

## Introduction

- The report draws mainly from Aajeevika Bureau's field insights and narratives documented on the ground, this section chalks out relevant recommendations, at the source and destination ends, to seek state and employer liability, responsibility and accountability to pave the way forward for Odia weavers working in the country's textile capital.
- Set against the backdrop of the highly celebrated Gujarat Model of Development, the report delved into, an account of labour migration of Odia workers from Ganjam into the million-dollar power loom industry in Surat. It traces the community's historical compulsions at the source to the labour processes, socio-economic relations and work adversities and living conditions at the destination. Hinged on the relationships between social identity, labour markets, inequality and extraction, it strove to direct the state and capital forces under the garb of 'ease of doing business' (Rajagopalan, 2019) in the context of Covid-19 pandemic.
- In the report we find the lives and narratives of migrants, and the challenges they faced during the influx and outflow of mobility during the pandemic from Ganjam working in the textile capital Surat in Gujarat. (Aajeevika Bureau estimates that among Odia migrant workers in Surat, 700,000 migrants are from Ganjam alone.

- About Aajeevika: The Bureau is situated in the central loom district of Katargram in north Surat, has since its establishment reached out to over 25,000 migrant workers employed in the textile and loom industries. It provides a space for negotiations to increase wages or win compensations for waged labour and creates networks to supply relevant information on welfare schemes, work availability and social support by engaging the state, employers and labour. Amid the nation- wide lockdown, the centre also played an active role in undertaking relief efforts and attending to grievance calls, as well as supporting migrant workers to return home safely. In a span of three months, the Centre directly reached out to more than 8,000 Odia labourers.
- The Centre also backs a workers' collective, the Pravasi Shramik Suraksha Manch (PSSM), which comprises migrant workers employed in the power loom and textile industry in Surat and its adjoining areas. PSSM has an outreach of over 20,000 workers across Surat. The objectives of the Manch include collectivizing of migrant workers, undertaking legal literacy and awareness drives and building an emergency response to attend to cases of worksite accidents, deaths, payment disputes and wage thefts. Through weekly meetings, WhatsApp group chats and interactions on the field, the Manch aspires to build solidarity among community mem- bers to work jointly for their own welfare and rights as migrants and labourers.
- The report foregrounds particular exclusions of the Odia migrant workforce in Surat's power looms by linking their historical trajectories with their contemporary compulsions, vulnerabilities with invisibilized intersectionalities,

lived experiences with state imaginations, labour with living, and Ganjam with Surat. Surat is a city that rests on the shoulders of its industrial workers, Surat has a long history of labour and trade unions; informal estimates indicate that there are approximately 200 trade unions, 66 related to the textile and power loom industries (Aajeevika Bureau Surat Centre records).

- Informal estimates suggest that Odia migrant workers in Surat constitute one of the largest groups of migrant workers—1.5 million migrants, of which an estimated 700,000 are from Ganjam district alone (according to Aajeevika Bureau Surat Centre). Surat is touted as the world's fastest growing city in the 2019–2035 period (Oxford Economics, 2018) with billion dollar strong diamond polishing, textile, mercantile trade industries, ship-building and petrochemical industries. The annual remittance from Surat by migrant workers is estimated to be Rs. 17 billion, mostly done through informal money remittance mechanisms (Sharma et al., 2014, p. 109).
- For six decades, the path from Odisha to Gujarat emerged as a 'corridor for hectic labour mobility. Gujarat has seen economic growth with textile as one of the power engines of the economy, growing at 18 per cent per annum since 2004. *(But Jan Breman argues that Gujarat's growth is predatory, the state facilitating and underwriting capitalist accumulation at the cost of labour. There is a conscious thrust by the government to not monitor compliance with labour laws to reassure the industry of an investor-friendly climate. Gujarat also spends less than most states on public goods such as health, nutrition and safe water. )*

- In Odisha, migration has remained the main means of sustenance for a major percentage of its rural households. (On July 4, 2019 the Economic Survey argued that a higher national minimum wage is central to addressing inequality and widespread poverty in the country. A couple of weeks later, the government of India trashed its own analysis by proposing a ‘starvation wage’ of Rs 178 a day—a minimum wage hike of merely Rs 2. The new minimum wage of Rs 178 per day translates to Rs 4,628 per month. It goes against the Labour Ministry’s own expert committee recommendation of Rs 375–447 per day, let alone the 15th Indian Labour Conference’s suggestion of Rs 692 a day, or Rs 18,000 a month. The new national minimum wage, half of what was recommended, truly portends a death knell on India’s labour protection framework (Working People’s Charter, 2019). )
  
- In Odisha as per the Economic survey 2018-19. the unemployment rate, as per the survey, is more pronounced in urban areas of the state (8.4 per cent) compared to rural areas (6.9 per cent) (ibid., 2019). Nearly 83 per cent of the Odia population resides in the rural areas (Census of India, 2011) and two-thirds of them are currently dependent on agriculture and al- lied activities (Odisha Economic Survey 2018–19, p. 37). The situation on the ground has remained particularly volatile on account of Cyclone Phailin in 2013–2014, drought in 2015–2016, pest attacks on rice fields in 2017–2018 and Cyclone Fani in 2018–2019, which severely affected crop production (Dash, 2020).
  
- Informality is often characterized by lower wages, driven by migration due to seeking a better source of livelihood, irregular income and employment, frequent

retrenchment and a pronounced absence of any social security. Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the fissures and schisms that existed have got accelerated and further exacerbated (Das, 2020). (On July 4, 2019 the Economic Survey argued that a higher national minimum wage is central to addressing inequality and widespread poverty in the country. A couple of weeks later, the government of India trashed its own analysis by proposing a ‘starvation wage’ of Rs. 178 a day—a minimum wage hike of merely Rs 2. The new minimum wage of Rs 178 per day translates to Rs 4,628 per month. It goes against the Labour Ministry’s own expert committee recommendation of Rs. 375–447 per day, let alone the 15th Indian Labour Conference’s suggestion of Rs 692 a day, or Rs. 18,000 a month. The new national minimum wage, half of what was recommended, truly portends a death knell on India’s labour protection framework (Working People’s Charter, 2019).

### **(Notes : \_ About the loom Industry in Gujarat)**

- Historical Influx from Surat, from Ganjam (See more on the The urban economy and the linkages with the subcontinental hinterland—that burgeoned in the 17th and 18th centuries—were formerly controlled by a coalition of Muslim, Hindu and Parsi commercial interests (Nadri, 2009, p.80). However, it was the 20th century that marked a significant shift from trading to manufacturing, transforming Surat into one of the major industrial bases in west India (Haynes, 2001, p. 175). The textile production industry, which grew from ongoing structural and technological changes in the artisan family run handlooms in the 1950s, played a key role in this transition. Furthermore, the city experienced a major boom in the 1980s with the shutting down of the mills in erstwhile

Bombay and Ahmedabad, with workshops starting to hiring more labor in the sector )

- This forced a large part of the industrial labour hailing from as far as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha to northern Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh, to move out of the formal sector and find work in a more precarious niche in the in- formal sector of the urban economy. Jan Breman argues that the rise of Surat as a focal point of the informal sector activity is a direct consequence of the crisis in the formal sector economy (1996, p. 64). In fact, on account of the huge influx of a cheap migrant workforce, Gujarati workers constituted only one- fifth of the total workforce in the textile industry (Barik, 1987, p. 168). In the matter of scale, the power loom and tex- tile production industries continue to remain the largest recruiters of migrant labour in the city, and a significant contributor to Gujarat's economy. The textile industry industry in Surat also known as the textile capital produces what is popularly called 'art silk', accounting for around 40 per cent of the total synthetic fabric produced in the country (Jain & Sharma, 2018, pp. 81–82). This art silk is used to make Indian garments, mainly saris, which are sold in bulk to wholesalers across the country and overseas. At present, the textile city is home to Adivasi migrants from southern Rajasthan, Mad-hya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. However, in terms of history and numbers, Odia weavers, mainly from the economically backward coastal Ganjam district, continue to play a crucial role.

- An August 2017 report titled 'Labour Conditions in Surat Textile Industry' by the People's Training and Research Centre (PTRC), considered Ganjam a developed district in Odisha, and mentioned that the 'shrinking natural resources, decreasing agricultural land and disasters and drought have impelled the migration (Patel, 2017; p. 38).
- The industry has an estimated Rs. 50,000 crore annual industrial turnover, according to a July 2018 report by the Federation of Gujarat Weavers Association and its subsidiary, the Pandesara Weavers Association ('Gujarat clocks 22% growth', 2018). Present-day Ganjam features among the top 20 districts identified with a high level of male inter-state out-migration intensity in the country, as per Report of the Working Group on Migration published by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (2017, p .21). According to the Ganjam District Human Development Report (2013, p. xiv), more than 3,00,000 skilled and semi-skilled workers migrate every year to other states. However, Odisha government's official figures stand at a mere 4,966 labourers (Pradhan, 2016). This is because almost all Odia migrant workers from Ganjam district reach Surat for employment via an informal network and not through a licensed labour contractor, as per the provisions of the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979. In 2005, the number of official migrants from Ganjam was only 456 (Das, 2020). Thus, there are no official figures.
- The share of the distress-driven Odia migrants in the workforce increased rapidly at the start of the 1980s, numbering nearly 90,000 (as indicated in

Breman, 1996, p. 62). At present, a rough estimate provided by the Surat Odia Welfare Association (SOWA), a city- wide cultural organization, suggests that there are nearly one million Odia migrants, of which nearly 70 per cent are engaged in the power loom and tex- tile industry (Padhi, 2019). Official records provided by the Powerloom Service Centre in Surat run by the Union Ministry of Textiles, however, pegs the number of Odia loom workers between a mere 150,000 to 200,000 (Subramanian, 2018). Without classic employee–employer relationships, the absence of industrial documentation, work and living contracts as well as invisibility in government records, we are left with inaccurate and wavering statistics of Odia migrants labouring in the city.

- The Odia loom workers live and work in the city’s textile corridor, clocking in 12 hours of work for 365 days of the year. Over the years, the migrant flow into the city has been predominantly male, as is revealed in the city’s shifting demographic trend. When Surat began to grow exponentially, for instance, its sex ratio began to plummet from over 900 females per 1,000 males in the 1960s to around 750 today (Tumbe, 2019).
- For migration history of the Odia labourers along with the power looms of Surat, (Refer Professor B. C. Barik in ‘Industrial Development and Migrant Labour: A Study of Unorganised Sector Labour in Textiles Industries of Surat’). Elaborating on the emergence of this corridor, Dr S. K. Mohanty, retired deputy com- missioner of Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC), recounted, ‘...the coastal districts of Odisha located along the Andhra Pradesh border had already been home to the handloom industry. This meant that the Odia migrants were also already familiar with the work on fabric’ (2019). With the polyester industry

burgeoning in the western state, there was a pressing need for cheap, casual labour.

- While the migration exodus spans diverse caste hierarchies, a large number of the workers from Ganjam belong to the Other Backward Class (OBC) and Scheduled Caste (SC) communities (Sahu & Das, 2010, p. 19; Subramanian, 2018). Less than 1 per cent of the Odia migrant population in Surat belongs to the Adivasi and Scheduled Tribes (ST). Inadequate resources to cover long distances, coupled with the inability to leave behind their land and community for long periods, suffering food insecurity due to challenges like crop failure, which have pushed these highly vulnerable groups into undertaking foot-loose, cheap labour in the neighbouring districts and states instead.
- Thirty-five-year-old Renuka Pradhan's one-room home in Mina Nagar in north Surat, for instance, turns into her working space at 10 a.m. every morning. Bundles of colourful saris, delivered at her doorstep, are placed near the kitchen sink, the doorway, and even pushed under the *khatiya* (cot). Pradhan swiftly unpacks a bundle to pick out a bright pink-and-blue polyester sari that she hangs over a water pipe outside her room. 'I spend around five to seven minutes on each saree. In case I pull too much thread and end up damaging the fabric, I will have to reimburse the entire cost of the saree to the contractor. I have to be very careful' (as quoted in Subramanian, 2019). 'Nearly 60 per cent of the workers employed in the looms have come from Odisha,' said Devesh Patel, president of the Ved Road Weavers Association. 'In the aftermath of GST, several looms in central areas such as Ved Road had to shut down, rendering the labourers un-

employed' (2019). Women's home-based work did not merit any input tax refund under GST, as 80 per cent of the raw materials used are power and labour, which does not come under the input credit net.

### **Pathways, interlinkages, shifting demographics and lived experiences:**

- Robust social networks that have formed due to the distinct historicity and scale of this migration stream both aids the process of migration and consequently, provides access to various services in the destination; as well as works to reproduce existing source-based caste hierarchies in cities and often to have to adapt to existing social hierarchies back in their villages, and living conditions that are not favorable.
- For instance, migrant labour scouting, selection, recruitment and absorption into the power loom and textile markets of Surat is a multi-staged process and it is these networks which often enable the workers to find work in the looms and a room to live in and caste plays a role in the sense managers hailing from the same caste or region lay out clear demarcations on who can find a place to live and who cannot. Thus, existing ethnic identities, mediated by social networks, have a significant bearing on the experiences of migrants at the destination. (See/refer: The very popular Kaka Mess, Surat).

- A small number of workers, more significantly those who are long-term or second-generation migrants, have brought their families to the city and live mainly in informal settlements, or *bastis*. A single male worker's wage is insufficient to run a household in the city. A pressing concern among the migrant families is that women's access to work is itself limited (and wages depressed) by their inability to work alone, by the presence of children and by the demands of fuel and water collection. Odia women, thus, are employed as home workers, for *dhaaga* cutting (pulling extra threads from saris) or *diamond* sticking (diamonds refer to shiny sequins and beads that have to be pasted on dress materials) for nearly six to eight hours every day (Subramanian, 2019), in addition to completing long hours of unpaid care work. As they are defined as 'housewives', this production does not upset the patriarchal reproduction relations within the family. Furthermore, the work is treated as time pass, thus, preventing the women from even demanding a just wage.
- Furthermore, Odia children in the households, growing up amid poverty and food insecurity in the city, face hardships early on. Sahu and Das have argued that an Odia migrant is able to spend little on his children's education (2010, p. 10). This is because the families must spend exorbitant amounts on basic facilities, even when they save on rent by living on shaky ground, leaving little to invest in their children. The schools, Odia-medium school, run by the SMC, taught only till Class 7 and a private education was too expensive. Across Surat, for instance, there are only 13 primary level Odia-medium schools (from Class 1 to 7). Of these, six are private schools and the remaining are run by the SMC. However, with classes only up to Class 7, most children are compelled to drop out soon after and support their mothers in unpaid work to run the household. In

the case of dhaaga cutting or sequins work, none of the women workers have signed any written contracts. Yet, they have very strict everyday targets, which compel them to pull their children in to help early on.

- According to Gouri Gangoli, former principal of an SMC-run Odia-medium school in Surat, those children who are able to continue schooling have two options: to join the Gujarati-medium board in Class 8 at an SMC-run school, or enrol in a private Odia-medium school (2019). Having been schooled in Odia medium up until then, it becomes challenging to catch up in a Gujarati-medium classroom. In case they continue in a private school, which is also more expensive, they have to return to Odisha to take their Class 10 board exams as the Gujarat state hasn't made any local provisions for conducting the board examinations in the Odia medium added Gangoli, who has helped plan and design the curriculum for the Odia-medium board from the late-1990s.
- Consequently, several Odia children have been compelled to drop out of schools. They end up in the same hazardous, low-paying industrial settings as their parents, providing another generation of cheap and flexible labour to the industry. Meanwhile, their parents can no longer keep up with the industry's productivity demands or migrate due to deteriorating health. The current lack of state and employer provisioning, in addition to bringing exorbitant costs to migrant households and destroying workers' bodies, results in intergenerational transfer of poverty (Jain & Sharma, 2018, p. 65).

- Thus, the migrant poor, require children and adolescent boys to join the labour force early on. Gouda's brothers continue to labour in the same power looms in which they saw him die in front of their eyes.

## **Security of migrant labour:**

- A key loophole that fosters such exploitation rests in the very license registration of the power loom unit. A majority of the power looms in the city are believed to be registered under the provisions of Shops and Establishments Act 2019, instead of the Factories Act 1948, which offers a slightly more expansive range of protections and rights for workers. This is despite the fact that most power looms will also come under the scope of the Factories Act as they employ more than 10 workers (over 2 shifts), use horsepower, and are manufacturing units. Incidentally, the tax from Shops and Establishment Act registration goes directly to the local authority, while the tax paid under the Factories Act is a state-level tax—as a result, the local authorities have an incentive to register power looms as establishments and not factories. Thus, unlike the provisions under the Factories Act, employers registering their units as establishments evade the responsibility of providing mandatory social security and health insurance to their workers. They do not maintain a written record of their workers and pay them in cash (as against a bank account transfer). There is no clear employer–employee relationship that gets documented. By doing so, they are also able to violate the wage norms prescribed under the Minimum Wages Act 1948, and in the case of worksite accidents and deaths, they are also able to completely disassociate themselves from the said worker.

- Likewise, the obsolete machinery, and cramped, hazardous working conditions are also a serious violation of the provisions of the Factories Act. Yet, there is a serious paucity of industrial inspections—in fact, the right of a Factory Inspector to enter workplaces at will has all but disappeared. According to a senior official at the Labour Department (interviewed in 2019), there are only three government labour officers in the entirety of Surat District (whose administrative limits encompass but go far beyond the city itself). Inspections are as a result done on a target basis and are randomized, and under ease of doing Business, there are no more inspections without complaints already made to the department.
  
- Refer \* the Workmen's Compensation Act 1923
  
- Among the Odia migrant workers, illnesses are common, as are stress and alcoholism. The complete lack of access to basic public services like sanitation, health, education for their children and the public distribution system further deteriorates their existence (Sahu & Das, 2010, p. 2). The state, however, has clearly marked the borders between 'work' and 'home'. As the 'The power loom sector is extremely decentralized,' workers registration under the insurance scheme' is extremely challenging. The scheme was launched in July 2003. The worker pays an annual premium of Rs. 80 (with Rs. 290 added by the government and Rs. 100 from the Social Security Fund)
  
- In their paper, Sahu and Das have stated that as many as 83 per cent of the Odia migrant workers in Surat feel insecure about the continuity of their jobs,

for they hardly know when they may be thrown out by their employers (2010). In their paper, of the 57 migrants who had visited their native villages, 47 per cent weren't allowed to continue their jobs after returning to the city. Getting work at the same unit is possible only if the looms are vacant. Workers are denied permission to rejoin even if they were absent from work for two to three days consecutively on account of illness. This leaves a worker unemployed for certain periods of time until he can find a new job.

- Apart from the lack of work opportunities back in their villages, the majority of the Odia migrants also feel that the migration influx, exacerbated in the past decade, has led to an excess of labour supply. Having to run the loom machines non-stop, 24x7, the employers take advantage of this situation to the maximum. To find a worker for a loom or a factory owner at Surat is not as difficult as for a worker to find a job. This has serious implications on the number of workdays, wage fixations and benefit entitlements for a worker. Since there are many who are ready to work at lower wages for the same quantum of work, mill owners keep substituting low paid workers for the high paid ones and try to get rid of the latter on the smallest of pre- texts. In other words, given the competition among the swelling number of aspiring migrants to get absorbed into the labour market, hardly any worker feels sure about the continuity of work since he has no idea when the employer will throw him out.
- They turn to union-led strikes to demand increased wages and better work conditions, worker collectives to negotiate and obtain fair compensations for victims of worksite mishaps, informal job networks to find secure and safe work, and even dance classes to combat urban loneliness and labour alienation.

- Given the high informalization of the entire industry and the mobile nature of the migrant population, organized unions have had limited interest and negligible success in organizing this group of deregulated and vulnerable workforce (based on interviews in 2018 and 2019).

## **Recommendations and the Way Forward**

- Strict adherence to the provisions of the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, whereby all migrant workers' details are recorded in their source districts. And for provisions for Pravasi Identity Card before migration and this facility must be accessible at the gram panchayat or block level. The database of registered migrants must be linked to the concerned departments of the state/Centre, in order to avail the benefits of different schemes of the state and central governments.
- Migrant Welfare Board can be introduced as an initiative to secure the socio-economic surroundings of a migrant worker, under which basic health benefits, social inclusion along with social security, child education and marriage, higher studies, death benefits etc. can be covered.
- Dialogues and visits can be undertaken between the source and destination governments in order to ensure access to basic facilities (living, health, education etc.) at the destination by migrant workers on producing their Pravasi Identity Cards.
- Provision for registration of migrant workers at the destination centre. The same must be communicated to the source state with an obligation for further inclusion

at source. Source as well as destination governments should be careful on protection of the fundamental rights of migrant workers.

- Provision of identity cards to the workers by the state will be an important first step to ensure that the Odia workers are able to establish their identity as workers and their occupations are recognized as legitimate categories of work. It will also provide a much-needed foundation to bring them within the jurisdiction of labour laws, introduce legislations to improve their working and living conditions and advocate for further benefits such as social security.
  
- Recognizing the fact that the Odia weavers comprise an important part of Surat's economy, it is important to recognize universal principles that can inform the design and implementation of policies and schemes such that they are able to address their particular needs for safe, secure and dignified work and living conditions. Drawing mainly from Aajeevika Bureau's field insights and narratives documented on the ground, this section chalks out relevant recommendations, that could be initiated in both Odisha and Gujarat state frameworks, at the source and destinations ends, to seek state and employer liability, responsibility and accountability to pave the way forward for Odia weavers toiling in the country's textile capital.
  
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- Establishment of an 'Odia Help Desk' in some obligatory institutions such as hospitals urban health care units), bus stands (City Bus Stand), railway stations (Surat, Udhana) and also labour department offices for easy access of basic services by the Odia communities. It is important to also have important documents translated into Odia to ensure complete accessibility and inclusion.
- Constitution of the Gujarat State Social Security Board as per the provisions of the Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act 2008 and enabling self-registration of workers under the State Social Security Board.
- Institution of a welfare board for power loom sector workers through a tripartite arrangement between the state, employers and the workers. On the lines of welfare boards in other similar occupational categories, this institutional arrangement would receive overall funding from the state, supported by cess/taxes collected from the employers and a membership fee collected from the workers. These will be an appropriate platform to provide welfare benefits and economic security to informal workers.
- Facilitating financial inclusion for workers so as to ensure contributory savings from employers and workers. These may be linked to the welfare board registrations, with provisions for continuing the same account, as long as the worker is in the same occupational sector. Necessary safeguards with reference to

withdrawal of savings may be introduced to ensure that workers do not have a perverse incentive to leave their jobs in order to access the savings amount.

- The following minimum working conditions need to be recognized, notified to employers and implemented on a mandatory basis
- An 8-hour working day (rather than the current 12-hour day) with a half-hour break, One paid day of holiday per week, No payment below the statutory minimum wage, Provisions for adequate safety equipment at the workplace and compensation in the case of accidents, provision of basic amenities at the workplace such as safe drinking water and toilet and sanitation facilities, Ensuring transparency in textile supply chains so that the downstream workers, including Odia home-based workers are also recognized as legitimate workers, and their relationship with the principal employer established so that they can demand their work-related rights. Ensuring registration of power looms under the Shops and Establishments Act and Factories Act respectively, depending on the size of the workforce. Frequent inspections and random checks to ensure that those looms that are bigger in size have in fact been registered under the Factories Act and are adhering to all relevant regulations.
- Considering the high prevalence of worksite accidents and deaths, it is important to ensure the smooth and effective facilitation of the provisions under the Workmen Compensation Act.
- Instituting mechanisms to ensure collective bargaining for workers in order to ensure that labour rights are recognized and labour legislations are implemented.

Local authorities must reach out to migrant pockets in cities through workers' platforms and civil society organizations, conduct local-level enumerations and ensure provisioning of public facilities in these areas on a fast-track basis.

- Adequate rations must be provided to all persons occupying urban spaces on a priority basis; all docility-based eligibility barriers must be eliminated. This is particularly necessary for workers living in the mess rooms, as well as in migrant settlements in far-flung urban peripheries which might fall outside the jurisdiction of urban local bodies.
- Odia labourers largely depend on employers and landlords for accessing basic facilities in their living spaces. The provision of these facilities as well as standards for their adequacy and quantity must be set through executive orders, which can form the basis of future legislations. Informal landlords might be incentivized to do this through subsidies from the state for renting to migrant workers in return for formalizing their rental arrangements. In the case of small and petty employers who cannot provide for workers, or workers who are engaged on a piece-rate basis or as home-based workers, the state must step in through extending public provisioning in such clusters.
- Ensuring registration of power looms under the Shops and Establishments Act and Factories Act respectively, depending on the size of the workforce. Frequent inspections and random checks to ensure that those looms that are bigger in size have in fact been registered under the Factories Act and are adhering to all relevant regulations.

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- MRC's
- A large number of MRCs are being operated across different states, such as Bihar, Odisha and Kerala, run either by the state or civil society, or as a collaboration between the two. While MRCs have a wide potential to reach out to migrant populations, they remain focused on information or service delivery. While the provision of these services are important, the scope of MRCs can be utilized to re-conceptualize them as Migrants Rights Centres, which act as spaces for responding to labour rights violations and upholding the rights of casual and migrant workers, in addition to service delivery. They can undertake legal literacy and counseling so that migrant workers possess adequate information and confidence to report labour rights violations, building the repertoire of cases for enabling swift response from state institutions responsible for delivering justice, as well as archiving and documenting cases in order to activate state regulatory action over industries, clusters or employers where violations are recurrent. These centers should also be equipped with lawyers trained in responding to cases involving informality and migration, and can act as capacity-building centers for training and supporting a network of lawyers and trade union representatives in these methods.

### **Additional Notes:**

- Unlike the expanding prosperity of these growth centres in the state, however, the landscape of migrant labour has remained a hotbed of chronic poverty and

distress. The share of labour in gross value, for instance, is dismally low, among the lowest in the country, and has been falling since the 1980s and 1990s (Sood, 2012, p. 130). Similarly, Hirway and Shah argue that the share of wages in the net value addition has dropped in Gujarat at the rate of 3.25 per cent per year from 1999 to 2008 (2011, p. 60). The real wage rate for casual work in Gujarat is among the lowest in the country. While the state enjoys a 20 per cent higher per capita income than the national average, rural and urban wages lag by 20 and 15 per cent respectively (Chandrashekhara & Ghosh, 2014). Breman argues that the nature of Gujarat's growth is predatory, with the state facilitating and underwriting capitalist accumulation at the cost of labour (2013, p. 95). For instance, the government has given out sales tax subsidies worth Rs. 52.5 billion and capital subsidies worth Rs. 7.69 billion to the industry in under 15 years between 1991 and 2005 (Hirway & Shah, 2011, as cited in Jain & Sharma, 2018, p. 92).

- Yet, in November 2016, as demonetization was announced, Gujarat's unemployment rate, according to data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, rose from 2.2 per cent to 5 per cent in December 2016, reaching 9.5 per cent in February 2018 and 7.4 per cent by October 2018 (Mishra, 2019). In addition, the state's spending on basic services and public goods such as health, nutrition and safe water remained below the national average. As per the National Health Profile Report 2018, for instance, Gujarat's spending on health to its GDSP ratio is among the lowest in the country, an abysmal 0.72 per cent (TNN, 2018). There has also been a conscious thrust by the state government to not monitor compliance with labour laws to reassure the industry of an investor-friendly climate (Jain & Sharma, 2018, p. 92). Such iniquitous efforts and

arbitrary claims have rendered the much celebrated ‘Gujarat Model of Development’ to be exclusionary, with the state’s poverty and inequality reduction rates trailing way behind the national average.

- The looms are also a site of alarming number of minor, major and fatal injuries among workers, many of them Odia migrants. The PTRC report says 84 fatal events that killed a total of 114 workers were reported between 2012 and 2015 in registered textile processing units in Surat. During the same period, 375 workers were seriously injured. This data was obtained after filing Right to Information applications at the Directorate of Industrial Safety and Health, Gujarat. The city also houses many unregistered power loom workshops, and the number of deaths and accidents could be underestimated. No comprehensive official data is available on any of this (Subramanian, 2018). In addition to fatal injuries and deaths, an alarming number of workers reportedly suffer from varying levels of deafness, mainly due to continuous exposure to the high-decibel loom machines. According to a medical examination undertaken by Aajeevika Bureau’s Surat Centre in 2018, a staggering 95 per cent of workers reported hearing loss. The reports were certified by Christian Medical College and Hospital in Vellore.
- Over the years, the city’s population has grown from less than 0.5 million in 1971 to nearly 5 million inhabitants in 2011 (Census of India, 2011), of which 58 per cent comprises intra- and inter-state migrants (UNESCO Report, 2013, p. 6), the highest proportion of migrants to locals in the country. In terms of its wage workforce, nearly 70 per cent is constituted by migrants (Shastri, 2017).

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