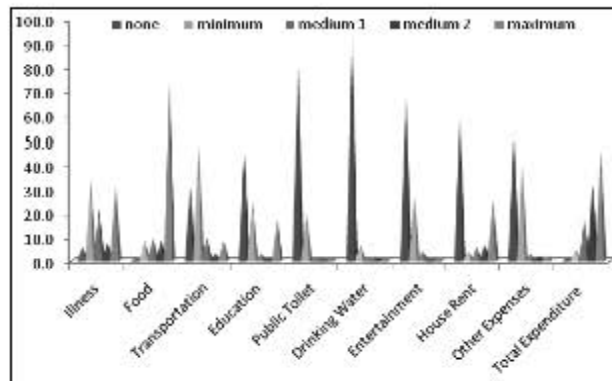
### Wage Rate



The tallest pillar indicates that a huge majority of these labourers have daily wages between Rs. 150 250/- only. A small proportion of slightly above 20 percent earns between Rs. 250 350/- and a small fraction of about 4 percent gets Rs. 350 450/- per day.

### Monthly Expenditure made by the labourers

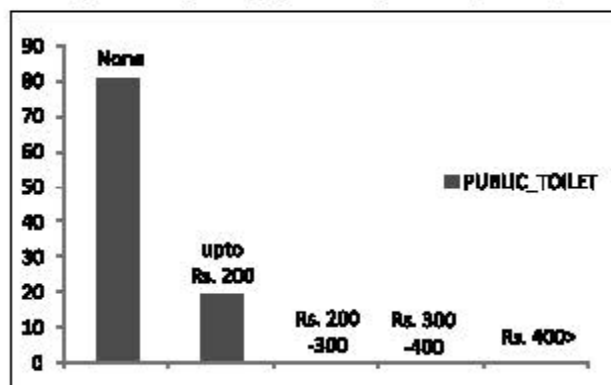
To understand the nature of overall monthly expenditure made by the labourers in order to



meet the basic needs of life, certain set of questions were asked from the respondents. The above picture is a compilation of the same.-

#### Public Toilet

The overall picture that thus emerges shows that on certain basic needs like drinking water and toilet, maximum number of respondents does not spend anything (80-90 percent). They use

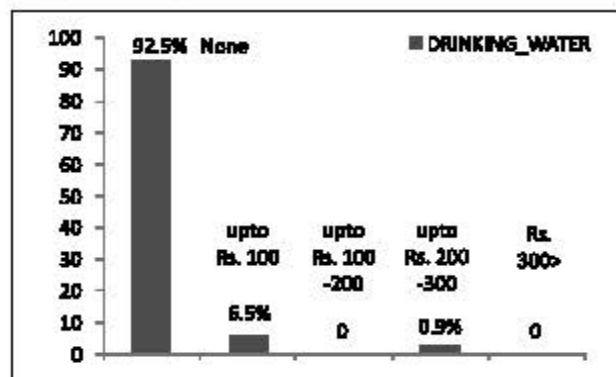


public source for drinking water while for toilet, in order to avoid paying for the service or in absence of any place to go nearby, most of the respondents are opting open air defecation.

#### Drinking Water

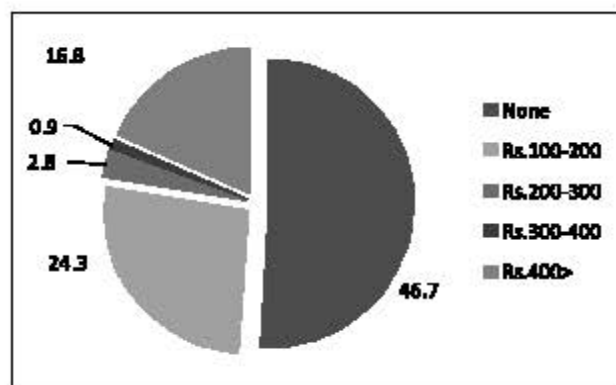
Drinking water again is a need on which about 92.5 percent respondents are not spending anything. They use public sources like municipality tap, handpump or take water from

neighbouring roadside hotels.



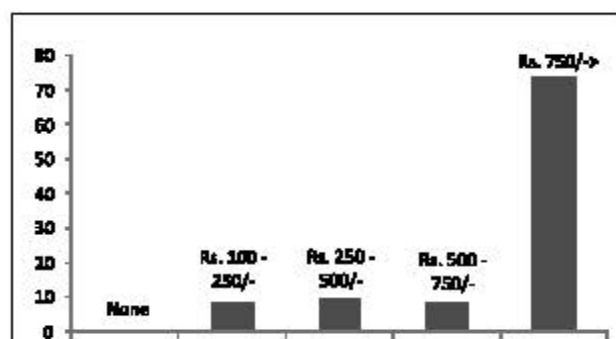
#### Education

Next is education where there is negligible spending. This is largely because majority are illiterate and therefore do not support means of study. Those who mentioned some expenditure is largely on the education of their children at home.



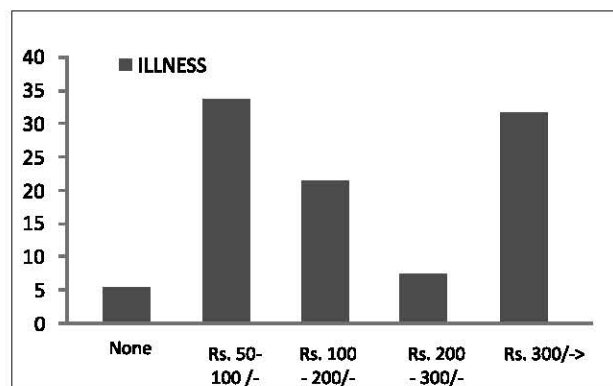
#### Food

Monthly food expenditure is tallest in about 80 percent cases where they report a spending of more than Rs. 750/-. This could be because



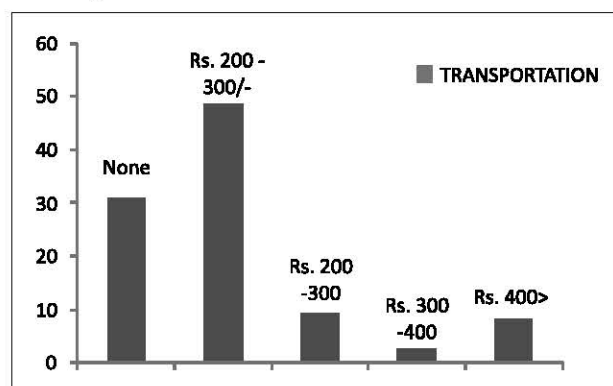
almost half of the respondents are going back to their homes daily and must be supporting the entire family's daily food needs. Those who are periodically going to their home are probably taking care of the food needs of their families. Very negligible proportions have reported less than Rs. 500/- as their monthly food expense. Those who remain as homeless in the city during work period are buying food from local shops and thus face expenditure.

### Illness



The towers depicting expenditure during illness are quite tall. There is almost equal proportion of respondents spending between Rs. 50-100/- and Rs. 300/- and above on their illness. This could be probably that the first set of respondents meets their own expenditure while another set has also included the expenditure related with their families. No matter what, it is clearly evident that no one is spared of spending on illness.

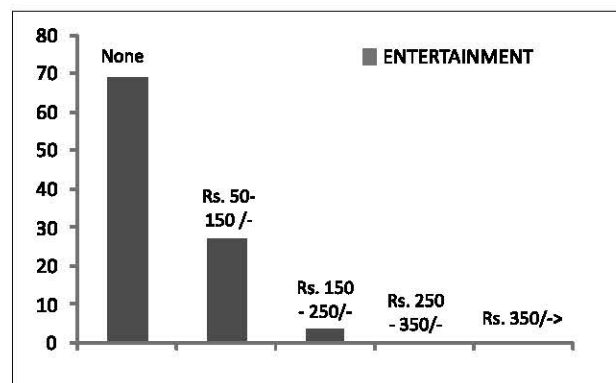
### Transportation



Transportation is another head that is showing quite a bit of expenditure trend. While a little above 30 percent of respondents said that they do not spend any money on transportation needs, slightly below 50 percent said that they spend between Rs. 100-200/- for the purpose. About 9 percent of them spend between Rs. 200 - 300 and Rs. 400 and above. There could be the reason that since half of the respondents are going back to their homes daily, they are spending money in availing public transport at that time. Those who do not are either the ones who live nearby or are staying in the city.

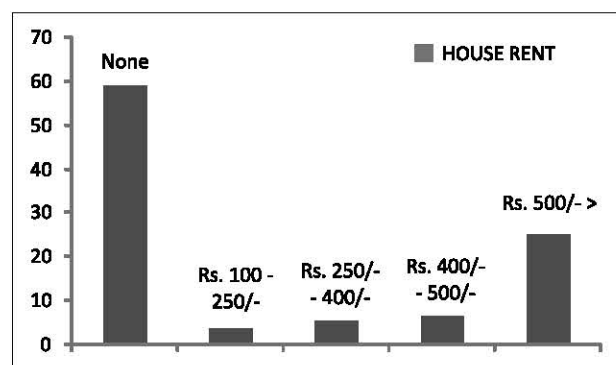
### Entertainment

Not many people are opting for any paid entertainment service in their life as is evident from the graph here. About 70 percent of the respondents denied spending money on any such use, while some fractions are spending money on meeting their entertainment needs.



### House Rent

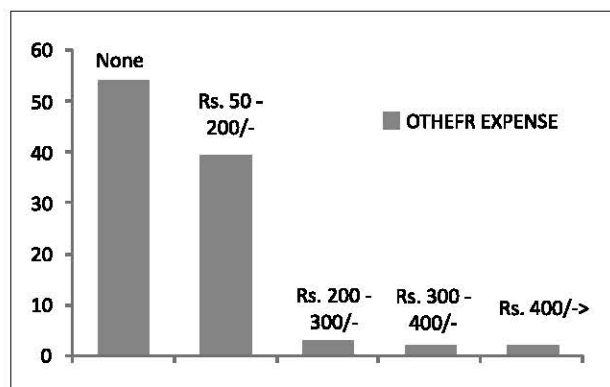
As far as monthly expenditure on house rent is seen, there is a mixed picture. While about 60



percent respondents said that they do not spend any money on house rent, about 25 percent claimed to be paying above Rs. 500 as monthly rent. There is less than 10 percent proportion of people each saying that they pay in the medium range category. The reason could be that while many of the respondents go back to their homes by day end in their native place, they are not required to pay any rentals, while many opt for streets as their homes and again get saved of paying rents. Those who have taken room on rent are the ones who are paying such amounts in between.

### Other Expenses

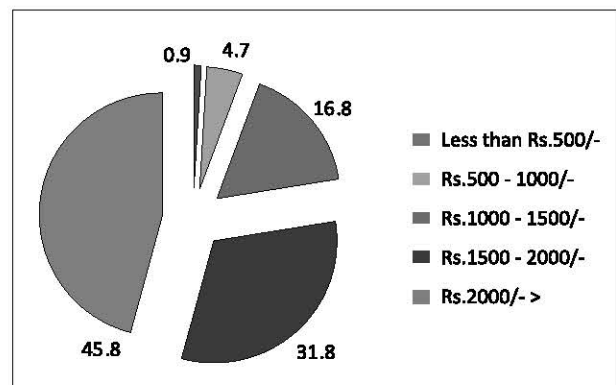
The graph below representing trend on other expenses, it is very clear that more than half of



the respondents do not spend money on anything other than the above discussed basic needs. A little less than equal proportion of respondents report spending between Rs. 50-200/- on a monthly basis on any miscellaneous expense, spending above this is reported by marginal fractions of respondents.

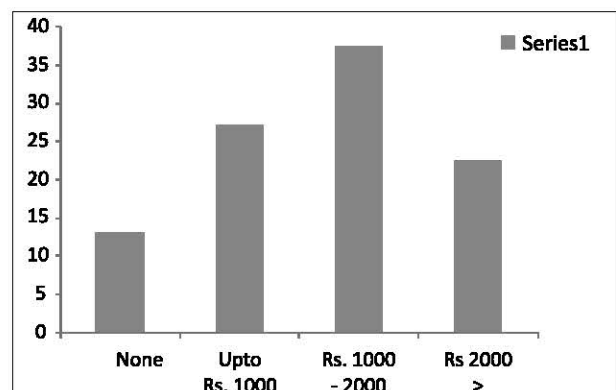
### Total Monthly Expenditure

Overall total monthly expenditure as reported by the 108 respondents in the study reveals that while the largest fraction of respondents i.e. 45.8 percent is spending more than Rs. 2000/- a month on meeting their basic family living needs, a very marginal section of less than a percent claims to spend within Rs 500.- on themselves. This probably is the section that is



yet not married and does not share the expenses of their family.

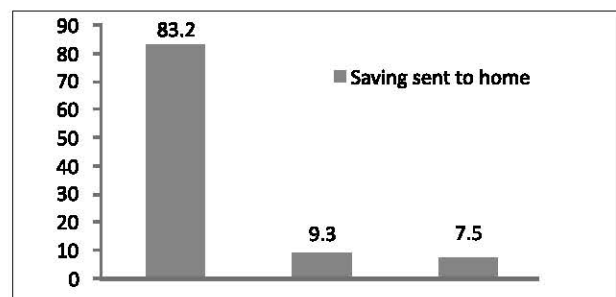
### Monthly Saving



As far as overall monthly saving is seen, majority of respondents claim to save between Rs. 1000-2000/- per month after meeting all daily needs of their own and their families.

### Savings sent to home

How many respondents send their savings to their home? When this was asked during the

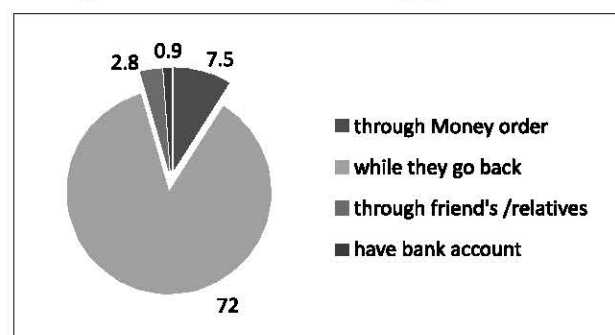


study, a huge majority of above 83 percent said that yes they send the savings to their home,

while above 9 percent said that they do not do so. 7.5 percent respondents said that it is not required. This could probably be because those who do not send are working to meet their own expenses/ either are not married or considered too small to meet family needs.

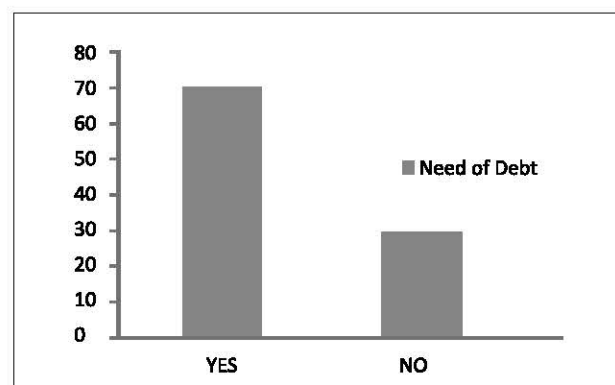
### Mode of Money Sending

A majority of respondents (72 percent) takes the savings to home whenever they go back to their



native. 2.8 percent send through their relatives/ friends when they are going home and 7.5 percent are using the Money Order option through post Office. A very small section of less than a percent has opened bank account and deposits in that.

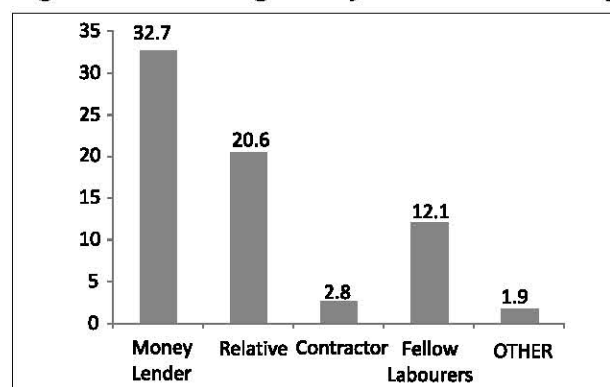
### Need to take Debt



When asked whether they need to take debt to meet out the extra financial crisis, 70 percent respondents inform that they do take debt at the time of such need. While about 30 percent said that so far they have not faced such a situation.

### Source of taking debt

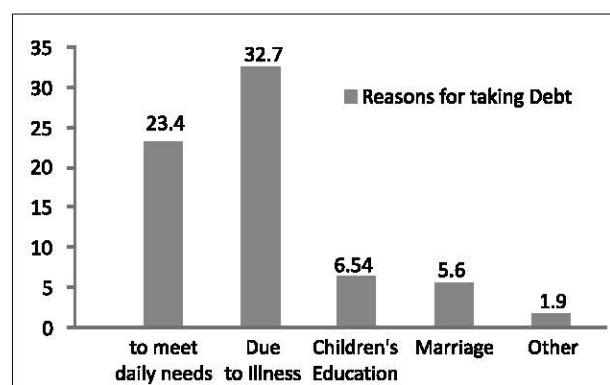
A majority admits that they go to the money lender in their native village with 32.7 percent responding in this manner. Relatives are also a big source of taking money in times of need by



the respondents with about 20 percent saying so. 12.1 percent respondents said that they ask for such help from their peer group. A very minimal proportion of 2.8 percent respondent asks the contractors for such help while another marginal fraction looks for other sources.

### Reasons for taking debt

Illness is the major cause due to which the



respondents (32.7 percent) get into the cycle of debt, even meeting daily needs is admitted as the other major reason by them with about 24 percent going for this reason. Children's education and marriage expenditure also force less than ten percent respondents each to take debt from different sources.

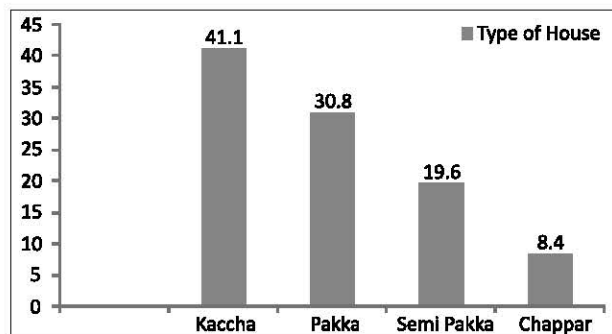


## A glimpse about the Socio Economic Condition of the respondents at their native place

All the 108 respondents have maintained their family ties as per the data collected during the study. Further responses throw light upon their family and its economic status.

### House Type at Home

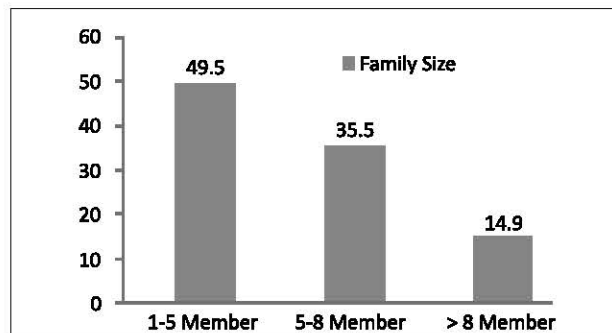
41.1 percent respondents still have Kuchcha (Mud based) house at home and on the contrary



30.8 percent respondents have pukka (bricked) house. While 19.6 percent respondents live in mixed type of house, a small but significant section out of 108 respondents, 8.4 percent still manages under thatched roof.

### Family Size

As far as family size of the respondents is learnt,

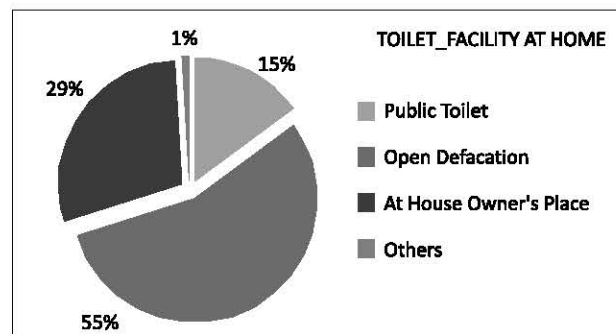


about half the respondents have a family of up to 5 members, while another big proportion of 35 percent and above have 5-8 members. There is a small but decent proportion of respondents (15

percent) who have a family with more than 8 members at home.

### Toilet Facility

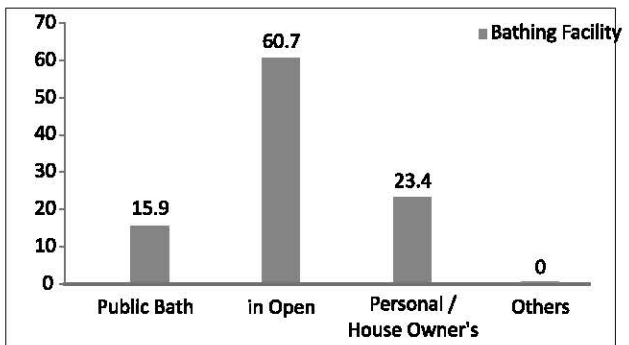
It represents the reality of rural India which is believed to be going for open defecation in absence of personal and public toilet facility. The pie below very clearly shows that at home, the



family members of more than half of the 108 respondents go for open air easing, 29 percent are availing the facility at their owner's house.

### Bathing Facility

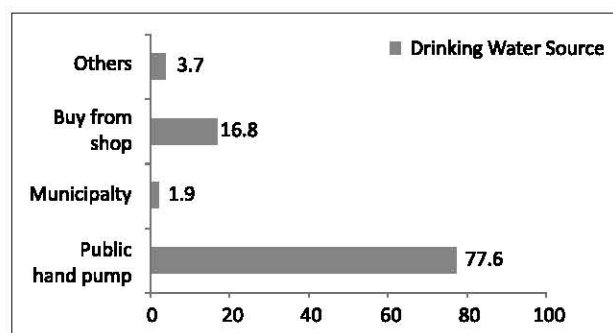
It shows that again a large part of respondents do not have any separate bathing area at home and



thus 60.7 percent said that they use open area for the purpose; 15.9 percent said they use public bath while about 24 percent said that they either have personal facility or are using the house owner's place.

### Drinking Water Source

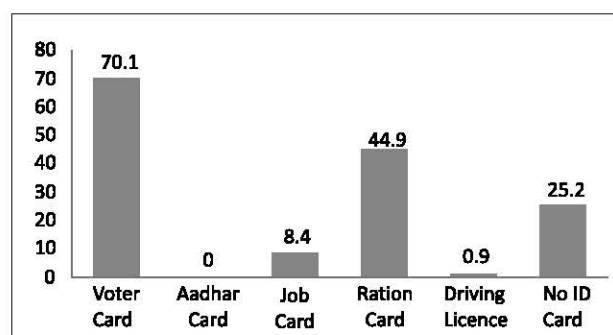
Over 75 percent respondents said that at home they have public hand-pump for drinking water



purpose; a marginal proportion said that they use municipality tap while 16 percent said that they have to buy water from the shops.

### Status of Proof of identification

As per the findings of the study while more than 70 percent respondents own a voter card, only

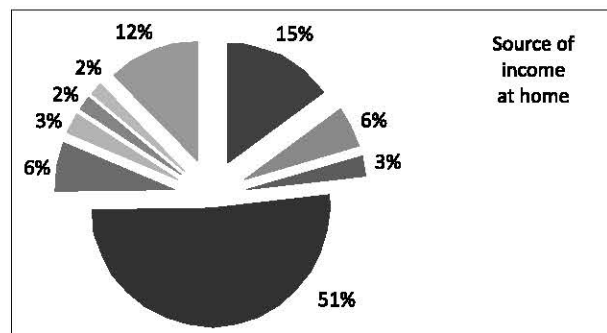


44.9 percent have ration cards as well. 25.2 percent still have no identification proof like these. Besides these, since none of the labourers is yet registered under the Construction Workers' act 1996, none of them possesses any such document.

### Source of income at home

About sources of income at home the response has been quite mixed. As the pie below suggests, families of more than half of the respondents (51 percent) do labour work to meet their financial needs as well. Another notable finding is that out of the 108 respondents 15 percent own less than one acre of agriculture land in their village.

There is only a small pie of 3 percent respondents who said that at home they had more than 5 acres of land. Cattle rearing and earning full income is also with a small percentage of

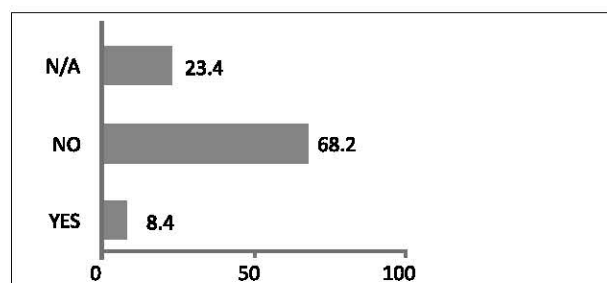


respondents (6 percent). Only two percent respondents belong to some Artisan category and earn from their skill.

It should be highlighted here that this query also had the option of work under NREGA scheme in their villages and to this none of the respondents said that they or their family members have availed the scheme.

### Utility of NREGA in the lives of poor migrant labourers

How many of the 108 respondents are registered under NREGA? This inquiry gave dismal results. A much publicized central government scheme that guarantees 100 days of work to village adults at the time of need is not accessed by as many as 68 percent of the respondents.

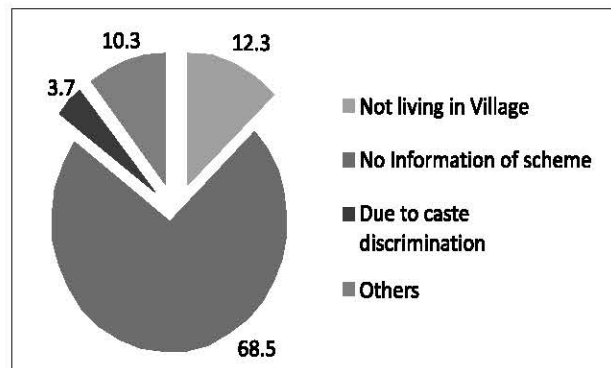


Only 8.4 percent of them inform that they have the NREGA registration but if we relate this information with the one received above about other sources of income at village, it seems these

NREGA registered proportion has not got any work under the scheme so far.

### Reasons for not accessing the Scheme

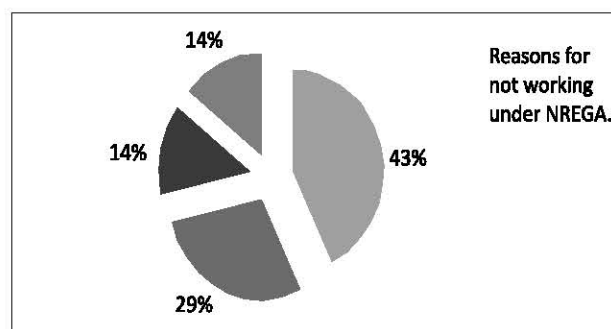
On further probing into the reasons for not accessing the scheme of employment, it was learnt that more than 68 percent respondents do



not have any information about the scheme as per the pie drawn below. A little above 12 percent respondents said that since they do not live in village they do not access the provisions of this scheme, while a small section shares that often caste discrimination puts them out of the benefits of the scheme.

### Reasons for not working under NREGA.

There is another dimension to the issue of not many people working in NREGA in villages

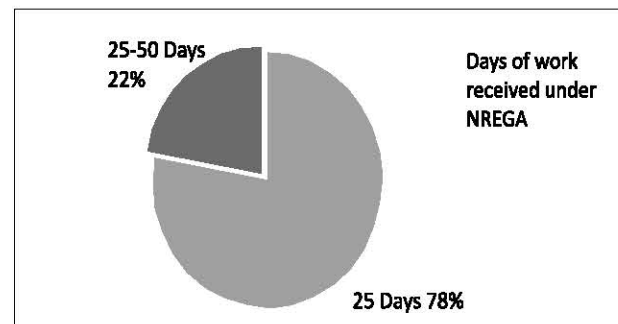


though the scheme is so highly promoted. This dimension is of choice. And to this, people quoted their reasons for not choosing to work under NREGA. As evident from the pie here, the major problem is that there is no proper system of wages received with 43 percent saying so. 29

percent said that work is not there when they need it most so what is the purpose of waiting for it. Another set of 14 percent respondents said that people do not receive wage in time and hence many do not opt for it. 14 percent settled for other reasons.

### Days of work received under NREGA

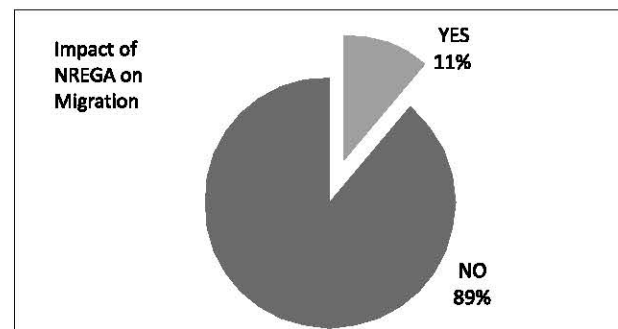
For the 8.3 percent segment that admits to have worked under NREGA further query was made regarding number of days they have worked in a



year and the response is represented below. While a majority of 78 percent proportion worked only up to 25 days a year against the promised 100 days, another 22 percent worked between 25-50 days. No one as per the responses received has worked for more than 50 days in a year under the scheme.

### Impact of NREGA on Migration

The study further tried to find out whether NREGA has put any impact on the migration of people from rural to urban areas in search of



work, and not surprising; the results are again disappointing with almost 90 percent respondent

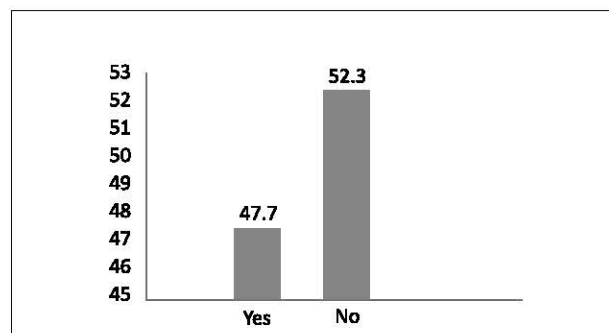
saying that it has not made any positive impact on the migration issue. Only 11 percent believed that it has put impact to some extent.

### **Has life got any better**

The study so far has thrown light on the various aspects of a migrant labourer's life including their socio economic situation in cities and the one at home. We could see the various reasons/responsibilities that force people to move to cities for more work. Thus the study further tried to look at how things have changed in these individuals' lives. Has it got any better after the series of endless struggle?

How have things improved in Life. Do you think that by working in cities and augmenting their

income has made life any better for them and the response to this query is very discouraging with more than half of the 108 respondents saying that not much has improved. Looking at the brighter side of it, a little less than half of the respondents think that there is certainly some amount of improvement in their lives.



## Story of Construction Workers of Meerut In A Nutshell

The facts brought to light above tell us that as per the conservative estimates there are about twenty five thousand construction workers standing for work across 12 major labour posts in the city of Meerut. These are casual labourers and usually work either on daily hire basis or are taken to work by petty contractor. The 108 construction workers interviewed have never heard of any law made by the state to ensure their workers' rights, neither are they registered with any labour union. No one from the state has ever approached them and taken care to listen to their issues. Though about 70 percent of the respondents have voter cards but their issues have never been raised or addressed by any people's representative at any level. Half of the workers interviewed during this study commute daily to and fro from home to city for work and about more than half of them get work only for 15 days a month. The proportion of unskilled labour in the city touches about 90 percent. Almost half of them have been standing for such work for about 15 to 20 years. More than 70 percent of them get wage rate between Rs. 150 250/- per day only. Half of the respondents said that they have a family size of up to 5 members while 15 percent had families of more than 8 members and after meeting all daily expenses these workers about 40 percent of them cannot save more than Rs. 1000/- per month. 70 percent respondents say that they take debt and most of that is either to meet daily needs in the city or health emergencies at home.

The much hoped and hyped welfare scheme for India's poor, National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme has not played any role in changing the lives of these poor workers with about 68 percent of them saying that they never availed the scheme. While among these, 69 percent again admit that they do not have any information about the scheme, those who know, say that the work is not given when it is needed most. Some also say that they do not receive payments in time. None of the respondents who worked in NREGA scheme received work for more than 50 days in a year.

Construction workers in Meerut are struggling hard to survive the poverty and its impacts. They work hard; spend least on themselves, trying to save every penny by avoiding spending any money on basic needs like drinking water, toilet and bathing facility. There is no room for entertainment for self. Human Rights and Personal Dignity are words that have been trampled by the daily juggernaut. However they do want things to change. When asked what change they would like to see, they all said they want a dignified space to stand for work, fixed wages, no cheating, justice and basic services. This all is overdue for ignored citizens of this country.



## Recommendations

- Full implementation of the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Services) Act 1996 must be made by the State of Uttar Pradesh in full swing taking special steps to undertake registration process of construction workers standing for work as casual workers at various Labour Posts in the cities (including Meerut).
- All the locations in the city that are known as Labour Chowk/ Labour Adda must be identified by the Labour Department and regularised with provision of a Hall area fitted with light and fan in running condition where workers can assemble and wait for their work opportunity. Further to this it is very necessary to provide the hall with basic services like proper drinking water, facility for toilet and washing, first aid box that should be renewed and replenished at regular intervals.
- Wages for different types of work need to be fixed by the state and must be displayed on these posts so as to eliminate any scope for bargaining by the employers/ contractors.
- Registration of construction workers should be carried out on this spot by the labour department.
- Labour Unionization Process should be facilitated by the state so that the union of these labourers can constitute their grievance committee and facilitate the complaint mechanism process.
- The state must promote awareness about the Act and its provisions specially targeting the communities that are eligible to get its benefits. For this, popular print and electronic medium of mass communication should be put to use. Besides this, information boards must be put on various locations in the city like Bus Stations, Railway Stations, Market places etc that are frequented by the working community most so that the information reaches to the targeted community in time. The information must be provided in a language and manner that is most understandable to the people targeted for the purpose.
- Special provisions for women and especially women with children as mentioned in the Act must be implemented at the work places and Labour Posts with immediate effect.

- Workers registered under the Act must be given their due benefits at the earliest so that the information reaches across the labour community and the registration processes rolls at a faster pace. The money accumulated with the state for the construction workers welfare should be realised in time.
- Effective implementation of NREGA in rural areas should be made so that rural youth get the promised hundred days of work at village level that gives them some respite from migration for work in cities.
- Services of permanent shelters with adequate basic services like drinking water, sanitation, food and first aid services must be ensured so that the construction workers leading a migrant's life in cities during their stay for work can get basic services that will ensure their human rights.
- Coordination between district labour department and Nagar Nigam of such cities is required so that migrant workers' basic rights issues are met systematically and construction workers get a dignified space in the cities that they build with their hard work.





## 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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