



WINTER INSTITUTE 2013

**Migrant Life, Livelihood and Shelter in Bhuj**

December 2-14 | 2013 | M.A/M.Sc in Urban Policy and Governance 2013-15

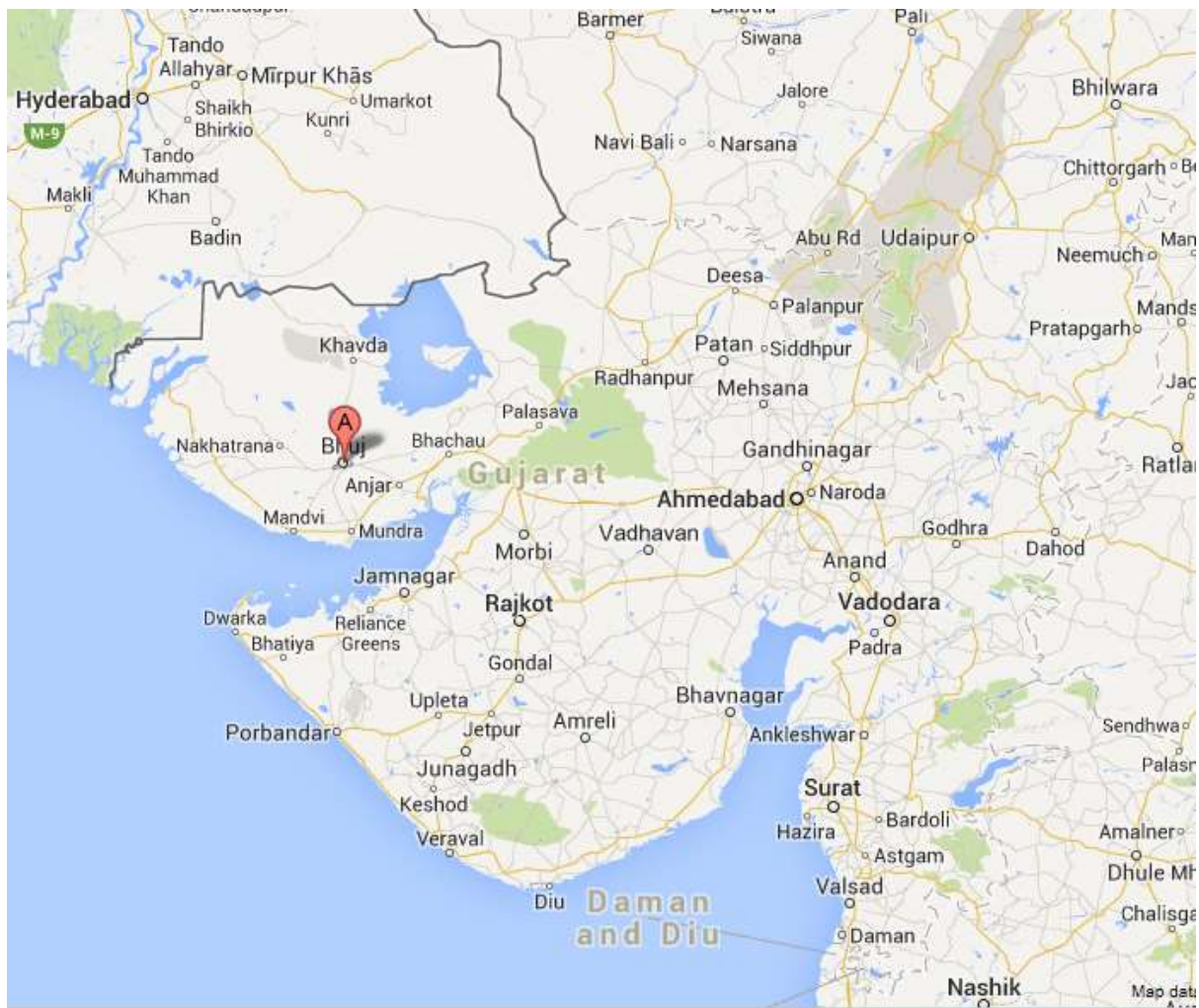
School of Habitat Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences - Mumbai



# Winter Institute 2013

## Shelter, Life & Livelihood in Bhuj

02-14 December 2013



Courtesy: Google Maps

### *About the Winter Institute*

The Winter Institute is a full-fledged 2 credit Course in the academic calendar of the Masters in Urban Policy and Governance (UPG) program of the School of Habitat Studies, at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai, conducted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester. It is 2 weeks long, involving immersion in a community and location. It is conceived as a platform for interdisciplinary collaborative learning through research and action in the field. During each Winter Institute, students (and all other participants) are trained in a research method or tool that is either outside the core curriculum of the UPG program, or does not have significant curricular time devoted to it. It is expected that students learn to analyse and understand issues, as well as possibilities of strategic response to them, as they are studied in the field. Students typically work in mixed groups on live problems, guided by one or more faculty members, and their output is designed to be of direct use to the host community and local collaborating organization. Participatory Research has been the tool studied and employed in the current institute.

### *About the Research Theme*

Hunnarshala Foundation has been asked by the Bhuj Municipal Council to help it develop the Detailed Project Report for undertaking the Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY) in the city. RAY is a new housing program of the central government that seeks to provide appropriate housing for slum dwellers, but also to make cities 'slum-free'. Learning from earlier policy experiences, it envisages a more participatory process. More importantly, perhaps for the first time in housing policy in India, it acknowledges that migration is a continuing process in Indian cities. Accordingly, it has allocations for building facilities and shelter for migrants. Hunnarshala (in discussion with its collaborating organizations like Urban Setu and Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan) suggested that the Winter Institute focus on understanding the realities and needs of recent migrants who live in temporary and vulnerable settlements. The organization and its partners have a reasonably good understanding of the predicament and needs of the older, more settled slums, but have no connections with or knowledge about recent migrants. Student research during the Winter Institute would thus significantly help Hunnarshala find appropriate ways of integrating migrant needs into the RAY proposals. Since the research method is participatory (and migrant communities will attend and comment on the final presentation of student research) it is hoped that the knowledge about the communities will be aligned with their own lived experience. Students also expect to learn directly about migrant experiences and situations, as well as develop an understanding of challenges that participatory research presents. Hunnarshala plans to use the insights from this research to organize more detailed investigations as well as to brainstorm on possible approaches to housing and infrastructure provision that can more fully address genuine needs of new, and constantly mobile, migrants, through RAY.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## *Exploring the City*

Bhuj is the largest city in Kutch district of Gujarat. For people who have never been here, it is generally known for the horrendous tragedy which occurred in 2001- a devastating earthquake that left over 600,000 people homeless in the region. On our first day in the city, our interactions with different citizens – historians, media persons, NGO workers, housewives, children, traders, shop owners, chhakhawalas, migrant workers and government officials – allowed us to see the city in various lights. We discovered that it is at once a beloved hometown, a passive city, a peaceful city, and a hostile city.

Although the earthquake has redefined the city in many ways, our interaction with senior citizens and historians in the city allowed us to imagine Bhuj within a range of important civilizations and events in South Asian history- through remnants of the Indus Valley Civilization, places associated with the Mahabharata and Alexander the Great's march into India, tombs, palaces and other buildings from the rule of the Naga chiefs, the Jadeja Rajputs, the Gujarat Sultans and the British Raj.

Just a brief interaction with the wholesale traders and service providers in the transport industry so as to understand the flow of goods through the city brought to fore the fact that trading was an activity that anchored Bhuj within the entire Kutch region, and moreover, the Kutchi community in the world at large. Trade came across as the essence of the existence of Bhuj, and that made transportation the second largest industry in the region.

From the various NGOs working in the city, government officials and media persons, we were able to follow the massive physical, infrastructural, social and political changes that the city has witnessed. The economic and governance changes that resulted from the city limit extension of 2001 have presented both challenges and opportunities. The amount of work that NGOs and the local municipal government do together is unique to Bhuj. With the blurring of functions and activities, the city has experienced what we call the NGO-lization of administration.

In contrast to the media persons and government officials' perspective, the housewives, the children, the chaiwalas and small shop owners were only boastful of their hometown – for its history and heritage, for its peacefulness, for its air of contentment, and for its wide opportunities. The Kutchi identity reins supreme over the Gujarati or the Indian identity reminding us of its unique pre-independence trajectory as the region of Kutch.

After a one-day introduction to these various perspectives on the city, we spent the rest of our time trying to understand the migrant perspective on the city, which as we quickly discovered is far from being a homogenous one. Our one-day familiarization exercise however, ended up providing many insights about the city that also helped us better understand the position of the various migrant communities. Our effort has been to grapple with the migrant perspective with all its multiplicity and identify what Bhuj offers as well as takes away from the various migrant communities whose lives have come to be intertwined with the narrative of the city.



## 2 THE PROCESS

We approached this Winter Institute (2<sup>nd</sup> December 2013 to 14<sup>th</sup> December 2013) with the intention to learn and understand the various aspects of migration into Bhuj and the impact Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY) could have on the migrant communities. Prior to our journey to Bhuj, we had a small workshop with Mr. Simpreet Singh who has been advocating for the implementation of RAY across India. He gave us a detailed report on the policy changes required under RAY and also the current status of implementation. Mrs. Leena Joshi also conducted a PRA workshop and shared her field experience about how the right research tool could yield fascinating results. Mr. Rajiv Khandelwal, Director of the Aajeevika Bureau also spoke to us about migration typologies, cycles and migrant issues. For our work he advised – ‘if you meet the people too easily and they are most forthcoming about their issues, you’re not meeting the most vulnerable people, those most in need. Make sure you look deeper because the most vulnerable are often the most invisible.’ The insights gained through these sessions were most useful in the field.

After our arrival at Bhuj, and interaction with our host Hunnarshala, we set about orienting ourselves to the city of Bhuj, we focused on the migrant communities. Members of Hunnarshala and Urban Setu had already identified 22 migrant communities through their existing work in the city. We split into 9 groups and visited each location over a period of two days. Some groups had interesting findings as the locations they scouted were 30-year-old settlements with *pakka* houses and did not fit the criteria of a slum as defined under RAY.

After the preliminary visits, we narrowed down on 9 locations for detailed study. They were chosen for their unique aspects - size, regional background, source of livelihood and migration pattern. The following week and a half were dedicated to building relations with these communities and understanding their lives. We focused on both the community level (nature of community, general patterns of migration and livelihood, resource maps, demographic details) and the individual level (collecting subjective human stories of one family or individual). This approach helped us identify patterns and variations/ details.

The research used a qualitative methodology, including interviews, focus group discussions, and PRA tools such as transect walks, resource mapping, seasonal calendar, daily schedules etc. half way through our study, we identified six broad themes that emerged in every location:

1. Livelihoods
2. Credit
3. Networks
4. Children
5. Entitlement
6. Vulnerability (pervasive in all of the above)

For the final part of our research, each group focused on developing their understanding of the above mentioned themes.

At every stage in the research, experienced members of Hunnarshala and Setu were consulted so as to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data collected. They even accompanied us to the communities when we were unsure of some information. The accuracy of the data collected is especially important, as this project is the first step for Hunnarshala and Setu to work with these communities. The results from this report can also contribute to Bhuj's RAY proposal. Therefore, on the last day, we invited members from all the communities to view our presentation at Hunnarshala. They added to our narrative about what we learned from them and about their communities.

Throughout the research process, our understanding was enhanced by our interactions with various organizations working in different urban sectors. Since we focused on housing, our interaction with Arid Communities and Technologies (ACT) and Sahjeevan helped us explore water supply and solid waste management as services that automatically get attached when we think of urban settlements. URBAN SETU and Bhuj Bole Che (BBC), with their work in community participation in governance and citizenship, helped contextualise our study of migrant communities- especially their claims to entitlements and recognition by the city. Finally, Sakhi Sangini, as part of Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathana (KMVS), provided us with examples of self-financing for housing and women's participation in this sphere.

### **Scope**

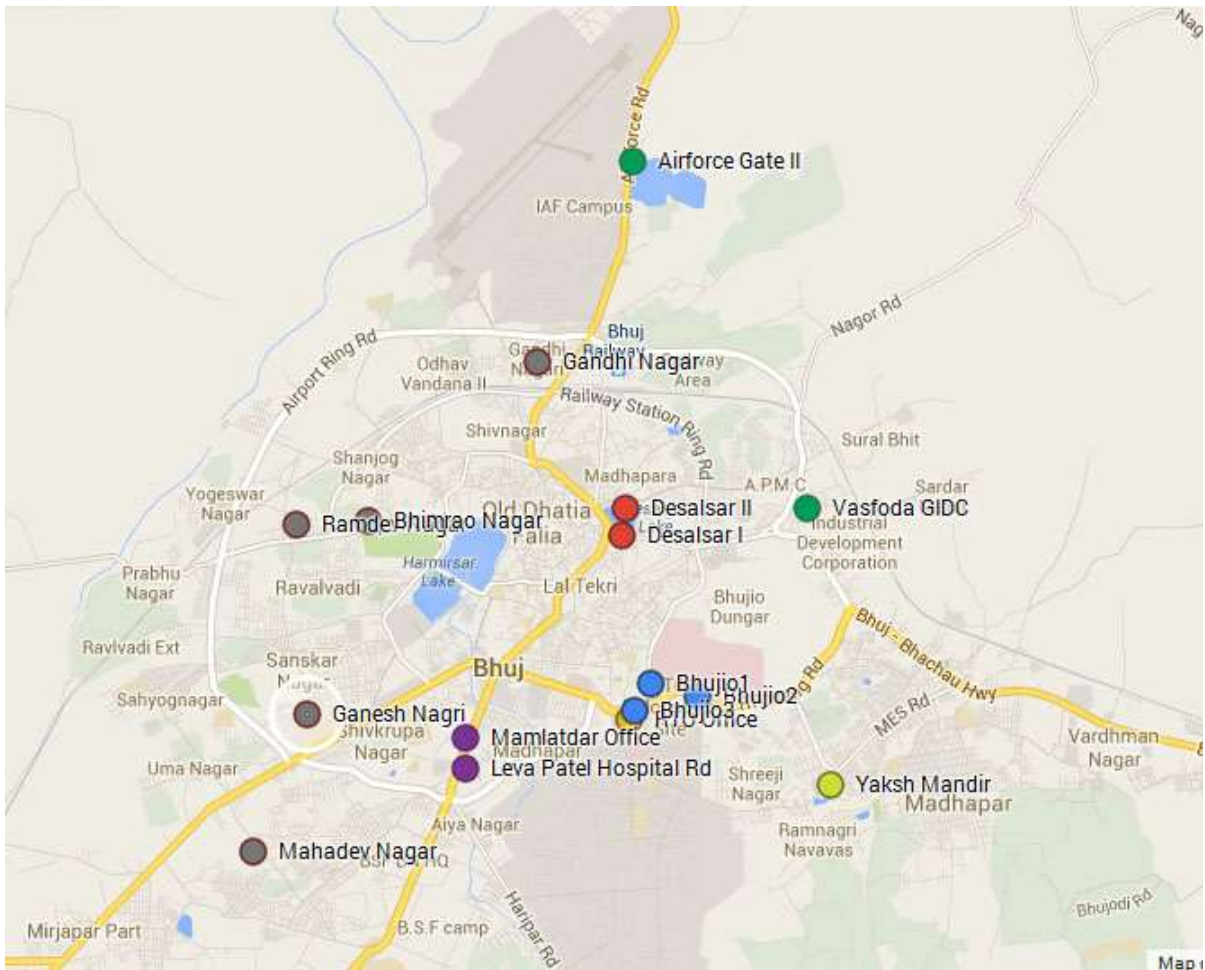
While we started the research with the RAY as the specific policy in mind, the explorations have not been restrained to understanding the migrant communities' ways of dwelling and creating shelters, but rather on how and how much they choose to be in the city or a habitat. This, in some inherent way, has enlarged the scope of (at least) our own understanding of the dynamism in their situation.

### **Limitations**

A time bound engagement with the communities was of course one of the foremost challenges in this task, though it was always undertaken with an intention to provide our hosts with the initial ground on which to build up further avenues of collaborating with them. A very high percentage of workforce participation and high levels of residential mobility of both men and women, old and young, left few valuable hours in which we could actually establish direct communication with the migrant communities, and that too at the cost of intruding into their daily routines.

As will be further brought out by the study, the migrants revealed themselves to be an extremely dynamic and fairly heterogeneous group, at least in their expression of agency and aspiration. The studies are yet far from comprehensive, especially statistically, but the idea has been to bring out, through some human stories that cut across various cross sections of the community, the essence of their negotiations with their situations and aspirations, and the opportunities that enable them to do so. It is to be understood that these stories are in no way aimed at illustrative representations (one or two stories speaking for all). However, unique as each tends to be on its own, the larger canvas that is woven through their telling is far from incoherent.

### 3 STUDIED LOCATIONS



Map 3-1 Map of all locations studied

Studied Locations: *Migrant Communities at/near*

Mamlatdar Office, Bhuj-Mundra Highway

RTO Relocation

Bhujio Dongar

Desalsar Lake

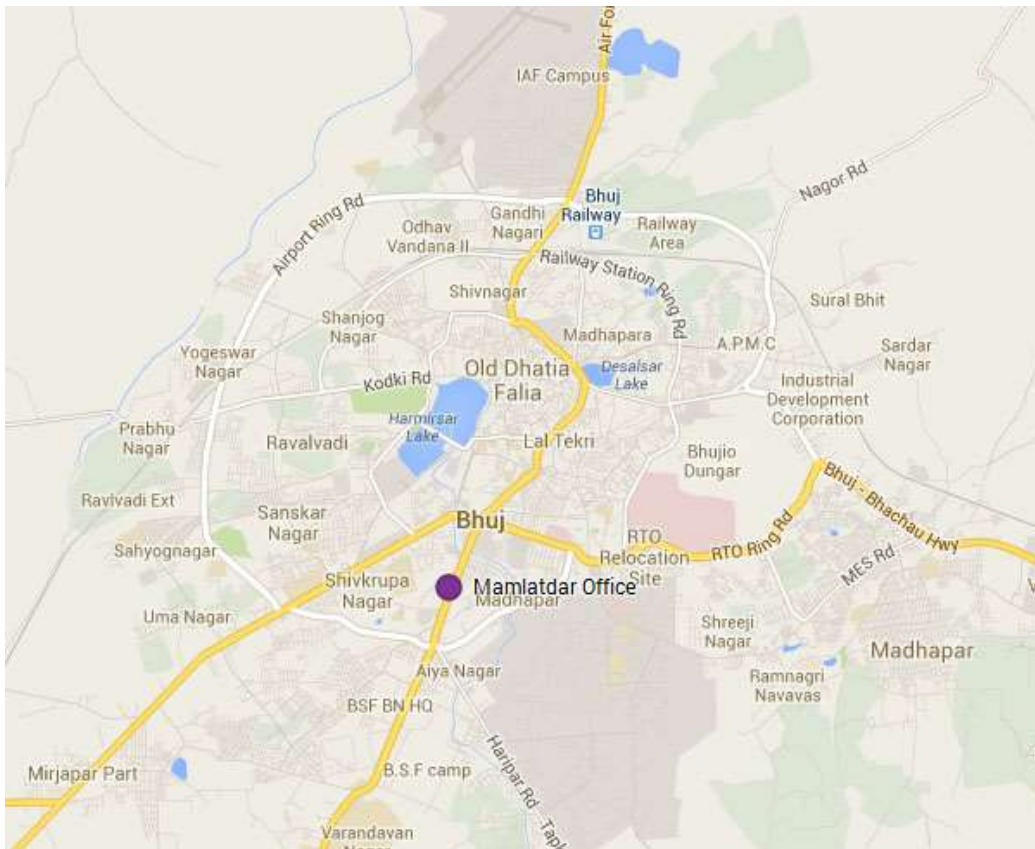
GIDC, Madhapar Highway

Yaksha Mandir

*Location:*  
Around Mamlatdar Office, Bhuj Mundra  
Highway

*Group Members:*

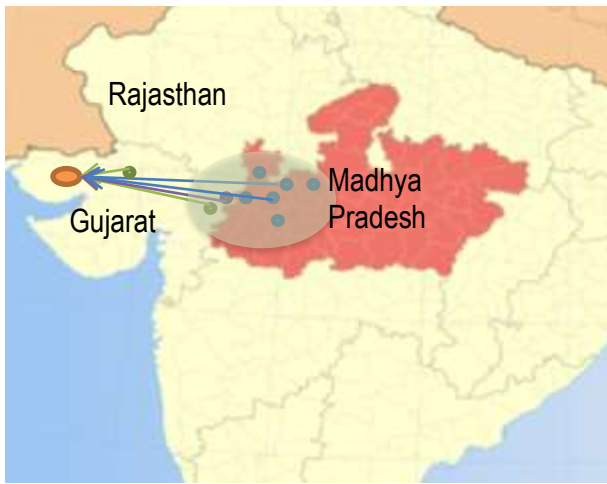
Farzana Qureshi , Nirali Joshi, Ranga Naresh Gurram



## 3.1 MAMLATDAR OFFICE

Strung along two sides of the Bhuj Mundra highway between Jubilee Circle and Reliance Circle near the Mamlatdar office of Bhuj are small settlements of migrants dwelling in temporary hutments. This community is established by people who have arrived largely from the Gujarat-bordering districts of Madhya Pradesh (Ujjain, Ratlam, Mandsaur, Rajgarh, Indore, Shajapur) and Rajasthan (Jhalawada).

Several of them came here along with families for the first time in 2002 i.e. after the Kutch earthquake. Gradually, as opportunities for work increased, their extended families started arriving to join them.



Migration into Bhuj

Figure 3.1-1 Migration Pattern to Bhuj, Mamlatdar Office



Figure 3.1-2 Migrant settlement expansion along the highway

A few of the community members mentioned that they initially took up rented housing when they arrived in the city. However, in due course of time, the local residents stopped being willing to rent out their homes to people from Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and other states. So these migrants came out from those rented homes and started living in different open spaces like RTO relocation area, Bhujia Dungar and other places (largely government lands) in Bhuj. Finally they came to this location around the Mamlatdar office along the foot path in 2006. The authorities have evacuated them almost three to four times since they arrived here, and each time they have resettled themselves along the same road. Presently they lie dispersed into three clusters, i.e. besides Mamlatdar office, opposite the Leva Patel Hospital and near Reliance Circle junction just besides Leva Patel Hospital.

### **Push Factors**

A large number of the dwellers here are basically seasonal migrants who return to their native villages during the festival period, social functions in their family and during the planting and harvest periods. Several of them own agricultural lands back home, whereas some are landless. Reduced income from agriculture owing to aspects such as decreasing yield (one of the reasons cited is increased use of pesticides), fragmentation in land holdings due to distribution of ancestral land amongst heirs and very low agricultural wages came across as some of the key push factors. However, there were also some families who stated the need to earn more in order to support the increasing expenditure on educating their children back in the villages. Many people in this community belong to scheduled castes.

### **Pull Factors**

The earthquake of 2001 and news of work availability is reported as a major pull factor. Wages were also comparably higher in Gujarat when they arrived and continue to be so. When inquired after the change in their livelihood over the past decade, they revealed that till just about 5 years back they were getting Rs. 100/- per day, now they are getting Rs. 250-300/ in Bhuj city. At present, wages back in their village hover around Rs. 100-125/day. When they had initially arrived, wages back in their village were around Rs. 35-40/ day and in Bhuj city they were Rs. 75/day.

When asked about them availing the MGNREGA back in their villages, some of them claimed that the scheme hadn't reached their village at all, though they were aware of it existing in other villages. Few others said that wages under the employment scheme were preyed upon by local contractors, and most often they received only a percentage of their rightful wages, and that too, never at the stipulated time.

In what can further be considered as a 'keep' factor, more than a few community members mentioned that in contrast to their employers back in Madhya Pradesh, the people here tended to occasionally provide clothes, grains and other forms of support along with wages. They referred to it as something they found good in this city. Others just mentioned life in the city itself being good, saying, "*ghar toh gaon hai, yahan shehar hai.*"

Sunderbai, aged 35, belongs to the village of Karmali in Madhya Pradesh, while her now deceased husband hailed from the village of Charkot. She is the mother of three boys (two of whom are under 15 years of age)<sup>a</sup>. The family arrived in Bhuj around 13 years back. Her husband had passed away in Madhya Pradesh after a prolonged ailment of tuberculosis. The younger children were going to school before their father's death, but are unable to continue doing so here as they do not have any documents of their previous study and also due to economic problems. Expenses related to her elder son's marriage<sup>b</sup> are also a concern to her. She lives in the settlement adjacent to the Mamlatdar office along with her immediate and few extended family members, all of whom operate in the city as ragpickers. She says she has no companion in her family as well as in the community.



<sup>a</sup> An age comparison between Sunderbai and that of her eldest son reveals that Sunderbai might have been close to 17 or 18 when she had her first child. The issue of child marriage is fairly prevalent in these communities, where the girls mention being married or solemnized at about the age of 10, and then sent to their husband's home after the age of 15.

<sup>b</sup> Several in these communities mentioned the marriage of a son to entail a larger expense than that of the daughter. It is accounted for as one of the major expenses that they face in their lives, along with festivals, illness and death of family members.

### Nature of settlement

At present, the entire community of migrants along this road comprises of about 360 people i.e. approximately 118 households with average family size of 3-4 persons<sup>1</sup>. The settlement next to the Mamlatdar office features about 16 hutments, of which around six were occupied at the time of visiting the community. The settlement opposite Leva Patel Hospital was larger with about 80-84 hutments, of which approximately 70 were then occupied. Closer to Reliance Circle, there is a linear string of about 9 hutments (of which 7 were occupied). Some further isolated clusters (3-4 hutments each) were found on the opposite side of this linear string, accounting for the remainder 10 households or so.

All the shelters are built with sticks and plastic covers/tarpaulin/cloth/sarees. However, there appears to be some variation in the physical form of the hutments from location to location (though not too much).

The hutments next to the Mamlatdar office (Cluster 1) are nestled in an elongated, wooded patch alongside the road, which is bound by the peripheral wall of the Pashu Palan Kendra towards the rear. The trees have been planted in 3-4 clear rows parallel to the road, in a grid like pattern. The grid pattern of the trees and the bounding wall towards the rear lend a

<sup>1</sup> Data was provided by the community members on location. It is approximate data.

particular nature of order to this settlement where the tree trunks act as markers for locating each hutment and in some cases, also form the key support verticals, and provide a natural grid of extension where each hutment can expand its outdoor activity. The land lies lower to the level of the road, and thus the trees also offer some amount of invisibility to the hutments, along with shade and coolness. The trees are about four years old.

The hutments in this location are wider (about 7-8 ft in width) and have greater headroom (average 5'6) with a pointed roof profile. The residents have occupied the imaginary slots created by the planting grids to place their hutments as well as expand their livelihood related activity. They utilise the spaces within and between the trees for creating storage lofts, as well as hanging clothes, baskets and swings. The bathing area has shifted one row away from the hutments, leaving space in between for the occupants to lay out their cots and bedding.



Figure 3.1-3 Community besides Mamlatdar Office

Interestingly, when the dwellers in this cluster were asked whether a new family that arrived needed to establish some communication or acquire any permission from the prior dwellers for setting up their huts, some of them replied, *'No they don't. Anybody is free to come here; this is all government land; who are we to refuse.'* However, they were also quick to point out, *'But where will they come now, there is no place...so much of the space is taken up by our scrap collection and carts.'*



Figure 3.1-4 Hutments and usage of space (cluster 1)



The settlement opposite the Leva Patel Hospital (cluster 2) is placed on a large open plot of land, fairly visible from the road. It is comprised of about 80-85 hutments that are huddled close to each other in smaller groups. These huts tend to be predominantly 4-6' height with a bow shaped profile, with the area of shelter varying from an average of 20 sq. ft. to 35 sq. ft.

It came across that there were no real restrictions on who chose to build in the plot or the size of the hutment that one chose to build. In fact, the size of the footprint was largely determined by the capacity of the family to procure the initial raw materials (smaller hutments could be constructed with twigs and sticks collected from nearby shrublands, whereas larger spans required them to buy bamboo strips from the market) for setting up the hut. On an average, the dwellers spent Rs1000/- to Rs2000/- for building their hutment. A typical hutment comprised of a small semi open area where cooking was undertaken, and a temporary enclosure about 3-4' in height for bathing. When asked what they do to their hutments when they leave (whether they dismantle and sell/carry along the raw material), most of them said that they left the hut as was. In case a new family arrived, they were pointed over to the existing abandoned hutments. Should the original hut builders return, it was well accepted that the new occupants would vacate the hutment and make place for them.

There are only three families to have built pucca houses in this cluster, and that too towards the rear end, farthest from the road and backed by a hill side. One of them belongs to a young man of about 36 who works in Bhuj as a wage labourer. He owns no lands back in his village in Madhya Pradesh, and aspires for some level of permanence in his family life in Bhuj. He is willing to commit between 500-1000 rupees of his monthly earnings, if a shelter be provisioned for him. His children who reside with him here have not yet enrolled in school. He says he has taken a chance by setting up the walls of his pucca structure, and he is mindful of the fact that he may, at any time, be evacuated. His adjoining structure lies half complete and unoccupied. It was set up by a similar migrant who ran short of money to repay the amount for the building blocks, and thereby fled from the place.

This cluster appears to be more difficult to navigate after dark, owing to a large area being devoid of any common lighting source.



Figure 3.1-5 Settlement (cluster 2)



Figure 3.1-6 Cluster located besides road on high elevation (cluster3)

Cluster 3 is comprised by a linear arrangement of about 9-10 hutments that lie at an elevated plane, in direct visibility of the highway. While this elevation brings them the benefit of more direct light from the streetlamps, it brings with it the threat of children falling off the edge and running into traffic.

Another disadvantage due to location, for this cluster is the existence of an open plot of land just adjacent to them where residents of the city paid a person to provide fodder to stray cows, largely as a religious deed.

These cows often head to their hutments after running out of fodder, and ransack them for the food articles stored inside (which discourages most of the migrant dwellers to store any) and also pose a danger to the structure of their hutments and the safety of their children.



Figure 3.1-7 Cows grazing at open space behind cluster3

While all the hutments faced the road (as it was best to access streetlight that way, and no two hutments had to face each other), there was one hut in the corner that was oriented differently and was also fairly larger. Upon discussion, it was revealed that the one foot high stone platform on which the hut was built had already existed when the family arrived, and they just built onto it.



Figure 3.1-8 Cluster 4 hutments

Cluster 4, which is essentially made up of isolated groups of about 2-3 hutments spaced at about 50-100 meters from each other, tended to be either covered up and closed in during the day time, or devoid of any possessions when found open/accessible. The residents in these hutments are fairly clear of their desire to stay away from the larger settlement that comprised cluster 2, mentioning that they found it best that they stick to their own routine and livelihoods.

## Resources to sustain

The resource mapping exercises carried out with the community members at each location helped identify some of the key means through which the people accessed resources such as water, fuel wood and other daily utilities. While themselves reluctant to get down to penning out the resource maps, they were soon engaged enough to point out directions, landmarks and distances, and appropriate any errors in representation.

Water is available to the community at 4 different locations:

- People from Cluster 1 bring water from a paan shop, which is close to them. They are paying Rs. 20. Some of the people bring water from Mamlatdar office. They also occasionally access water from a tap in the Pashu Palan Kendra that lies behind them.
- People from Cluster 2 bring water free of cost from Raghuvanshi Nagar which is about 1 km away
- Some families in Cluster 3 bring water from AYI Nagar
- People from Cluster 4 bring water from the surroundings of Leva Patel Hospital and are paying 300 Rs. per month.

Water was available every alternate day, as is the case with the residents of the entire Bhuj city. According to the people, they are getting water as per their need. However, the only inconvenience is the distance they have to travel and the quantity they have to carry back. None of them reported any quarrels between the migrant communities themselves or between the locals living closer to the taps regards access to water. Interestingly, this water is being availed for free in the water scarce area. However, Cluster 3 can be an example for people paying money for water, only for the convenience of accessing it from a shorter distance.

For daily convenience, they utilise the empty shrub lands, where they have to jump over a fence daily to get in and out. Firewood too is collected from the same area. The same shrub lands often provide the initial raw material of sticks and twigs for the construction of their hutments.

None of the residences have an electricity connection. They use candles, oil lamps, torches and mobile phone light for preparing and eating dinner.<sup>2</sup>

The community members were able to point out the direction in and distance at which their nearest hospitals are. The area has two private hospitals, one is run by a trust and another



Figure 3.1-9 Community Map drawn with inputs by people at cluster 2

<sup>2</sup> A deeper exploration of the various means for lighting up their homes in dark hours revealed that the communities needed some source of light at the crucial hours of cooking and eating. On an average, a household spent Rs. 5-10 per day, averaging to about 200-250 rupees per month for lighting up a corner of their home for a mere two hours or so. We compared this to the average electricity bill of a nearby resident who had a proper electricity connection. He said that his bill amounted to about Rs. 550 per month which included usage of lights, fans, TV, refrigerator and other electrical equipment and a 24 hour electricity supply. In the case of the cluster living in a linear formation much closer to the road near Reliance Circle, and dwelling at a much higher elevation, the light of the street lamps was considered enough, and they stated no extra expenditure on candles, torches or the like. Most of the families mentioned charging their mobiles at the worksites. That being the case, long or continuous spans of workless days might be posing difficulty.

privately. The government hospital is located about 1.5 km away from the community. They are using three hospitals in different situations i.e, in emergency situations they use the ACCORD private hospital and in normal situations they went to the government hospital and Leva Patel Hospital. However, their most common practice was to buy medicines from the nearest chemist. Daily groceries are procured from nearby shops and some members also mentioned that in the absence of an address for themselves, they received their post at the nearby grocer's shop.

Jubilee circle comes across as a strong landmark for reference. It was also clear that the access to the basic resources and closeness to Jubilee Circle was what guided the locational choices of the communities. A typical day in the life of these migrants finds them waking up at about 4 a.m, finishing their daily ablutions, fetching water, cooking their afternoon meals and taking off for Jubilee Circle to reach there before 8 am. Upon return post 5.30 p.m, they set off to collect firewood, cook their meals, eat dinner and then retire for the day typically by 9 p.m, or continue on (often) for some drinking sessions.

### Key Occupations

A large amount of the working population in this community is engaged in daily wage labour. A few have transitioned into more settled jobs such as those of drivers and gardeners. Some of them mentioned having traditional livelihoods such as leatherwork and broom making<sup>3</sup> back home, though none seem to be continuing it here. Rag picking ranks second as a primary and in some cases, supplementary source of livelihood<sup>4</sup>.

Most of residents in this community fall in the working age group of 16-55, and there is a perceptible absence of persons in the age group of 6-14 yrs and very elderly people. The getting of work depends on the strength of their network, physical fitness and sometimes capability as well as experience (time period of living). Most of the members of the households are related to each other.

Indulal started working at the age of 15 for Rs 20/- taking people's animals for grazing to a nearby hill in his village in Ratlam district of Madhya Pradesh. He left that work after working for 6 years. He then worked as a hamali in a goods transport office for about 8 years. Later he worked as a contract plougher (using a tractor), through which he was earning close to Rs. 200/- per day, which was quite good except that it put him out of work after the planting of crops. He came to Bhuj at the age of 40, owing to insufficient livelihood in the village and upon hearing of the opportunities in Bhuj after the earthquake of 2001. He is working in Bhuj as a labourer, mochi and in other miscellaneous works for Rs. 250/- per day for an average of 25 days a month. Indulal belongs to the mochi (cobbler) community. He is presently 53 years old and his wife is about 50. They have three male children, two of whom are married. The eldest of the three remains in the native village, while the remaining two are with them in Bhuj. While Indulal knows mochi work, his children have little know how of the skill.

His wife collects scrap from surrounding areas, she also works as a maid sometimes. In this long period in Bhuj they have worked in different sectors as labourers. They worked in many of the construction works in their surrounding areas like roads, hospital and also the construction of the adjacent Mamlatdar Office. Their children are above 20 years of age and are doing well in this city. One is working as a construction labourer and another is working as a gardener. This family comes across as amongst the more prosperous in the community. They are more assured of work owing to

<sup>3</sup> The young Rajasthani girl who mentioned this said that they did not practice *jhadu* making here as she did not have access to 'khajuri' leaves.

<sup>4</sup> The women in the household often engaged in ragpicking as a supplementary source of livelihood, for which they ventured out alone or in pairs with another female in the family. The rag pickers mention an average monthly income of Rs. 1400-1600 from ragpicking. An expense incurred in the process is that of renting out a cart at Rs. 20/day. There were some people in the community who mentioned that they did not take up ragpicking as traditionally, they never engaged in such means of livelihood.



the strong networks they have built over the years, and claim to be earning more in comparison to others. They also have a bank account in their children's name. Indulal's family expressed a deep sense of distrust for their neighbours (Sundarbai and extended family members) in the Mamlatdar office location. Their family had recently experienced a theft in their hutment when all of them were out for work, for which they hold their neighbours responsible. The matter had escalated into a fight and culminated in a police complaint, post which an interrogation had been carried out but no evidence or signs of the lost items were found. The families choose not to communicate with each other at all now.

Despite residing in Bhuj for almost 11 years now, this family owns no proof of living. They too, like many others in their community, changed location about two to three times in the said period. Indulal revealed that they have wanted a good house, but never really tried to build one. However, post the theft, this want has become stronger.

Ramprasad (son of Indulal) started his journey 8 years ago, when he began work with his father as a boot polisher. He continued this job for two years and was later hired by a contractor working on different gardens. Through this association, and by choosing to stick around with this employer even through his lean periods, he secured a permanent job with him. The employer has now gone on to provide him a room and other facilities. At present he receives a salary of Rs.10,000 a month. Through the years he has been able to make strong networks and therefore has been able to find opportunities to work across Gujarat. Over the years, he has also brought in other community members from his native village and helped them train as drivers using the vehicles available on the construction site. As a side job, he is also employed by film producers as those who are part of a crowd when such a movie scene is required.

Ram Prasad, constantly referred to the members of the cluster opposite the Leva Patel Hospital as well as those who lived right beside him in his own cluster as people whom he did not interact or associate with. The reasons cited were that these people did not prefer to take up the responsibility of more permanent jobs even when offered to them (he says he had once tried) because they were not interested in getting wages only at the end of the month and the kind of organization of life that it entailed. According to him, they needed money at the end of each day to drink and make merry. Ram Prasad mentioned that he envisions a day when the entire family will move back to Madhya Pradesh. He said he had a few ideas about different business enterprises he could engage in, of which right now he is more confident of embarking on a transport business.

Interestingly, when we spoke to Ram Prasad's parents (Indulal and wife, who incidentally do not live with him in his accommodation, but continue to live on in the hutment on government lands), they expressed the desire to settle in Bhuj city should they be provided with an opportunity. They said they are willing to pay up to Rs. 3000-4000 / month if assured of the same.

## Networks

The key source of information of available work opportunities for these people lies with their family members. The people who have good connections with contractors seem to be getting more number of working days and a greater choice in work. A majority of them own a mobile phone with a prepaid connection. However, we did come across a few who had no mobile phones and said that their only means of making themselves available for work was by being present at Jubilee Circle in the mornings.

Motilal Parmar, son of Kisanlal Parmar and Gitabai, was born in 1979 in Kachrod village of Ujjain district. He studied till class 8, post which he discontinued his studies and took up cobbling for about 3 years. He then moved on to the sale of locks and chains, and further to vending peanuts in trains crossing Ujjain. Thereafter, he was also a tea vendor in Ratlam for about 3 years. Ending his stint in Ratlam, he moved on to Mumbai for another month of work. He went on to get married in 2001 when he returned to Ratlam. He arrived in Bhuj along with his wife after the earth quake and was involved in daily wage labour for about a decade or so, receiving wages that ranged from Rs. 70 then to the now going rate of Rs. 250-300/day. As of today, he has graduated on to being a contractor (thekedar) and claims to be earning Rs. 500/day just for arranging labour but not having to engage in labour himself. He makes clear that he no longer desires to enter into daily labour again and this kind of contracting suits him well. He lives in a (pucca) rented house not too far from the Leva Patel Hospital, for which he pays a rent of Rs. 2200, which is inclusive of electricity bills. He has a daughter who goes to school. He mentions that rented accommodation is out of reach for most of the other labourer families living in the hutments as it ranges anywhere between Rs. 1000-1500 per month on an average.

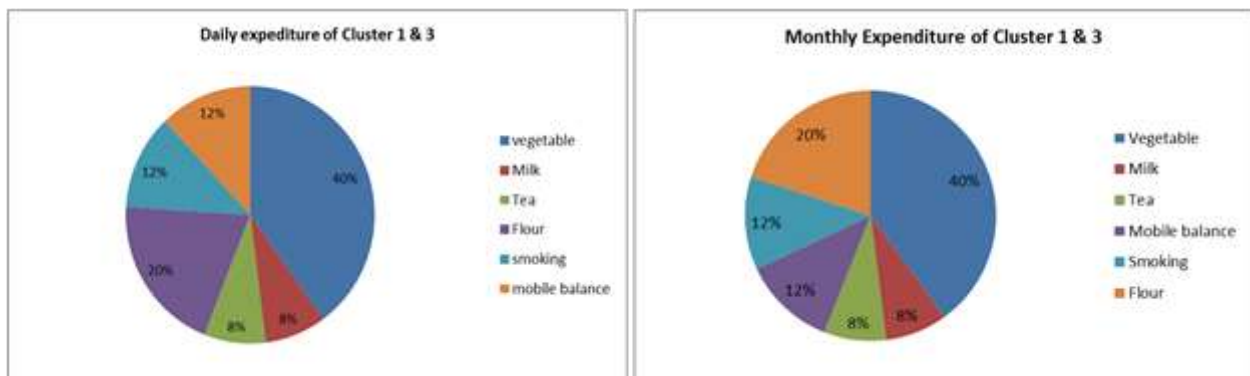


Motilal emphasises that he has developed strong networks with possible wage employers in the area, and it is he who influences the procurement of work by the different wage labourers depending on the relations between himself and them. At a community meeting for undertaking resource mapping, Motilal often stepped in to answer queries directed at various people in the cluster, claiming that he knew their situation and details well and that made him the best possible respondent. A few days later, we came across a migrant labourer in the cluster who mentioned not getting work for almost 13 days because he had fallen out of favour of Motilal.

## Income-expenditure

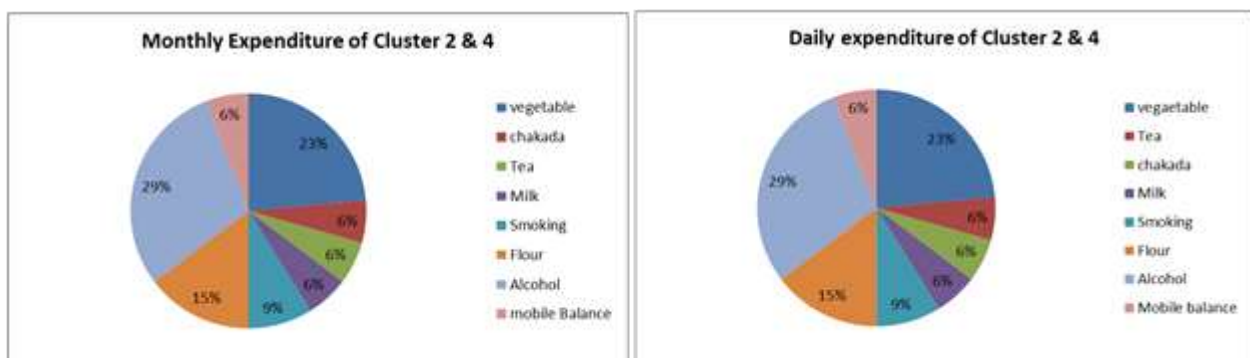
Typical wages vary between males and females. Males received between 250 to 300 Rs./day and female wages stood at Rs 200. A couple together brought back Rs 500 a day. Working as a couple was preferred, and when not possible, the male would proceed for work whereas the females rarely went for work if unaccompanied by their spouse.

On an average, a household estimated work assurance for 15-20 days a month. There were spans as long as 14 continuous days reported by some individuals when they procured no work. Averaging this out, a family of two working individuals made a minimum of Rs3,750/- per month and maximum of 7,200 per month. They spend their income for different purposes like food, snacks, travel, smoking, alcohol and mobile maintenance. The expenditure charts help elaborate upon their expenditure for different purposes.



Graph 3.1-1 Daily & monthly expenditure of clusters 1 & 3

The above pie charts are approximate expenditures of cluster 1 & 3. Most of them are saving 30% to 50% of their income to send back home for their children's education and for their parents. The money was carried back home either by an immediate or extended family member or by a known person from the community who was traveling back. A fair amount of back and forth from the villages amongst the various households seemed to aid this. Traveling back to the village entailed an expenditure of close to Rs. 1000/per person per round trip.



Graph 3.1-2 Daily and monthly expenditure of Household in Clusters 2&4

This community claims to be saving 15% to 25% of their earnings. Those savings are sent home while a portion of is kept for contingency (when they don't get work).

## Credit

Most of the community members mentioned that they bought all groceries with cash and didn't hold credit accounts with grocers. While some said that they preferred to not carry debts at shops, there were some who did say, 'Who will give us things on credit?' Most of them maintained that loans in times of contingency were availed from money lenders back in their native village (an approximate interest quoted was 4-5 rupees per month per every 100 rupees borrowed). However, it was also brought out that those migrants who had been here longer and had successfully established some kind of association with any employer or contractor, managed to access loans up to sums of about 10,000 to 15,000 from them, interest free, and payable in installments. There came across a strong sense of trust involved in this kind of borrowing.

## Entitlements

Many of these people have documents which are given by the Government of Madhya Pradesh Government, and none issued by the Government of Gujarat. Ration cards existed for most families back in their native villages which were being used to access grain there. Almost of all them had voter ID cards which they used to cast votes in Madhya Pradesh. Several of them came across as fairly updated regards the political developments in their native areas.



Figure 3.1-10 Entitlement (voter ID) shown by resident of community

Some of the households held cards given out by Manav Jyoti Trust which helped them avail food grains every month.

## Children

The movement and placement of children within the overall movement of circular migration is what came across as one of the most striking aspects through the course of engaging with this community. In the larger cluster of about 70-75 households, one could notice a distinct absence of children in the age group of 5-16, as the parents often choose to send their children back in the villages for schooling. Back in the native village, the onus of raising the children falls on to the grandparents (how feasible this was depends on the study of the relative age group and marriageable age). Of significance here is the quality of education back in the village. Several of the community members lamented that despite their arrangement of staying away from their children for the sake of them continuing their education, the quality of schooling back in the villages was far from satisfactory.

The type and location of hutments also render the children vulnerable to animals, vagaries of climate, unknown threats as well as strangers, when left alone. Some of the community members mentioned sending their children back to the villages during winters. Some preferred to take their children with them to worksites to avoid them being left alone.



Lakshmi Prasad is a young boy of 14, who was brought to Bhuj about four weeks back by his brother-in-law from their village in Madhya Pradesh so as to initiate him into some kind of livelihood earning activity to support his parents back home. As we engage with various members of this migrant community that resides in a large open space opposite the Leva Patel Hospital on the Bhuj Mundra highway, Lakshmi is not difficult to spot in the crowd. He comes across as the only boy that age in the entire settlement of about 75 households. Lakshmi tells us that he was engaged for about 20 days as a labourer in Bhuj along with other family members by a contractor who hired them from Jubilee circle. He got himself about 50-60 rupees a day as he worked under someone in his family. Three weeks down that day, he is yet to receive his wages. And it is these wages that have kept him in Bhuj every extra day. Lakshmi has decided to go back home to his parents and village, much against the insistence of his family members to reconsider his decision. Lakshmi reveals that back in the village, he had studied in school till about class 5.



Lakshmi's elder brother left home some years back because of family responsibilities, choosing not to shoulder them. The responsibility has now shifted on to Lakshmi. As he speaks to us, he brings out several of the questions that make him more vulnerable at this tender age. He says he really wants to do something for his parents, but does not know how to make it happen. But he also says that if his parent's situation could improve in some way, he would not choose to work like this. For now, Lakshmi wants to go back home. As this community contains a very few number of children in the age group of 12-15 years (most of them are sent back to their villages at around the age of 6, where they are tended to by grandparents) Lakshmi is clearly bereft of the circumstances that can enable him to experience late childhood.



As we walk onwards, the cluster gives away to isolated groups of about 3-4 hutments strung along the road. Here we met Kunta, along with her little sister and brother, and neighbour Kamal (all under age 8), sitting outside their huts. They mentioned that they actually live with their grandparents in a village in north western Madhya Pradesh, while their parents live and work here. Back in the village, all of them go to school.

However, Kunta developed an ailment some months back which couldn't be cured back home. Her parents thus brought the children to Bhuj and began her treatment. They have been in Bhuj since the past two months or so, and remain in their hut the entire day as their parents leave for work in the morning and return around 6 pm. When her parents returned from work a little later in the evening, they mentioned that they were planning to send the children back in another week's time so that they could write their exams.

Right across the road, in a linear arrangement of about 9 hutments, we came across Ashok who had just returned home with his parents after their wage day. Ashok couldn't recall his exact age, but his father estimated it to be between 10 to 12. He accompanies his parents to Jubilee circle every day, and onwards to their worksite should they manage to get picked up for labour. Asked what he does at the work site while his parents are at work, he says 'nothing'. When asked whether he meets other such children at the site, he replies that sometimes I do, and sometimes I am alone. Ashok has



never been to school. Ashok is an only child, and that has made his parents, who also hail from a village in Madhya Pradesh, unwilling to leave him back in the village with his grandparents. They are also wary of leaving him alone in the hut as they embark on work every day as that would leave him vulnerable to threats from animals, vehicles and also strangers. They say that schools in the city ask for some kind of reference before admitting children, and in any case, school would be helpful only if it were timed in a way that their son would not be alone at any time.

### **Emerging questions**

#### ***The tendency to frame or use formal frameworks to ascribe the quality of aspiration and responsibility within an informal coping mechanism***

Amongst the migrant settlers themselves, all of whom have arrived here over varied number of years due to largely similar push factors, there comes across a sort of divide and distrust based on the nature of employment and permanence. Conversations in this direction often immediately moved on to the expenditure preferences of 'those' people (daily wagers), which included the 'need' to procure daily wages for spending on alcohol, and thus the denial of opportunities which did not bring in money at the end of the day for the purpose. The decision to remain engaged in daily wage labour is thus reflected upon as a choice to remain less regularised, and in a sense remain less dignified.

#### ***Generational movement of labour, finance and aspiration***

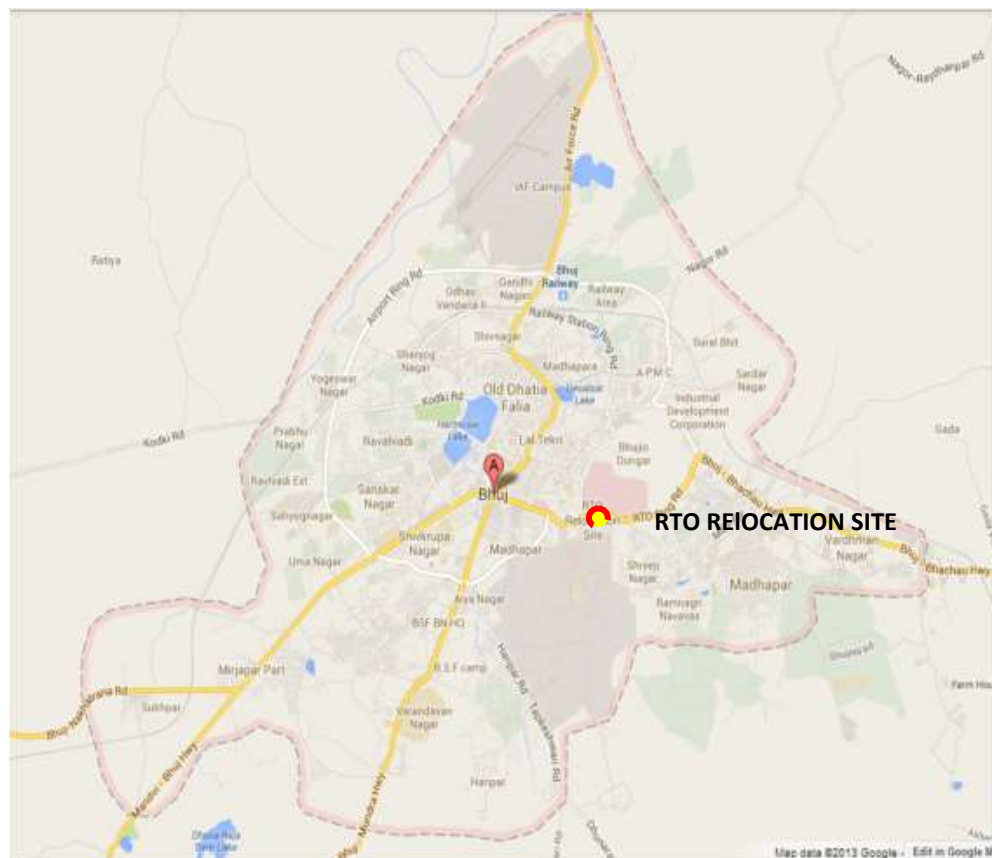
While it is typically assumed that the younger of the generations are those that leave homes into more transient living, this was challenged in a few cases where parents have arrived in the city for work while the son has stayed back in the village for livelihood and also where the parents are engaged in daily wage labour despite the son having a more stable monthly income and housing facility. There have been instances of elderly persons saving up and sending money for the education of their grandchildren. At the same time, we also came across a young boy of 14 who had been sent from the village to earn money for sustaining his parents back in the village. Interestingly, there has been a strong complementarity in the roles assumed by each generation in the overall coping mechanism of the family; however, the aspirational needs of these generations when it came to the perception of settlement and transience seemed to vary.

#### ***Location of children within the circles of migration***

Almost all the families hail from a common region in Madhya Pradesh and share a similar livelihood pattern. What clearly varies are the choices and priorities of the parents and their coping mechanisms with respect to the childhood of their children. In all the three circumstances, the one common aspect that emerged was the difficulty for the migrant families in the way of ensuring both an age-appropriate educational and social experience for their children. In most cases, it came down to a choice of either/or.

# *Location:* RTO Relocation Site

*Group Members:*  
**Ayush Maheshwari, Merlyn Mathew, Ranvir Kumar Singh,  
Ritika Sebastian, Ronjyoti Brahma**



## 3.2 RTO RELOCATION SITE

### About the Community

According to Merriam Webster dictionary, the word 'community' refers to the people with common interests living in a particular area. The community consists of a group of individuals of around 700 people originally belonging to the border areas of Rajasthan (Jhalawar) and Madhya Pradesh (Agar, Ratlam, Ujjain). The children seem to be the most vulnerable in this community.



Map 3.2-1 Migration pattern into Bhuj at RTO Relocation site

The community is a migrant group having seasonal and semi-settled characteristics of work. The former is due to the sowing and harvesting of agriculture crops in the native villages of the migrants. However, this characteristic is not present everywhere in the community. Few of them are settled migrants; those living for more than 8 years and don't possess land, a few are semi-settled who go back to their villages only during festival time.

The settlement consists of temporary huts with a small space to do the cooking. It is also used as a living room. It lies to the right of the Military Garrison and in front of the RTO office. To its left lies a private market complex. The settlement is around 80 m in breadth across the frontal road and 100 m in length through the RTO joining road.

The nature of the community here is very transient. Some of them frequently (in 2 months or so) visit their home and carry back the savings. The formal links of the banking system are invisible here partly due to the illiteracy levels and partly due to the bitter experiences of formal banking systems.

The caste configuration is largely homogeneous here. Chandravanshi descendents constitute the large part of the community and Suryavanshi descendents are in small numbers.

### Attitudes/behavioural pattern

Gender patterns are drawn right from childhood in terms of the age to start work or keep house. They don't feel the need for electricity or the need for children to go to school. Their loyalty stays with the village and some of them are ready to go back if their financial conditions get better. They are not resistant to change. When asked how they would feel about rental housing, they were willing to pay rent up to a day's wages.

### Nature of the settlement

A community that is settled but transient, they open up their space only to those new people coming from the same regional background. Established social networks and contacts through contractors and migrants who have been in the city for longer is what help them survive. There is no feeling of community or a clear leader to stand up for all. Even neighbours hardly interact with each other. Subah kamao, raat mein khao is their motto for earning, clearly stating that they prefer daily wages as opposed to a fixed income at the end of the month.

## History

According to Prakash Dyodi, about 12 years ago there were about 10 huts at the site. Also according to Premabai, the site was used to dump some debris after the earthquake. Many of the original huts were built using this debris. It is not clear, even to those living in the basti, as to who owns the land. We came across a range of answers namely RTO , Army or the Government, however the threat of displacement is not very real to them, they are very secure about the existence of the basti . But they realize that they have no claim over this land.

## Evolution of the Basti

As we know that the present area where the community is residing is just 12 years old. The settlement that we see today is not the same as it was earlier. Earlier only two to three households were there. Slowly and gradually as they got acquainted with the area and felt secure, they started calling their relatives and other family members. So if we look at the pattern of building the house one would see that there is some sort of fencing demarking few houses from the other few. So the one within the fencing belongs to same family or could be belonging to the same locality.

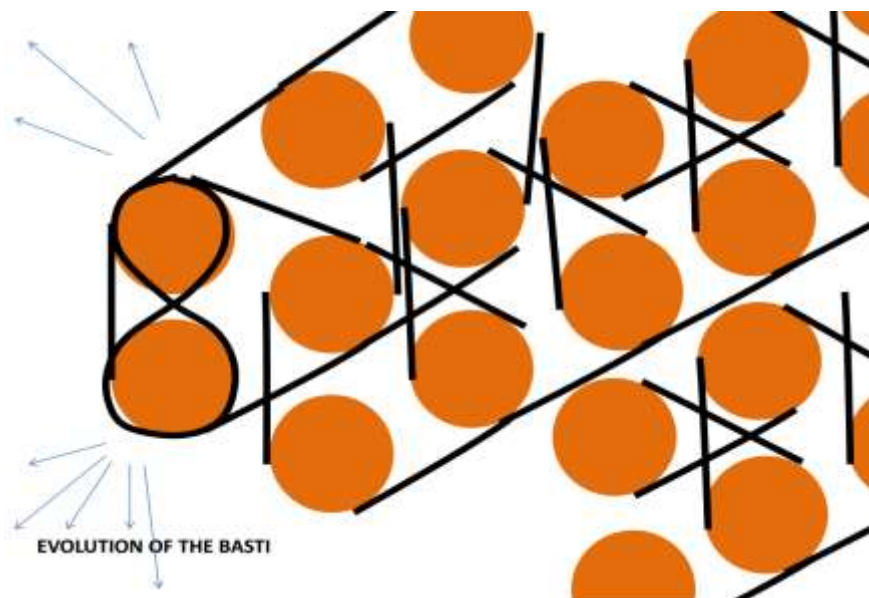


Figure 3.2--1 A typical depiction of community

The black line that we can see above is the fencing. The fencing is temporary in nature and made up of thorny bushes which are easily available. Within the community there is some kind of understanding and bonding but that can just be felt. The house within the fencing takes care of itself and it also prevents from being occupied by others. If new settlements are to come up they have to have known someone within the basti. Nobody can just walk in and start building a shelter. So the new settlements generally come up back of the basti. So the basti keeps on expanding but in a very slow manner.

## Resource Map

Before buying a house in town one would look for a good view, location, places nearby also resources available nearby. This typical pattern is also followed by the people migrating from one place to another. They don't just randomly select a place and built a house. They look for the availability of the water, fire wood, and area near to the work place or near to the area where they are picked up by the contractors. The community that we studied resides in a place which is some 1.6 km from the Jubilee circle. So they can easily walk till Jubilee circle and from there they are carried by the contractors till the working site. Jubilee circle is the place from where workers are picked for work by the workers.



Maps 3.2-2 Relocation site Community Map

They get the water from nearby vegetable godown and also from the fire brigade. They carry water in the container; each container has 10-15 litre capacity. Very often they are chased away by the owners of the godown. They even keep the container with them. So the people residing in the community have to take extensive care before going to fetch water. For cooking food they use fire woods. They get fire woods from nearby bushes.

The community does not have access to electricity. They use *diya* for lighting. For walking around they use the light from the mobile phone. When asked, they expressed deep sorrow regarding not having access to electricity. But they don't want to have chargeable lights as they reported to us that, the rag pickers often take away their valuable goods. The house that they built is of a wooden frame and covered with tarpaulin.

## Spatial Details

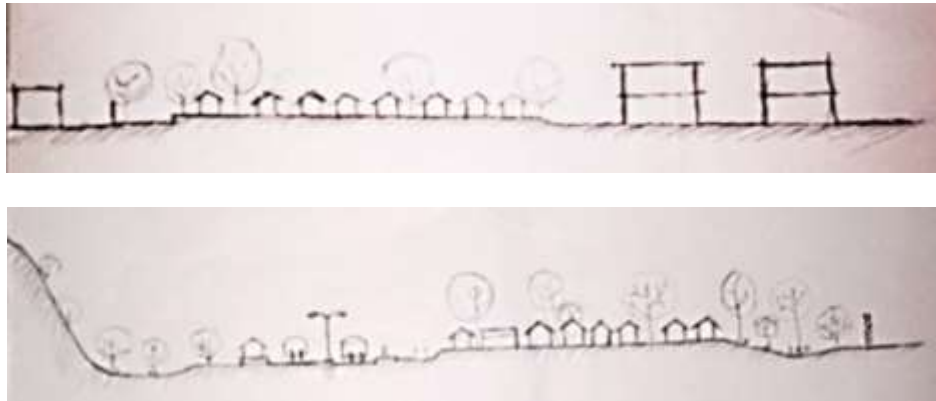


Figure 3.2-2 Section of community

Houses made of tarpaulin sheets and plastic and cloth, propped on a wooden framework is what meets us in the community. There is no hierarchy between the houses as they all are of the same character and very temporary. The way they live, concept of space is not one of ownership as they know that if they go to their home in the village for long, another family would occupy their place and they would have to occupy someone else's. To protect it from cattle, the hutments are secured with thorny brambles. A group of huts where relatives live together is cordoned off by a thorny fence and thus secures a larger open space. Some of them have smaller compounds secure with thorns and bushes.



Some of them get the cement to pave the floor from the construction sites they work at. The dimensions of the huts are roughly 6' by 4'. The huts have mere flaps covering the entrance and therefore offer no privacy.

## Social Networks

Within the settlement we found it difficult to locate a sense of community. People living there are not organized into one. There is no familiarity even among neighbours. The huts of the basti are organized in manner such that immediate relatives' lives in small huts around each other, and many times these smaller clusters are fenced. However, there is enough cooperation among them, for instance the neighbourhood family looks after the abandoned hut till the older residents return. However, the community is not expanding as new members are not allowed to reside there, except if they belong to their familial ties or are from their village. Therefore this settlement has grown slowly.



The social networks are instrumental for their survival in the city. The selection of destination city is by the experiences of their fellow villagers and some have relatives residing in Bhuj. It has encouraged inflow of migrants from the neighbouring region. They arrive and stay in the Bhuj through their relatives and acquaintance from their region. They also use these networks to find employment. These networks create a cyclical flow of workforce from a single region.

They have strong rural roots. They constantly go back and forth between their villages and cities. Migrants come to the city and live here for a long period of time. Most of them do not want to settle here and foresee going back to the village. Talking to them one realizes that we expected migrants to be men and women who are based in the rural areas and come to urban areas to find work. However, what has clearly emerged is that they are now based in the city and go back for work only during the harvesting and sowing seasons. But they don't feel that they belong to the city. Even after working here for twelve years they say that they are from their village. To belong to the city, Madhav Singh told us we need to own land and have a house here. This means that their life is always in a flux.

Going back to the village is an important part of the migrants' lives. They go back not only when work is abundant but also to maintain their social ties. They draw on support from their villages to live in the city. As most of their entitlements are registered in the village, they go back for the medical facilities, to vote and sometimes to even get ration.

### **Livelihood**

It is the prime reason for which people have migrated to Bhuj. The residents of the basti are mostly casual labourers. All of them gather at *Jubilee circle* in the morning where they wait for contractors to come and hire them for the day. Many of them prefer to work in pairs. After their 9a.m.-5p.m. shift they gather firewood while returning from work.

However a major problem they identified was that work has reduced. They work only for 15-20 days in a month. They feel this is because the number of people seeking work has increased. Some of them use whatever networks they have built to ask for work from contractors outside. Most of the residents of the settlement have a history of having travelled to other parts of the country as casual labourers before settling down in Bhuj. Most of the members of the basti we spoke to do not wish to continue travelling to other cities in search of work. However some people have found more permanent jobs. Like the three siblings who are now working inside the nearby army camp as casual labourers. We also met Mhadhav Singh, who based on his minimal education has found place in a brick company where he earns between rupees 12000-16000 working overtime.

Most of the people living in this settlement were agricultural labourers in their villages. The payment for work there is very meagre and erratic. It doesn't even cover their basic requirements for food on a daily basis; consequently many migrate to cities for subsistence needs. Some of them have been duped of their wages in the past when they work collectively with one contractor. Therefore, they prefer daily wages and work for longer days only with known contractors. All of them also have the burden of supporting their families back home. Most of those who live in the settlement don't have any assets within the family, they are landless agricultural labourers. And few among them have no more than 2-3 acres of land. Additionally, MGNREGA scheme of the Government doesn't function efficiently. The wages are only around Rs130-150 per day and only for a span of 2-3 months.



These people take each day as it comes earning just enough to survive and save some. Bhuj as a city has not only helped them overcome debts but also give them a reason to think and aspire. It provides them just enough for their current needs. It also gives them hope to aspire for more things in the future. Kaluram told us that his family will not return home even after he had paid off the debt he took for his brother's marriage, because he anticipates that his four year old son will need money to study and his marriage.

### **Credit**

On a daily basis they earn about Rs 250-300 individually and if they work as a couple they get 450-500. Of that, a large amount is spent on buying food. So they barely manage to save 100-200, provided they manage to get work (the figure varies from family to family). All the savings are managed by Maharaj ji, who runs a ration shop in the vicinity. When they deposit the money an entry is made into the diary of cash deposits and withdrawal. They are required to inform one day in advance before withdrawing. But the whole system of deposit and withdrawal is informal in nature and trust based.

Many people are forced to migrate to generate additional income to pay back various loans. They borrow from informal credit sources. The rate of interest is about 2- 5 % per month. In our discussions with a group of women in the settlement they told us that they find it hard to borrow in the city since they feel no one trusts them enough to lend. "Koi nahi deta hai" Thus for credit they rely on informal credit sources back in the village

Lack of savings and increase in expenditure has lead to the constant borrowing of money. Thus credit has become a constant part of their life cycle. Their meager savings does not cover their bulk expenditure; they are unable to save for the future in the long term. They have to constantly spend on a multiple occasions, often when someone falls ill or on weddings and festivals in the family. It not only drains their savings but they also have to borrow on top of that. On high interest informal credit, it takes years to repay even small amounts of loan.

Almost all the residents are Hindu. They celebrate all the festivals and marriage in a grand manner. So during this season they spent a huge amount of money. Some of them who are unable to save much are bound to take credit in order to meet the bar of spending. So in one way they are bound by traditions and rituals. For instance, respondent KishanLal ji donates Rs 10,000 per year for Ashapura Mataji and he continues to say that even when he is unable to work, he will not forget Ashapura Mataji and will go to the extent of begging in order to donate money. Religion has thus seems to have become a obstruction in making way for a better future.

### **Children**

In our lives we relate our childhood to school and holidays and curiosity about everything around us. The past few weeks we realized that childhood could also be like this. The community is scattered. The relations do not last- they do not form even. Neighbors do not know each other, families distance themselves from others. But a generation grows up together amongst all the chaos that happens here. Out of all the older children boys go to work while the girls stay at home to help with the house work. While among the younger ones there are proportionate number of boys and girls

The transient nature of their lives has affected them in negative ways especially in terms of education- in an age where they are supposed to be surrounded by books and learning teenagers, young girls, cannot write their own names themselves. Most of them are aware that education will lead to better livelihood opportunities. Parents have strong aspirations to educate them, but for that they leave the children back in the villages with the relatives.

However children do not like going to school as the school is far; teachers are strict and resort to corporal punishment.

We can categorize children as- young boys work as construction laborers, the girls in the same age group are stuck in the community all day, doing house work, mending things, collecting water, gathering firewood, playing with each other or taking care of the younger ones. The youngest children are taken to the site where they mostly play under the parents' supervision.

Very few of the parents have birth certificates for the children because they were born at home and not in hospitals. Most of them don't remember their date of birth or age, parents rely on memory to tell their age.

The children were very excited when we organized a drawing workshop for them. What was interesting to us was the fact that most drawings were depicting houses and their daily activities. More than the parents, it is the children who have a relationship with their house.



Health is another major issue and it was told to us that children died of illness. Some are affected by skin diseases. Parents also told us that NGOs conduct Polio camps for the small children. You can see it in their eyes when you ask about the future- parents and children both are aware of the fact that they will be casual laborers someday.

## Analysis

We have tried to recognise vulnerability under certain headings:

1. Health implications due to poor sanitation. Since the settlement is temporary in nature and there is no access to formal sanitation and water facilities, the only choice people of the basti have is to defecate in the open, which further leads to the health problems.
2. They claim that they are charged for the medical facilities in the government hospital. Hence for any major illnesses or health problems they return to the villages. Most of the women go back to their villages for child birth where children are rarely born in hospitals. Most of the children don't have birth certificates. There is no formal documentation of their age. Hence children don't know their age, and many times when asked the parents estimate from their memory. Kishsen lala ji told us that delivering a child in the hospital is an unnecessary expense. So they generally preferred delivery at home.

3. No local Id cards: Most of the people we spoke to had only their Voter id cards. While few have other forms of Id cards like Aadhar cards. All of these are registered on addresses back home and are not valid in any other state. However a trend we noticed was that most of the men were willing to show us their Id card which they removed even at the smallest mention of it. While the women only claimed to have them, none of them showed it to us.
4. Nomadic lifestyle: Move wherever they find work. Due to seasonal migration, they are constantly in a flux living in between the city and the village. Many of them have moved from city to city. Ratanlal ji has travelled most of his life to many cities in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and even Goa. This manner of living makes them very vulnerable, as none of the state policies support footloose migrants doing informal labour.
5. Women as a vulnerable section: none of the women we spoke to had come alone. They travel to the city in pairs, and find work in pairs. However women may not have a say in the when or where the couple may travel. Lali told us that she was simply brought here. She and her husband had also been to other cities to find work of which she did not know the names of. Most of the adolescent boys work outside, while older girls are left behind to do the housework. Is it then possible to conclude that most of these girls will be working only after they are married, if their in-laws permit?
6. Occupational Hazards: Recurring story we encountered was that of labourers who died or were seriously injured on the site. There is no labour law protecting them. They are all part of the informal economy working with the contractor on a daily basis. There is no way to hold them accountable for accidents on site. However it is generally understood that it is the contractor's responsibility. Many times they provide immediate medical aid and sometimes even pay compensation. However this depends on the contractor's good will and kindness.

## Stories from RTO Relocation Site

### *Grocery Store-keeper*

A woman who isn't shy talking to men, in an otherwise patriarchal community that requires the womenfolk to cover their faces with their ghoonghat (saree ends) when they come face to face with a male member of the community, Mrs. Rathore is the proud owner of the small grocery shop that caters to the everyday needs of the community. The community was not hers to call her own and she had never before ventured inside the community in spite of being an important part of their everyday lives.



**Figure 3.2-3 Store keeper and his temporary stall**

Also she projected herself to be unlike the rest, in terms of the jewellery she sported and the aspirations for her family and children. Being the youngest daughter in law of the entire family, people back in their native village also expected them to be present for all functions and rituals and also births and deaths. This warranted a visit back every 2 to 3 months. This was not taxing especially because Pata, Gujarat, where she hails from, can be reached overnight.

Her 3 children also exhibit these differences in terms of their way of communicating and the dressing. This might be her influence or it could be due to the fact that all three go to school (Oldest one in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, middle one in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and the youngest one in preschool). Education according to her was of primary importance.

Earlier, the family lived in front of the army base in the vicinity but were forced to shift due to security reasons. Their place of sleep is right behind their shop and this makes them prone to insecurities due to

their proximity to the road. They choose this as they need to protect their prime spot next to the road. Their little shop is a meeting place for people after a hard day's work. 9 years in the city of Bhuj has not changed their loyalties as they still identify themselves with their village and so do their identity cards create that strong ties back to the village. The husband and wife pair runs the shop together, her being the face of the shop when he is away on management affairs.

### *Ratan Lal, Kailash bai, Leelaben, Nirmala, Aneeta, Shankar*

Her tired face did not give away anything. When she handed us the small piece of paper all we could do was smile, embarrassed that I did not know the local language. But I tried. Immediately my smile faded, because here I was, holding the death certificate of her husband, a mere 2 months old. 55 years of age, he had met with an accident on site and succumbed due to cardiac arrest and multiple rib fracture. And this had to happen on the one day she had not accompanied him to the site and so found out only in the evening. The contractors refused to compensate and gave them money only to take the body back to the village for funeral. Leelaben had made Bhuj her home with her husband and 2 sons 8 years ago. She stayed near the talav earlier but after feeling tremors yet again after 2001 they moved to the current location as they feared that something would break and fall on them in the night or the children would fall into the talav. Her brother (35 years, educated up to 5<sup>th</sup> standard) and his wife followed her 3 years ago but he left his kids behind with the in laws in order to continue their education. This was one family willing to pay up to `500 for rental housing. Even though the rental housing system is of temporary nature, this would be a huge step in the direction of permanency on their part as they are willing to give up a day's wages.

Prior to coming to Bhuj TV, newspapers and the radio informed them about the earthquake. There is not much work in Bhuj as before—immediately after the earthquake there were many buildings to be built but not so much now. No agricultural work due to erratic rains or construction work exists for them back in the village also. Another

reason they moved from the village was that even with facilities like ration, where they are eligible to get 5 litres of kerosene, the shopkeeper gives them only. They go back only for festivals. Apart from agriculture, they did the work of digging wells in their village. When they go back to the village they borrow money from the seth as no one is ready to give them loans in the city. When expenses increase their borrowings increase and it is to repay these loans that they have come to the city.

Under IAY, the government gives `50000 to BPL families to construct a pakka house with permanent walls and roofing. To get this sanctioned for his family he had to bribe the officials with `5000. They belong to the servants caste/harijan- chamar, chandravanshi—According to him, no upper caste people come to the community.

They wake up between 5 and 6 am every day and go to Jubilee Chowk by 8AM. Even a little late and they could miss out on the opportunity to work. 3 years back they worked for `80 to `100 per day and now work for up to `500 for a couple. Leelaben who has been here for longer has even worked for `70. This shows how the wages have increased in the last ten years. The big girls look after the little ones and stay at

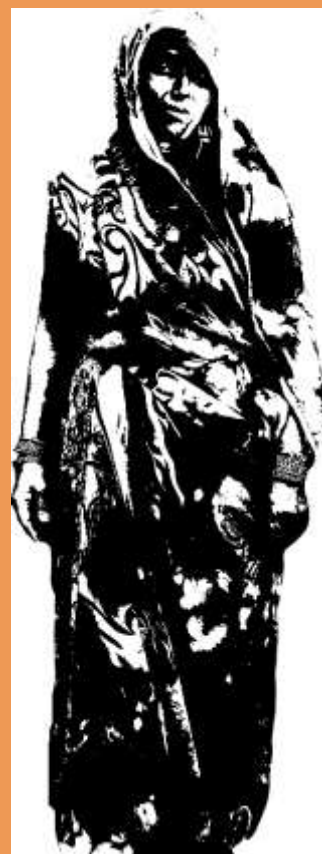


Figure 3.2-4 Leelaben, Ratanlal ji's sister



Figure 3.2-5 The extended family lives close by

home. Most of the children here haven't seen the insides of a classroom in the past one year. For their resources, they depend on the nearby shops and bazaar for groceries, get water from the banana godown, Nagarpalika or the fire station that are nearby but sometimes are chased by the owners. There are days when even he does not get work. Contractor eats up the money sometimes.

In the night there is absolutely no light and cannot see even close to the road for the light from the vehicles. Most often they sleep by 8 or 9PM.

Everyone is from different places even if they are from the same states. No one helps out the other. Everyone is concerned about the survival of himself and his family here or back in the village. Sometimes the menfolk get drunk in the hut next door but they avoid interfering in that also. Those people that stay in the immediate vicinity, they can recognize and acknowledge. But those living in the other corner of the community they feel they have nothing to do with.

When they fall sick, they travel overnight to their village in order to go to the government hospitals there as it is cheap. But here in the community, polio camps were conducted by NGOs for kids.

### *The Dukaan people- Lalli and Madhav Singh- the contrasts*

Here is a contrast in terms of all aspects. One is an 18 year old male while the other is a married woman, also a mother of 23. While Lalli has been in Bhuj for 5 years, recently (1 year), the owner of a grocery shop on the road, Madhav Sing, a neighbour has been here for only 3.

She went to school when she was little but had to quit as she started working young and got married early. First 2-3 years of her marriage were spent in the village itself. They moved to the village for a job as a Mazdoor. When they couldn't find enough work, they put up the shop and are making just enough to survive every day. They save their earnings, if at all, at the shop of Maharaj. Madhav though has studied till 10<sup>th</sup> standard and while his uncle got him enrolled in a college he had a fight at home and ran away from the village to the city of Bhuj. He works for BKT Company near the community and earns up to 12000 per month. Sometimes he does overtime and earns extra stipends. He regrets the fact that he missed out on going to college. He feels learned people can claim better jobs. He goes to his village once in a year if there is some work at home but he stays away from parents because he can't be bent to do agricultural work.

The community according them generally borrows money from the seth who stays in Bhuj camp. Their general claim is that if one does not have a building to his name in the city, they cannot call themselves of the city. Also documentation purposes require the house number which they do not have. Isn't it time that even these people had something that could call their own?

Madhav Singh is an avid traveller and takes off to places across Gujarat along with his friends. Not one to be bogged down by his fixed salary that comes at the end of the month, he often works overtime and receives extra amounts. With an average of 2000rs being spent on trips and 10000 rs being sent home, he still has excess money to survive the month. Lalli also has been to a lot of places before settling in Bhuj but she is not aware of the names. She does not know how to calculate in the shop and depends on her husband for all purposes. Only when he goes to collect items for the shop from the bazaar does she man the shop.

The delivery of her baby happened in the hospital in the village and she has the birth certificate for baby not for herself as her parents did not find the importance she feels. Now they're aware of the benefits of the birth certificate in terms of schooling. Madhav Singh does not miss the village as he often talks to his parents on the phone.

***Kaluram, Pooralal from Manchor MP, construction worker***

Kaluram and family have been in Bhuj for the past 3 years. The house they reside in presently was built by the previous owner who according to the neighbours was not going to return any time soon from his native village. He used to stay on site earlier but this required them to start work early and leave the site late and so it has been 6 months after settling in the present location.

His father, Puralal, 70 years of age, lives with him and also goes to work. His mother and brother reside in the village. Kaluram says that sometimes they don't get work all month. Every 6 months or sometimes even a year they go to the village and stay for 15-20 days, get loan and return. His recent expenditure and loans therefore, for his brother's marriage is what is on the top of his mind.

In spite of his present living conditions, Kaluram and family are very upbeat about living in the city where they get everything. No dadagiri happens in the city and they live in peace, he says. To come to this level of comfort in their existing situation and to be able to smile and be content, one must lend a heart to the pitiable conditions that might have bogged him back in his village. And these stories he did not want to reveal.

They earn up to `500 every day for a couple. They save money at Maharaj's shop like a lot of others in the community. When asked if he can read what is recorded in writing in his notebook he says no but proudly says that his son who has studied till class 6 helps him in understanding. His son used to study in the village but refuses to stay without his parents so has now come to the city. In the night, they sit near the road, since they live close to the main road and they get some form of light from the vehicles. For groceries he goes to the bazaar, does not buy from the roadside shops. Sometimes he gets work at the army base.

He finds contractors good people and says that they pay medical bills if there has been any physical injury on site. This couple does not find festivals important and go to the village only when there is less money. To send money back home, he deposits money into someone else's account in the village and his brother withdraws the cash in the village. He used to earn `150-250 in the village.

He had come alone earlier post the earthquake in Bhuj but did not like it that time as no one from their village used to be there, but now it does not feel like they have left the village as everyone around them is from the same place and speak the language. He does not say though that once the loans are repaid that he would go home. According to him there are no end of the expenses- if now it is buying something for his brother's baby, then in a while it would be his son's marriage or an illness in the family. They do not like the moving lifestyle and want to reside in the city only- yaheen rahengen, makaan banayenge.

### **Kishenlal Ji and Sapna**

Children of the basti present another aspect of migration. The uncertainty in one's life and its transient nature makes it difficult to categorise them as a community. Most of them spend the day together and all of them know each other irrespective of the village they come from. Unlike their parents, they can even talk in Gujarati. Thus if one was to look for a community in the basti, it will be only among these children.

For most of the children, their stories start in the basti, unlike that of their parents. We sat down with Sapna, a young girl who was more than enthusiastic to let the new didis into their lives, to know about her and her family members. She does not know her age, none of the children do. Their parents almost always rely on memory. Most of them don't have a birth certificate as these children were not born in the hospital. Their lives are not remembered in bare facts or dates. We guessed she must be 12 years old and looked like the oldest amongst her friends. She sure was the tallest. There was a time when she attended school in her village but had to move here with her parents. She remembers her strict teacher in the fourth standard and a few alphabets. She lives with her father, a sister and two brothers. Kishanlal ji is one of the initial settlers in the basti losing his wife and a son to illness. He had some hired help to look after the motherless children. The woman and her son refused to be part of our discussion. The boy maybe a few years older than her and never troubled her, his mother did though.

The children confined themselves to the basti, spending most of their time collecting water, cooking, taking care of very small children and some of playing *dulha dulhan*, *sapna*, always and the groom. We asked her her aspirations for the future but the blank look we received was a clear sign that future was not what they gave much thought to. None of the children in the basti are disillusioned enough to aspire more than what their parents do today. She described to us her experience of having worked in the village, in farms contributing to the family earning.



**Figure 3.2-6 Kishanlal ji and family**

Electricity is an essentiality but here it is a rarity. When the sun sets, life halts here. The light on the fringes are the generosity of the street lights but in the middle of the settlement, it is the courtesy of the mobile torch. Kishanlal ji, aged 50, a widower is striving hard to sustain his two daughters and a teenage son. He was drinking alcohol when earthquake happened stolen cleverly during the raid on illegal alcohol. He is in Bhuj for the last 15 years, though it cannot be independently verified. He worked as a security guard earlier and now a manual labor toiling at this age for the children's sustenance. His son and wife had earlier died in this settlement due to lack of affordable health and now his family is suffering from the fungus-related infection (scabies) and consequently his son is not able to find work.

When he arrives back from work and winter sun sets early, it is the mobile torch which provides the light for the making of dinner. He charges his mobile on the site of his work which is the only thing for which electricity is needed. However, electricity has been offered by nearby grocery store for the settlement for 300 but people refused to pay for it. The mobile phone has changed their way of living in night by providing entertainment. Kishanlal ji bought 1100W battery to run bulb, television but battery died soon after. The constant fear of theft from the huts thwarts them to buy anything *luxurious*.

We spend couple of hours in the settlement when it was dark, only the moon was a source helping us to make our way inside the settlement. Burning of fuel wood for cooking was other sources of light. Perennial inflow and outflow from the settlement adds as a barrier in making relations with the neighbours. It is a seemingly pessimistic settlement in an effort for an optimistic future.

## Shambhulal

### “Din me kamao , raat me khao” ( Work during day and eat at night )

The story is of Shambhulal ji, who is regular manual labourer but with different responsibilities and experiences. He had been deceived of his rightful money thrice in his 11 years of work experience as a manual labourer. He migrated from his village from Chomela in Jhalawar district of Rajasthan after his marriage at the age of 15 years.

He is illiterate and before migrating he used to graze goats in his village. His father's name is Ramlal and has 2 younger brothers and a younger sister. The family married off his sister with great fanfare and spent around 2 lakh money with no interest rate. They took debt from number of relatives to manage the money. He adds money to pay back the debt.

He arrived in Bhuj in search of work like other labourers who had heard about this place from people who stayed in Bhuj and found consistent and better-paying work. But the bitter experiences taught him not to engage in long duration contractual work. He solicits long duration work only from known contractors. Trade-off between risk of long duration and loss of work for the day is visible here.



His trusted contractor is the labourer-turned-contractor who doesn't pay less instead he pays more and helped him with the police. Once he was incorrectly caught by the police for theft in a certain area when he was coming late from the work but his contractor saved him from that situation. The understanding of the contractor of the situation of the labourers is of importance to the people working under him.

The children and family of Shambhulal ji has been left at home. His wife stays back at the village taking care of his parents; he had a child in 2010. The general tendency in this settlement is to be accompanied with wife and children, if not able to take care of them. Shambhulal ji is alone and that gives him added mobility to search for work in other areas.

He had no idea about the working site the day he arrived at Bhuj. He just knew that there is lots of job opportunities in Bhuj which he got to know from the friends in Rajasthan. Since he had no contacts with the contractors he had to roam around for few days. Finally one fine day he got to know about construction of dam and there he managed to get a job. Slowly and gradually as he got to know about the people there he came across the labour turned contractor. Since then he has been working with him.

Shambhulal ji usually goes back to his home during festive season such as Holi , Raksha-Bandhan, Diwali and take back whatever money he has collected. He keeps savings with the *pandit ji*, local general store shop owner. A diary of deposits and withdrawals is kept and entry is made when transaction takes place. No interest is credited to the account of depositors. The informal banking system in the cities is of common occurrence throughout this settlement. The inability of the reach of the financial system either in his home village and city is seen. The *hassles* (emphasis added) of the formal banking system influence their decision for the choice of informal banking. Also, he perceives formal banking system as the method to get money directly in his account as a consequence of the government scheme





Map 3-2-3 Site Plan, for the purpose of understanding pathways and exits



Figure 3.2-7 Community map drawn by people

## Reflections

ये लोग मध्य प्रदेश, राजस्थान के रहने वाले हैं। ये लोग भूकम्प के बाद यहाँ आए, उस समय यहाँ काम भारत सरकार तथा कुछ सामाजिक संस्थानों की मदद से, जोर-शोर से चल रहा था। अतः इन्हें हर दिन रोजगार मिल जाया करती थी। इस तरह देखा-देखी यहाँ लोगों का हजूम आता चला गया, और देखते ही देखते यहाँ पहले दो-चार झोपड़ी अन्ततः बस्तियों में बदल गयीं। और फिर शुरु हुआ कशमकश जिसमें सामाजिक संस्थान के अलावा सरकार भी दिलचस्पी लेने लगी। हर लोगों की अलग-अलग कहानियाँ, कोई बेहतर आजीविका की तलाश में तो कोई घर से भाग के आया हुआ, हर लोगों की अपनी शिकायत, मगर सभी की कठिनाई लगभग समान थी। ये लोग हर दिन जुबली मैदान ( Jubilee Circle ) काम खोजने के लिए इकट्ठा होते थे, पर उनमें से कई को खाली हाथ भी वापस आना पड़ता था। ये लोग बताते हैं कि महीने में १५-२० दिन रोजगार मिल जाता है।

हम लोगों ने सामाजिक क्रियाओं के बारे में जानने की कोशिश की तो उन्होंने बताया सभी शाम को थक के आते हैं और खाना खा कर सो जाते हैं। यहाँ कोई झगड़ा नहीं करता यहाँ कोई चोरी नहीं होती। वह कहते हैं कि हम सभी मजबूरी के शिकार हैं इसलिए एक-दूसरे का ख्याल रखते हैं, शांति से जीते हैं और तो और यह कहते हैं कि दूसरे राज्य वालों को बसने नहीं देते हैं। वे बिहार तथा यूपी. वालों से खासकर अलग रहना चाहते हैं। उनका मानना है कि वे हमारे बहू-बेटियों को भगा ले जाते हैं।

हम महसूस कर रहे थे हर तरफ रोशनी जगमगाने लगी थी मगर यह जगह क्रमशः अंधेरे के गर्त में समा रही थी मानो कि अथाह समुद्र के बीच में कोई टापू समुद्र की लहरों को अविराम निहार रहा हो, यह रोशनी उनके लिए खजानों से कम नहीं है। एक छोटे से दिये तथा अलाव की हल्की सी उजालों के इर्द-गिर्द इनका जीवन सिमटा हुआ है। इतनी कठिनाइयों के बावजूद इनके जीवन में निजता, ईमानदारी और नैतिकता की भावना झलक रही थी।

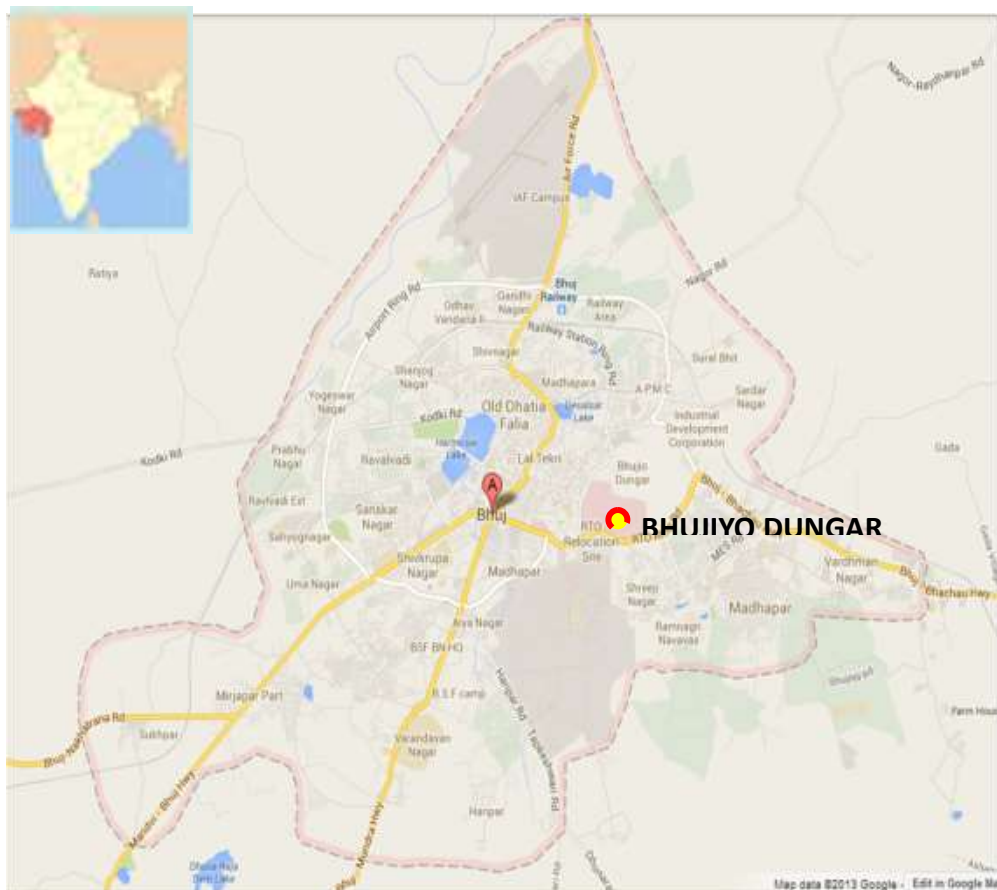
हमारे तरफ बुजुर्ग लोग कहते हैं कि उम्दा शिकार की तलाश हो तो जल के किनारे बैठना होता है। कुछ महिलाएँ पानी भरने लगीं इतने में एक व्यक्ति अन्दर से आ कर उनके डिब्बे छिन लिए, स्त्रिया कह रही थी कि डिब्बे वापस कर दो पर उन्हें झिड़क कर भगा दिया, वह लाजार निगाहों से मेरी तरफ देख रही थी शायद इस आशा में कि हम डिब्बे वापस दिलवा सके लेकिन हम मौन होकर बैठे थे।

इस बारे में उन लोगों से बात कि तो पता चला कि जब मर्जी होती है तो देते हैं। नहीं हम २०० मीटर दूर नगरपालिका के पास से पानी लाते हैं। सेठ से बात कि तो पता चला कि बहुत परेशान करते हैं नहीं देंगे तो चुरा कर ले जाएँगे। वह भी तो आदमी है। यह लोग रात को पीकर आते हैं और झगड़ा करते हैं। यह लोग ऐसे ही हैं।

हम सोचते हैं क्या इनका कोई स्वाभिमान नहीं, कोई गुरूर नहीं, और नहीं तो क्यो शायद समाज की कुचक्र भरी नीतियाँ इन्हें अपने घुटनों पर टिकाकर अपाहिज बना दिया हो जहाँ से ये निकलने को सोच नहीं सकते या फिर हमारी तरह रहनुमाओं की ओर टकटकी लगाकर निरन्तर देखते रहते हैं।

*Location:*  
**Bhujiyo Dungar**

*Group Members:*  
Avadhoot Abhyankar , Hari Vallabhi, Nikita Dcruz



## 3.3 BHUJIYO DONGAR

### Introduction

What is conventionally called a *community* refers to a group of people having a common identity which defines them and makes them a unit. In this case, the inhabitants of the Bhujio Dongar settlement in the heart of the city have a geographical disposition. The fifty families living on different sides of bhujia hill are quite literally living life on the edge, owing to the fact that their houses are located at the extreme edge of the slopes of the hill.



Figure 3.3-1 Settlement 1: been evacuated to fringe 3 weeks ago.



Figure 3.2-2 Settlement on left side of Bhujia Dongar for more than 2 years

## History

Bhujia hill is a historically significant spot as it is a fort constructed during the Mughal era in the country in an attempt to fortify the city from foreign invasions. Thus, the city of Bhuj derives its name from this very Bhujio Dongar itself. The fort suffered great damage during the earthquake of Bhuj, but is now being reconstructed as an earthquake memorial and will house a museum, a sunset point, and an eco park, as per current plans. For this purpose, the two settlements that have been living on the hill for the last 8 years for a few months each year will be forced to resettle to another part of the town. As of now, the government officials have managed to push these settlements to the fringes of the hill, leaving less than 2 feet between each house and the edge of the hill.

## Demographics

The settlements are originally from different areas of Madhya Pradesh but mostly concentrated from the districts of Ujjain, Shajapur, and Agar. These settlements have a diverse timeline as families have been living here for ten years and as recent as 3 months. The settlement is located around Bhujjiya hill, near fire brigade office, and there are around 50 dwelling units.

They started coming to Bhuj after the earthquake in 2001, where they heard about better work opportunities. They came to city with some contacts of their relatives or neighbors in village. Almost everybody came here along with their family (husband, wife and children), their parents are still in the villages, usually their younger children are with them in Bhuj, and few elder children are in their villages for education

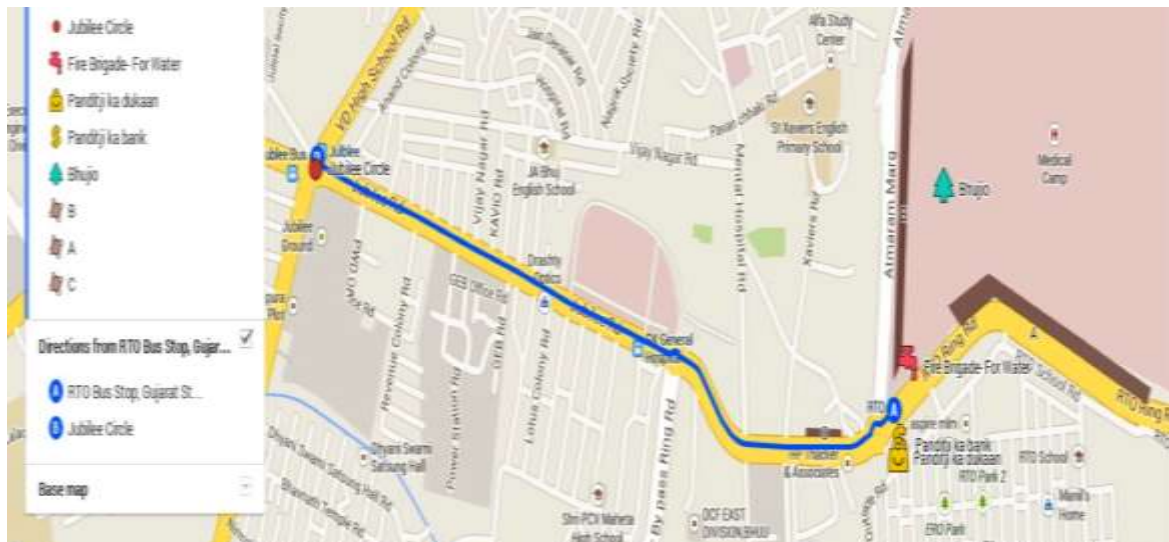
Although the government's MNREGA scheme has been claimed to have been executed in their respective villages, the scene on ground is that the projects have been executed with machinery while on record human labor is said to have been employed (people claim the Sarpanch, respective district authorities all hold a nexus) *'Jahaan ka Sarpanch aacha, wahaan MGNREGA chalta hai warna Sarpanch aur Sarkar milkar ghar baandh lete hai paison se.'*

Families that we spoke to went back to the village for all their important social needs. Most of the rites of passage- birth, marriage and death ceremonies were held in the village as the people have family and a sense of belonging to their origins. Most of them also had fragmented land that was not enough to sustain the family.

## Resources

The Bhujio – hosts the native flora – dry shrubs etc. that serve as lakdi/ firewood. Wood is also used to make the frame for the structure. Water although is in some cases collected from a nearby tank? The fire station now serves water twice a day (morning and evening). The forest also serves to create minimum privacy and defecation points.

Unlike a settlement that spans out on flat terrain, this settlement finds its place on the low hilly terrain of Bhujio at the foothills of the fort. The land belongs to the Forest Department.



Map 3-3-1 Resource map

As one can see below, the resources of the settlement, mainly water, sanitation, fuel etc. are concentrated in the surrounding area. The fire brigade is the chief source of water for the settlement where they go twice a day to fill water provided by them for free. Fuel which is firewood is collected from the dongar itself, which is also sold to make profit sometimes. The wood for the construction of the *zhopada* is also taken from the dongar. The people also use the dongar to complete their daily absolutions.

Electricity is not available to the settlement. As a result, their daily schedule seems to depend on sunlight. They come back in the evening and cook before sunset, sometimes also finishing dinner by that time. Due to unhygienic sanitary conditions around their community, there is threat of health hazards. The nearest government health center is around 3-4 km away. Here too, they have to pay check up fees up to Rs. 30/- & separate expenses for medicines.

This is a basic profile of the settlements at Bhujia dongar.

## Housing

*The word house itself was a debate. When we asked a woman, aapka ghar kab baandha aapne, she corrected us saying 'ye ghar thodi hi hai, ye zhopada hai. Ghar to gaon me hai'*

The structure of these houses is temporary in nature and stands on wooden poles covered with tarpaulin sheets or cloth which provides its cover. Each family spends around Rs 600-800 to build these units within 2-3 days. It has an opening which is the door and also the only form of ventilation. The size of this tent-like structure is 4-5' tall, 6-8' long and about 4' wide. This makes it a cramped sleeping space for more than one, or at



Figure 3.3-3 Type of housing

the most 2 people. But usually one would see at least 3 adults and 2 children in each family.

Inside the houses, we saw thin beddings and pillows, mostly on bare ground. The cooking fires of some houses were outside and others inside. When asked about it they said that those who have smaller children with them keep their cooking fires inside so as to keep the house warm while others keep them out. Their cooking stoves were mostly chulhas made of mud and for fuel they use firewood.

There is no security to their possessions when they go to work. There is no electricity in their huts, so they have to cook their dinner before it gets dark, so if someday they come late in the evening then it becomes difficult to cook in the dark. They face this problem also in the winter season when days are shorter. Their shelters are not enough full proof for rain & cold so, their health is always at the risk.

The structure of the house being made up of flammable material can also be hazardous, especially because of the Chula fires, though none of the respondents mentioned it explicitly.

### Livelihoods

The settlement derives its major livelihood from manual labour on construction sites. This labour is mainly on a day to day basis. Hence most of the men and women in the settlement work as daily wage earners at construction sites. Underlined below are the reasons for the migration of this settlement to Bhuj and the reasons for them being involved in this means of livelihood.

### Causes for migration

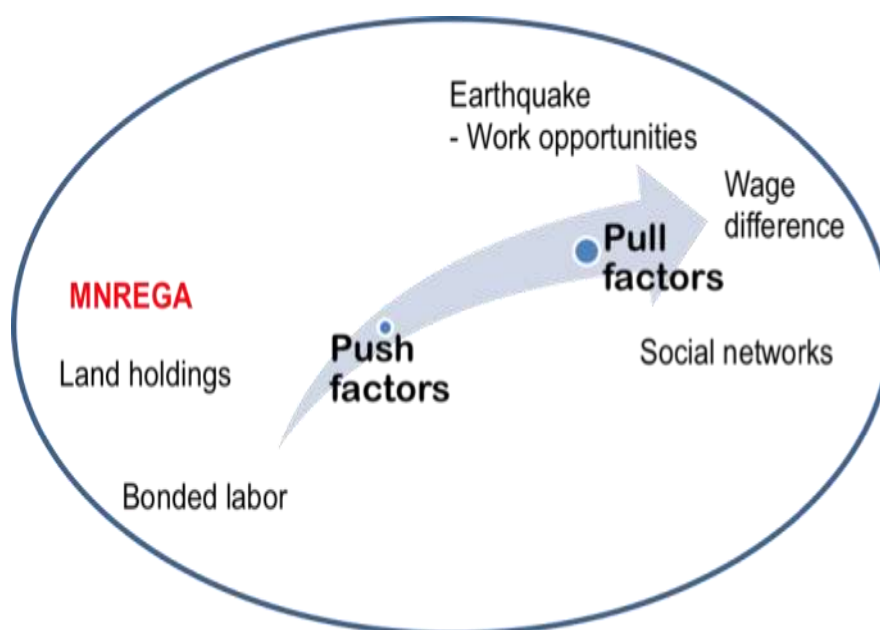


Figure 3.3-4 Diagram on push and pull factors of livelihood

### *The Push factors*

- Land holdings become fragmented as ownership is transferred down generations and the returns from one's tract of land become insufficient to sustain one's family through a year. In this case migration happens during the dry spells.

- Those who had worked as daily wage agricultural labourers, were paid around Rs 10,000 a year. Work was obtained on an oral contract basis and if one had to quit mid-way through the year, the compensation to be paid was double.
- The Central government's NREGA scheme has been said to have been implemented in their respective villages. However the situation on ground is that the projects have been executed with machinery while on record human labour is said to have been employed. Thus the very scheme developed to contain migration fails at the operational level. The people lose the opportunity to work in their native villages despite the government's employment guarantee scheme and are thus forced to look at the city for employment opportunities.

### ***The Pull factors***

- Post the earthquake of 2001 at Bhuj, with reconstruction work beginning to happen on a massive scale, it opened up opportunities for migrants to do construction work in the city.
- With members of extended family beginning to work in cities and in some way establishing familiarity, the perception of risk in leaving the village to work in the city is considerably reduced.
- The difference in incomes between those received in the village and city is a significant amount despite expenses on basic necessities in the city. Earnings have increased from Rs. 100 per day post 2001 to Rs. 300 in 2013, for unskilled labour on construction sites.

***'Bhukamp ke baad suna ki Bhuj me bahut kaam hai, to chalte chalte pahunch gaye'***

**Table 3-1**Daily Activities of migrants at Bhujija Dongar

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>04-05AM</b>	fetch water from the Fire Brigade office (or) from the pipeline
<b>05-07AM</b>	cook breakfast and lunch, get ready to work
<b>07-08AM</b>	have breakfast, pack lunch, walk to Jubilee Circle
<b>08-09/10AM</b>	wait at Jubilee circle for contractors, to obtain work for the day (if not, return home for the day)
<b>09/10AM-05/06PM</b>	Work at construction sites (Lunch from 01-02PM)
<b>06-09PM</b>	Cook dinner before it turns dark and rest



- Men and women work as a pair, and are paid from Rs500-600 per *joda* per day, the split being Rs 300 for the man and Rs 200 or Rs 300 for the woman; sometimes Rs 50 extra for working more than half an hour.
- People work on Sundays as well.
- Labour is unskilled and learnt by experience on site.
- Some of the workers hold cards issued by contractors, if they're on regular employment for particular sites.
- Instances of being left unpaid for 4-5 days are also noted.

### Source of work

#### Jubilee Circle



Figure 3.3-5 Men and women gathered at Jubilee circle for work

*On December 08<sup>th</sup>, a Sunday, the team visited Jubilee Circle. Being there from around 09AM to 11AM the team noted observations at Jubilee Circle.*

Jubilee Circle being an important node, (the juncture of many important roads) at the heart of the city, it becomes the place where they obtain work from various contractors who require labour for work on construction sites. The migrants leave early and try to be at Jubilee Circle by 08AM, so that they get work early, as the later they arrive, the lesser the chances of getting work for the day.

The men wait along the sides of the road, negotiating with the contractors who come on two or four wheelers. The women and children wait on the road medians. If work is obtained, they're taken in contractor's vehicles or in chakkadas (paid for by the contractor). If not they wait till

10.30 or 11.00AM beyond which if work isn't obtained they leave back for home and the entire day is unproductive. Work on site can take a little later than 06 PM as there is no fixed time to leave, and transportation cost for returning home are covered by the contractor.



Figure 3.3-6 Jubilee Circle even at 10 am on a Sunday

### Work environment



Figure 3.3-7 Construction labourers at a site near Geeta Market, Bhuj

On the same day, on getting in touch with a contractor, the team was offered to be allowed a visit to a construction site where people had come to work from Jubilee Circle.

Most workers have obtained shoes to work on site while very few are provided with any gloves. As most of them are constantly involved in working with cement and like materials their hands are prone to becoming rough. Instances of accidents have also been noted.

### Migration pattern

The pattern of migration in the settlement is well defined, given a few exceptions. The people in this settlement are mainly seasonal migrants. Here is a diagrammatic representation of their seasonal migration chart, highlighting the time they return to their villages, and the chief purposes for their return-

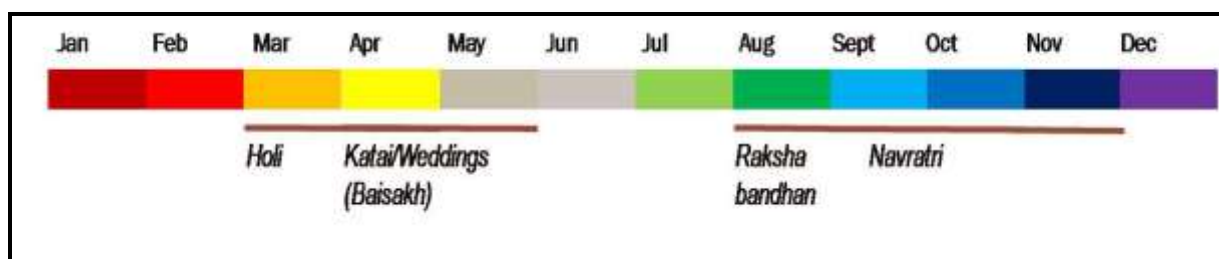


Figure 3.3-8 Migration pattern of the settlement

The observations gained from the community were as follows:

- The community went back to their families during religious festivals, birth, marriage and death rituals
- Chief religious festivals included Raksha Bandhan, Navratri, Diwali and Holi
- The marriage season as was told to us was primarily in the month of Baisakh, which is also around the time of harvest
- When asked whether they go home for helping their family with harvesting, half the respondents said no, while the other half said yes. The people who said no said that they already had family members who were working on the land in the village, and they weren't needed for it.
- This chart highlighted a pattern of two seasons where the families of the settlement go back to their homes in the village. The summer months and the post rain season. This shows that the community is in the city for around 6-7 months while they go back to the village for the rest.

*Another woman said, 'jab paise jama ho jaate hai, tab ghar chale jaate hai. Jab khatam hua to waapas aa jaate hai'*

Among the most seasonal migrants who go back to their villages during the months around monsoon for agriculture and related activities, the team met Balu ji who did something entirely different. What follows is his story.

### ***Balu Ji ki kahaani***

Balu ji is about 50 years old and lives on Bhujjiya Dongar with his family, his brother and his brother's family. He talks about a time in the past when he did not have ancestral agricultural land and worked in his village as an agricultural laborer in his village that came under the Ujjain district in Madhya Pradesh. But during the congress regime in the state around the 1990's, he received 2.5 acres of land through a land redistribution scheme in Madhya Pradesh. 'Digvijay Singh ji ke raj me', as he remembers it. He started cultivating this land in the little that his family had received; this helped him sustain his family without migrating.



But 6 years ago, In the Narmada damn project, he ended up losing his land along with many others to the progress of the state. This has led to a situation where during the months of monsoon and a few months following it, his land is completely submerged under the damn water but around summer and before monsoon when the water levels decrease, he is able to cultivate one crop. He plants wheat in this season.

Owing to this, Balu ji, who at one point in time was benefitted by a government scheme has later been displaced and forced to migrate by another. A man who was fending for himself and his family by staying in the village and cultivating his land has now been forced to move out with his family and work and only return back when the water in the damn decreases.

The damn projects in the country have displaced millions of people, and the government claims to have made necessary arrangements for the displaced and their distress. But Balu ji told the team that the government has done absolutely nothing for the fact that his land is submerged under water.

Such was the exceptional story of Balu ji and his family.

## **Social Structure**

### **Children**

The average family size of the houses within the settlement is around 3 adults and 2 children. There are more than two adults per family as relatives from villages are constantly coming to stay with them. As for the children, a specific age group can be found all throughout the settlement while another group is conspicuously missing.



**Figure 3.3-9 Children from the settlement**

Children between the age groups of 0-6 can be found here while 6-15 are back in the village, mostly studying in school. The young children are taken to the construction site with the parents while the infants are usually kept back, one woman in the family stays back to look after them. Sometimes, an older sibling may be kept back to look after the younger ones, depending on the need for both the husband and wife to work.

Children at the work site were exposed to danger, said some parents and also members linked to the community that we spoke to. Accidents were not uncommon especially with children running truant or falling into ditches, etc.

On the other hand, among children who were studying in school, many came back to the city to work as laborers once their schooling was over. This seems to show that education may not have the desired effect on the future of the child. One respondent who spoke to our team said he was a contractor but belonged to the same region as the settlers. In response to the question of how he had graduated from laborer to contractor he said that his knowledge of basic mathematics and some understanding of raw materials had helped him elevate to a better job. This may indicate that a good basic education with analytical skills may go a long way in helping the children of the community achieve better for themselves.

This highlights the problem of the susceptible nature of the children of this settlement to the dangers of the workplace as well as the loss of an initial phase of schooling. The team was told that once, few years ago, a local ashram decided to open a school for the children of the community while the parents went to work. But since the curriculum was in the Gujrati the children dropped out one by one. This also helps understand that any school for children in the area will have to be modeled to fit the medium of instruction and the long working hours of the parents in order to be effective.

### **Networks**

The networks by which people came to the city were mainly word of mouth between villages in a particular region. Marital ties was important as that is how people from different villages came to know each other and become related to each other, thus later helping each other migrate, and even housing the new migrants till they settle down.

The team spoke to Gopal ji and his family of four; his wife Radhika, his uncle's son Chetan and his brother in laws brother Vishal who were living in the same house, along with Gopal's five year old daughter Sunita. The family tree can be drawn in the following manner. Gopal's other uncle Madan ji and his family were also living a few houses away.

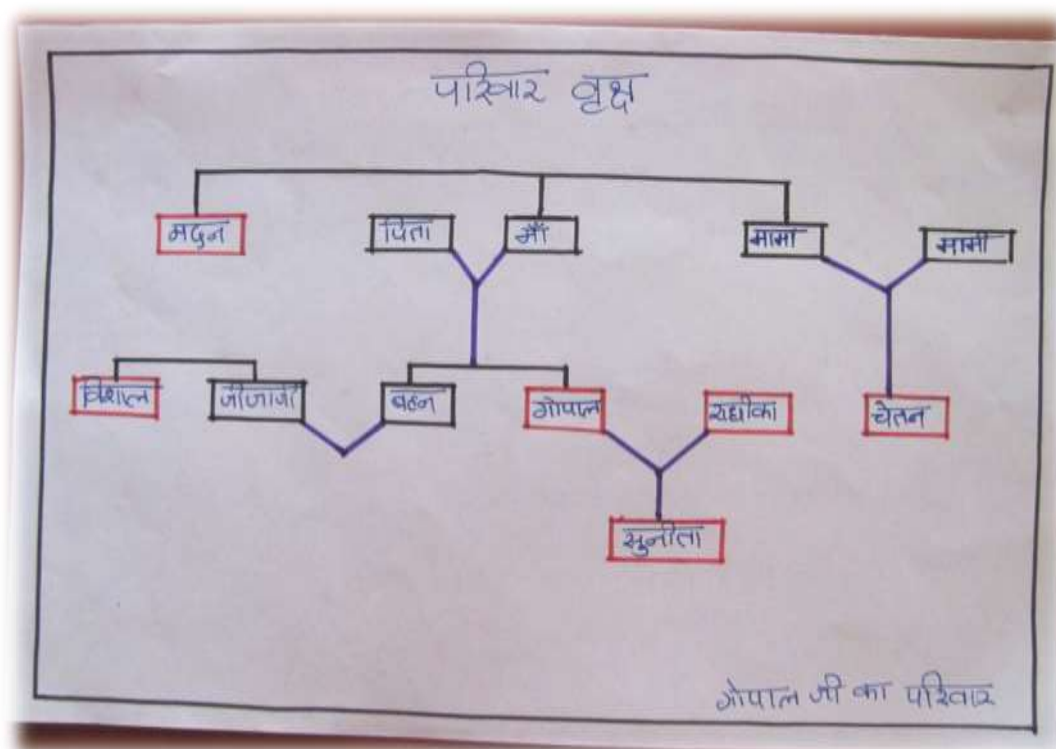


Figure 3.3-10 Family chart of Gopal ji. Red boxes indicate migrants

In many of the conversations we had with the community, there was a pattern of a pilot visiting a particular place before the family was sent to work. Many respondents said that during the earthquake a family member came here and worked for some time before going back to the village and sending family to work in his place.

Thus the community was made up of extended families living side by side. As with most respondents, they did not know more than three families living next to them as they said they never had the time to socialize. But there were also instances of death, where the community had come together to support the grieving family by generating the funds to get the deceased person back to the village for the last rites.

Many of the community members said that they don't mind working here and going back to the village for important events. But there were also youngsters who said that they don't mind staying here and don't wish to go back. It seems that the generations whose parents are back in the village and have been brought up in the village finds its roots in the village itself. But a younger generation that has been uprooted and made to live in the city as well as the village is confused about where it belongs.

Interestingly, the networks of the migrants coming from other states are very different from the networks made by the migrants who come to Bhuj from adjoining areas of Kutch and other parts of the state. Following is the story of Gaur Singh ji who spoke to us about his transient yet interesting life.

### *Gaur Singh ji ki Kahaani*

Gaur Singh ji and his family came to Bhujia Dongar a month ago, after spending Diwali with their family in Dawod district of Gujarat. Their family, along with two others are the only families from Gujarat in an area dominant with people from Madhya Pradesh. They will be working here for another 2-3 months till they go back home for holi. As contract laborers working for the government they have also worked in Mundra, Gandhidham, Ahmedabad, Rajput, etc.

Right now, Gaur Singh ji is busy laying pipe opposite bhujia hill, along with 2-3 houses adjoining it. He says about the zhopadis in front that they are different from him as 'wo log haajri ka kaam karte hai. Humara to contract pe chalta hai.' They have been getting work each day since they moved to this site.

The process of getting work for Gaur Singh ji is, 'apna main aadmi contractor se baat kar leta hai.' They get paid once in 15 days. The engineer comes to measure the work and each man gets paid according to the work done. They also get Kharchi ka paisa. When asked whether they need to ask for kharchi, he said 'itwaar ko kharchi hai to shanivaar ko de dete hai.'

Before the team left, we asked Gaur Singh ji, yahaan kab tak rahenge. And he said 'ek hafta. bas.' The family shifts along the work site. They are always in transit. '**Jahaan tak kaam pe chalk e ja sakte hai, utni door rehte hai. Bhi ghar baandh ke doosre jagah le jaate hai.**'

The story helps highlight the kind of difference one sees between the jobs offered to construction labourers native to Gujarat and those from other states. This may not always be true though, but the natives do have some advantage over the outsiders in terms of linguistic comfort, government benefits and stronger social networks. On the other hand, while speaking to native construction laborers in jubilee circle, the team saw some biases about the outsiders among them. In their words '**wo bahaar se majdoor aate hai aur humaara kaam le lete hai.**'

#### **4. Credit**

The following observations were made with respect to the earning and spending pattern of the settlements in question:

- While the earnings are on a daily basis, the expenses are bi-weekly.
- In most families the couple brings in 500 rs. on the day they get work
- Most people being illiterate, a few people in the group verify earnings for the rest.
- The entire settlement of fifty households keeps the earnings with a shopkeeper popularly known as 'Panditji' amongst the community, irrespective of the time they've been in the city. Panditji has thus become the centre for all financial activities for the settlement, acting as an informal bank for all the families in the area.
  - The place of residence being non-conducive to store any cash or valuables
  - Lack of access to bank accounts lead the people to keep the cash with the Panditji, who disperses the cash as and when required by the individuals.
- Money is also sent back to their respective families in the native villages through any in the known group who is visiting families.

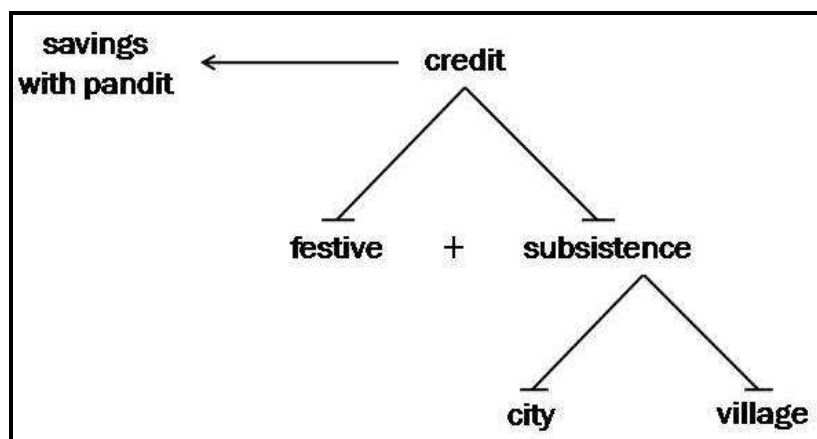


Figure 3.3-11 Showing saving and expenditure components

### The 'Panditji'

Interviews with the Panditji gave an insight into the relationship between the Panditji and the settlements.

The 'Panditji', so known by all inhabitants in the settlements is a retired Principal of a commerce college in Mandvi. His native being Bhuj, his property and relatives are all based in Bhuj. He returned to Bhuj at the end of his service, at the time post the earthquake. He has been running a grocery store near the Fire Brigade Junction ever since the quake. When reconstruction work began in the city and the migrants started moving in, they began settling in temporary dwelling units around the Bhujijo Dungar.

At that time, there being only two stores in the vicinity the migrants built an acquaintance with the Panditji and later on his son-in-law as well who has now taken over majority of the work.

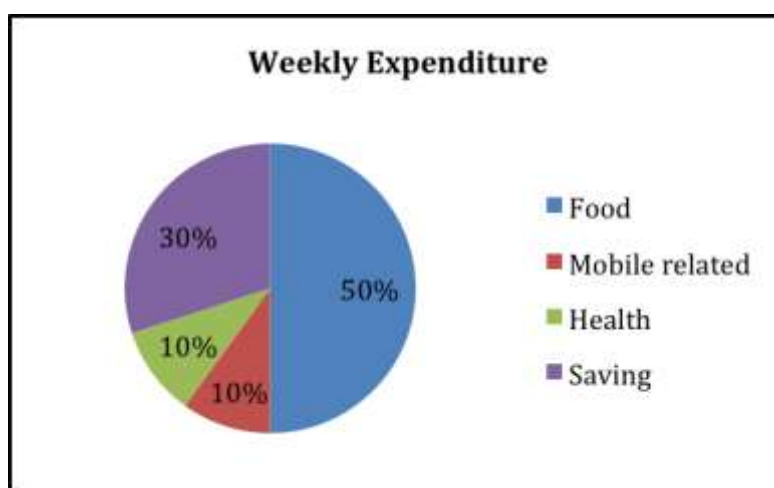
The team was also shown bank receipts, by the son-in-law, to demonstrate how the people's money is helped to be dispersed at native villages. The need for a certain amount is intimated a day or two ahead after when the Panditji keeps the cash ready, to be given back to the respective people.

It is also inferred that the people prefer to keep all their earnings with the Panditji in order to prevent spending on alcohol.

Every person, whether literate or illiterate is given a small book, where the Panditji makes entries of all cash transactions and also notes the balance amount of each person that is with him. He also maintains a record for his dealing with the 200 families.



## Expenditure



Graph 3.3-1 Chapati diagram on weekly expenditure of Gopal ji's family

From the above diagram it is clear that the food is the major component that takes up almost 50% of the earnings of the settlement. This is also the case with migrants from other states as all their documents are not from the state and hence they cannot be entitled to the benefits provided.

Another key expenditure is charging of the phones which are done 3-4 times a week and a bi weekly recharge that come up to 100-150 a week. The families in this settlement roughly save about 35% to 40% of their earnings each week. This is also the case as the respondents we spoke to did not mention consumption of alcohol. Such is the spending pattern of the community.

*Radhika, the wife of Gopal ji, said while taking about expenses 'Khaane peene ka daam roz badhte rehta hai, lekin majdoori to badhti hi nahi hai.'*

## Entitlements

### In home states

Basic necessities such as food are obtained through ration cards issued with residence proofs based in people's respective native villages. In the city, being migrants and with no specific place of stay, the people hold no entitlements to basic necessities in the city. Food is bought at market rates from the groceries.

The settlement lacks electricity connections, and there is minimum light from the adjoining roads. This forces them to complete the day's tasks such as cooking and having dinner when there is sunlight itself. To charge their mobile phones they pay Rs5 at the shops used for the same. The families hold voter ID cards which are also registered at their native villages.

### The city and the migrant

Unlike a settlement on flat land, this settlement which is spread over the Bhujjiyo hill, the visibility is more ie almost all can have an overview of the settlement. This openness in terrain is sensed when any interactions of the team with the community turned out to be with people in groups, hardly smaller with anyone/ few people.

However despite the openness of terrain and the temporariness of living in the city, people have certain clear understandings of space. This was noticed when an older woman from Baluji's family had a tiff with her neighbours whom she wanted to set houses away from hers plainly because she did not like them. Thus the hidden structures exist amidst the clarity one has over the space they dwell on.

Temporariness manifests in a multitude of forms in these households. When Baluji's three families of twelve people, that had been living at Bhujijo for 8-10 years, were seen owning just a couple of teacups and plates the proportion felt inadequate. However the team came to know two days later that the families had left Bhuj for work in Gandhidham and Anjar that morning. It only showed how temporariness reinforces itself and how their decision to spend lesser on household utensils became understandable.

Also a gradation in 'temporariness' surfaces, as this aspect of time of stay is not uniform and is subject to changes in building trends. Panditji noted that earlier the period immediately post the earthquake saw the settlement size at 600-800 families. This number has greatly dwindled to about 200 now. People also acknowledge the general slowdown in construction at Bhuj, which in turn forces them to look outside Bhuj for work. This leads to movement again. While many families have been around in Bhuj for about as long as ten years, many have also moved to the surrounding areas such as Gandhidham and Anjar. However this does not seem to have affected the influx of new migrants brought in by extended families that are already at Bhuj.

During the study period of a week itself, about 10-15 new structures have been built and families have moved in to work at Bhuj. Thus the landscape is one under continuous flux. The younger generation is also able to branch out into new avenues to work at the city.

## **Analysis**

### **Vulnerability as 'inherent' and 'acquired'**

Vulnerability of the migrant position in the city is seen at two levels.

- By virtue of the state in which they enter the city, they lack political support or well established networks. While the natives can bank on the comfort of social networks and a sound base in the city, the lack of it exposes the migrants to being exploited.

This is also directly reflected in the housing condition of the migrants. On comparison with other migrant (of Gujarat, outside of Bhuj) settlements, one notices that being employed in the same sector, they have managed to build permanent houses on government land and also obtain electricity etc.

The fact that they are also not entitled to exercise any franchise in the city, leaves them out of the purview of the politicians, who feel no need to make even basic provisions for these people.

In instances of being left unpaid after work, they're unable to fight back against the exploitation unlike the natives who are able to demand for fixed wages, work hours, holidays, etc.

- Illiteracy and lack of basic education

High dependence on the Panditji correspondingly increases the vulnerability of the savings. Lack of access to a formal banking system also keeps them out of a credit mechanism which is tied to one obtaining a place or identity in the city.

On meeting an amateur contractor who happened to be from the same settlement, it is inferred that basic education helps one in getting to know basic organisational skills and the like on site. This further enables them to move from being daily wage labourers after a few years to becoming contractors which in turn makes a substantial difference in income.

Thus certain layers of vulnerability become 'acquired' in the city.

### **House and entitlements**

When one lists the resources a city offers to the migrant, such as

- Livelihood
- Food
- Water
- Sanitation
- Electricity
- Transportation

It is access to these basic necessities that drive them to choose to stay where they do. Thus space/ land being a resource in itself is thus linked to the others in this direction too.

In a city, access to basic needs is tied to entitlements (or) identity/ residence proofs. A house thus becomes the key to access these entitlements. In a scenario where a house is not the most important concern or even within the ambit of consideration, the above mentioned entitlements more further away from the individual, and more efforts are required in order to procure them. The fight for entitlements thus becomes a part of their day to day lives.

While in conversation with the community, it was realized that it's not permanent dwellings that they aspired for, most of them had houses in their villages. The fight was more in terms of having a rightful space to live in and to go about living their lives in the city. It is this want of a rightful space that was most prominent in our conversations on the issue of housing.

### **Emerging Questions**

#### **What does the city offer for the migrant?**

When one tries to understand what is it that the city means to a migrant, a deeper understanding surfaces. It is that that the people are not in the city for better incomes per se, but it is the opportunity to work that leads them to the city.

Given the rigid and hierarchical socio-economic structures in the villages, growth is constrained and stagnated. It is at this point where the city offers a window towards better opportunities to break out of that loop.

From the researchers' perspective 'permanence of housing' which seemed central to the migrant position is now being questioned. The city which was earlier seen as a 'last resort' is now understood as a conscious choice for newer avenues and aspirations.

# *Location:* Desalsar Lake

*Group Members:*  
**Arunima Rao, Bawesh Pradhan**



### 3.4 DESALSAR LAKE- WASTE VENTURES IN BHUJ

Rural migrants in Bhuj are an integral part of the urban community contributing significantly to the city's development. The waste pickers (migrants from villages in Anand district, Gujarat), *a faceless workforce in the city, play a critical role in keeping the urban environment clean by recycling solid waste, not just by picking waste strewn on streets, but through the medium of 'trading', yet having no place in the economy of a city.* The rural-urban divide, however, has contributed to stereotyping of these rural people to the extent that urban residents perceive migrants as inferior, socially undesirable, and in many instances dangerous. Urban communities, therefore, have the obligation to provide services and assistance to rural workers to improve their standard of living, to raise their standing in the inner-city societies, and to "liberate" them from *the tag- "kachrawalabs"*.



These rural migrants have the need for and the motivation to establish solid relationships that bond them with the residents of the city. It is far from adequate, for these migrants to be associated only with their rural counterparts. Therefore, the city along with its citizens must undertake measures, which would help rural migrants to succeed in their efforts to assimilate and adapt to urban life in their place of destination, thereby integrating them into the urban society.

#### Definition

Many terms are used to refer to people who salvage recyclables from the waste stream for sale or personal consumption. These terms include *rag picker, reclaimer, informal resource recoverer, binner, recycler, poacher, salvager, scavenger, and waste picker.* A waste picker is different from a waste collector because the waste collected by the latter may be destined for a landfill or incinerator, not necessarily for a recycling facility.

#### Applicability of the term in our study

But the 'waste pickers' in our study area are way more than just waste collectors. For the purpose of our study, we would like to address them as **recycler agents**. As they don't just collect waste randomly, instead they purchase *select-waste\** and then sell it to various establishments or to second hand shops for refurbishing.

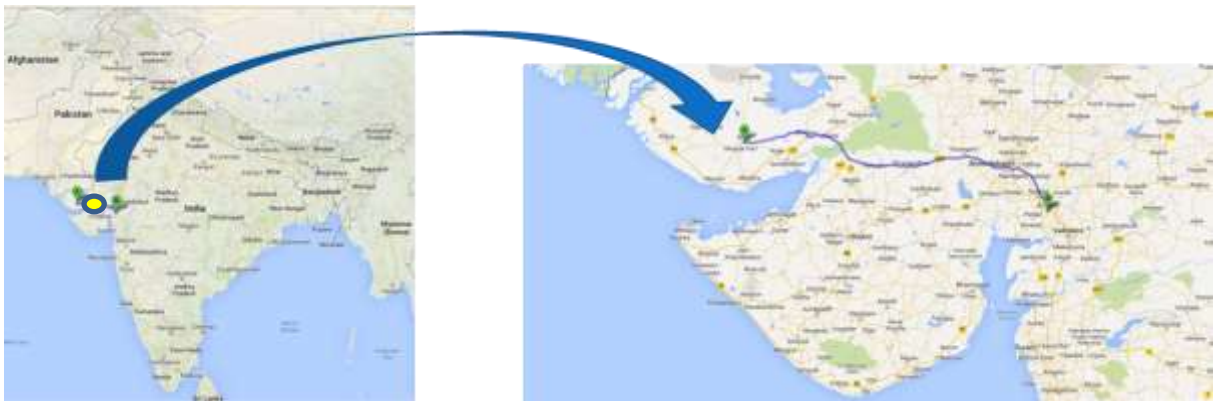
The most striking feature prevalent among the workers involved in this form of workforce in our study area- 2 settlements located in and around Desalsar lake close to the juna railway station in the eastern part of Bhuj city is- that they **invest daily** to procure waste (which is usually a mix of large packaging cartons, paper, plastic bottles, polythene covers, jute bags, and used automobile spare parts) from commercial establishments, garages, etc. located in and around the city center, at a certain price depending on the weight, and then they segregate it depending on the type of waste and then sell it to the kabbaddiwalabs.

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*Select-waste\* - waste such as used packaging cartons, paper, plastic bottles, polythene covers, jute bags, and used automobile spare parts*

## Timeline

The migrants residing in our study area, i.e., (2 settlements on either side of the Desalsar lake), have migrated from villages in Anand district, Gujarat, prior to the Bhuj earthquake, January 26, 2001, in the year 2000, for better livelihood opportunities in Bhuj. These migrants belong to the Phulwaris/ Talpadas (OBC's), worked as agricultural labourers in their village for just Rs. 30-40 a day, which also, was not on a regular basis. Few of them owned small parcels of land, about 10ftX10ft in their village, which they felt is not a very big asset and that they have given it to their distant relatives who now live there. Apart from the small piece of land and ration card, they have no documents with them. Triggered by social exclusion, distress and dissatisfaction, they migrated to Bhuj, as it is about 348 kms. from their place of origin and also because it is the closest neighbouring developed urban area.



Map 3.4-1 Showing location of Gujarat and the 348 kms long route from Anand district in Gujarat to Bhuj



Migration from Anand district in Gujarat to Bhuj

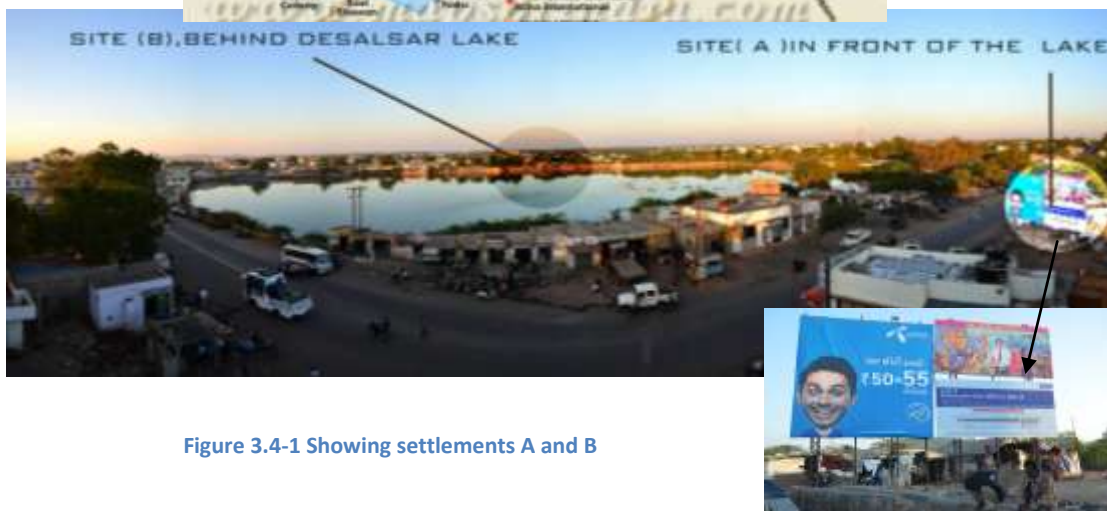


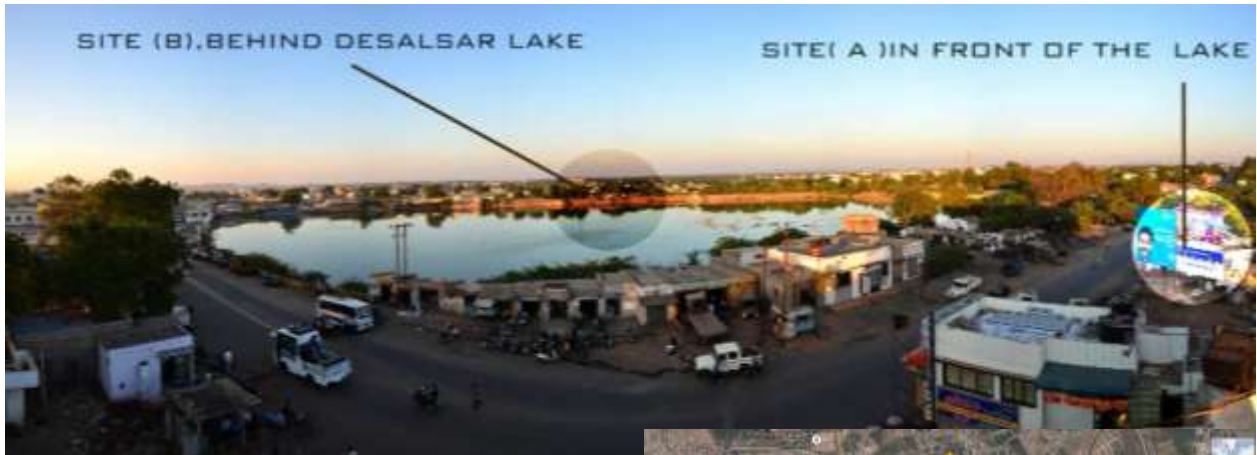
Figure 3.4-1 Showing settlements A and B

Table 3-2 Brief description of Settlement A and B

	<b>Settlement A</b>	<b>Settlement B</b>
<b>Duration of stay in Bhuj</b>	12 years (pre-earthquake)	13 years (pre-earthquake)
<b>Ownership of land</b>	Encroached upon Government land	Settled on private land (on sympathy of the landowner)
<b>Native state/district/village</b>	Anand district, Gujarat	Anand district, Gujarat
<b>Key source of livelihood</b>	Recycler agents/repair work/few women work as domestic maids among others	Recycler agents
<b>Entitlements</b>	Ration card/land pattas in the village.	Ration card in the village/ voter id card/ Ann Suraksha card issued by manav jyoti org.(private trust)
<b>Migr</b> No table of figures entries found. <b>ation pattern</b>	Settled	Settled
<b>Average income</b>	Rs. 4000 per month(husband and wife)	Rs. 5000 per month (parents and children)
<b>No. of dwelling units</b>	20 tenements (avg hh size-4)	17 tenements(avg. hh size-4)
<b>Housing type</b>	<i>Kutcha house- made of tarpaulin sheets.plinth made with mud and stone,all houses in linear pattern, sizes vary from 60 sq.ft to 80 sq.ft</i>	<i>Kutcha house- made of tarpaulin sheets.plinth made with mud and stone,all houses in linear pattern, sizes vary from 80 sq.ft to 100 sq.ft</i>
<b>Total no. of people living</b>	74	62
<b>Men/women/children</b>	17/15/42	15/15/31
<b>Access to services</b>	Lake water for washing clothes and sanitation, tap water for drinking, govt. hospital	Lake water for washing clothes and sanitation, tap water for drinking, govt. hospital, ann bhojanalay
<b>State of vulnerability</b>	Very high 1) Visibility(space), 2) risk laden-alternative forms of livelihood, 3) income	Comparatively low

### Spatial aspects

The settlements are situated in the eastern part of the city and are located on either sides of Desalsar lake which is one of the three biggest lakes in Bhuj. One settlement(A) is situated along the main road (Bhuj GIDC road) on one side of the lake and close to the Juna railway station and the other settlement(B) is behind the lake and is less visible and is close to the new railway station.



Map 3.4-2 Showing the location of the 2 settlements on either sides of Desalsar lake

Settlement A (along the road)  
Settlement B (behind the lake)





## Arrival in Bhuj and transition of livelihood

### Timeline/ Story of settlement(A)

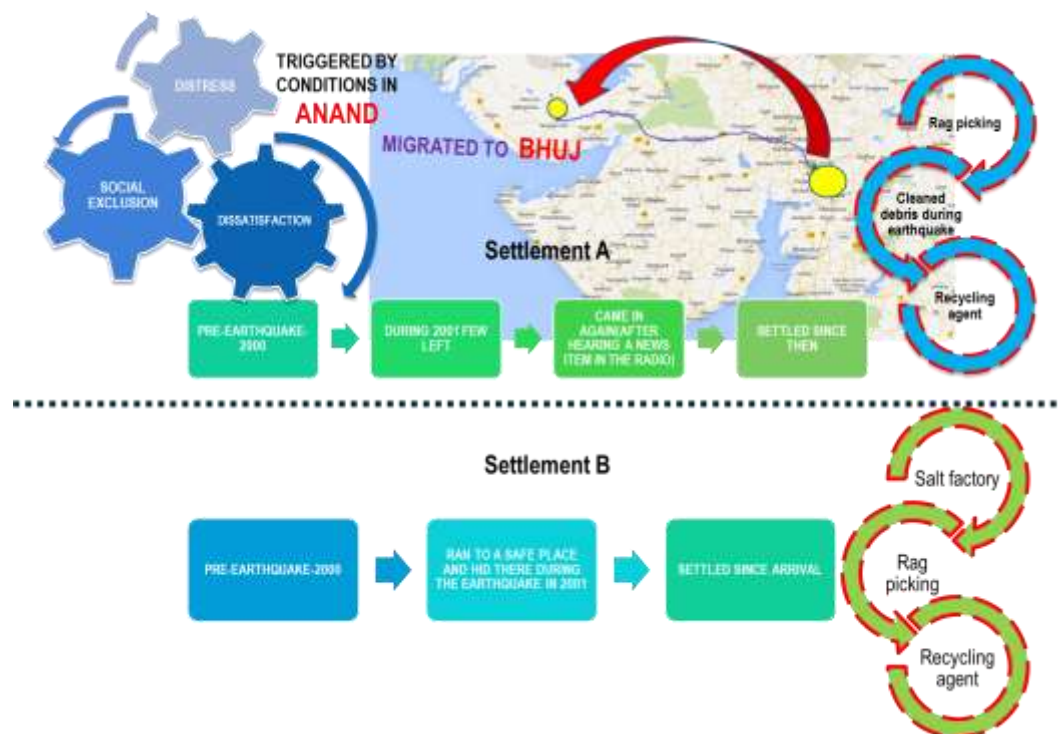
The dwellers in the first settlement (A), came in to Bhuj along with their families. Upon arrival to Juna Railway Station located in the eastern part of the city, they settled down there itself for few days. Gradually, after being evicted by the railway police, they moved to the area close to the station and settled down along the road (encroached on government land)

Few dwellers who were in the city prior to the earthquake worked as rag-pickers, also cleaned the debris during the earthquake, and later started the actual recycling business.

### Timeline/ Story of settlement(B)

Initially 2 men came to Bhuj after getting to know about job prospects in a salt factory, through a friend of theirs who works in the same factory. Later they brought in their families from their village and settled down in the juna railway station. Seeing their plight, one benevolent person, Mr. Asam bhai, who owned a small parcel of agricultural land behind the Desalsar lake, sheltered them on sympathy basis, but no legal authority given to them (settled on Private land). They continued their work in the factory and were paid Rs. 900 per month.

This monthly payment didn't go down well with them. They also faced health hazards, i.e., they developed soars in their feet after being corroded by salt, hence left the job. They took up rag picking initially and later became full time recyclers as they earned on a daily basis.



Triggered by harsh conditions in the place of origin, most migrated to the neighboring city, and took up different jobs before becoming a full-time recycler agent.

## Demographics

### Settlement A

It comprises of 20 households with 74 dwellers. Average household size being 4, there are about 17 men, 15 women, 20 girls and 22 boys residing in the community. There are about 10 elderly people residing in the community.

### Settlement B

It comprises of 17 households with 61 dwellers. Average household size being 4, there are about 15 men, 15 women, 23 girls and 8 boys residing in the community. There are very few elderly people residing in the community.

## Housing and access to resources

Both settlements have good access to resources, both physical and social. The natural water body-desalsar lake serves the purpose of sanitation and to wash clothes. Firewood is available in the shrubs close to the lake. There is a kirana store just behind the settlement, facilitating the community with daily provisions.

The presence of a bhojanalay, run by a private trust named Manav Jyoti Organization situated near the Hamirsar lake, about an hour journey from the settlement, immensely helps these dwellers access free lunch and dinner facility everyday without compromising with their work. Besides this, the recycler agents' stores are located within a radius of 1 km from their dwelling place, which is the main reason for settling down in the current location as its also very easy to access the markets in the center of the city.

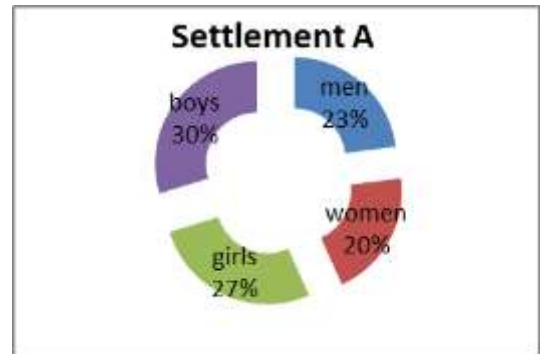
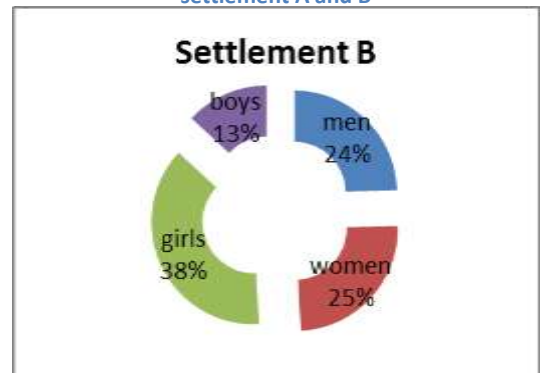


Chart 3.4-1 Showing population distribution in settlement A and B



***Kutcha house- made of tarpaulin sheets. Plinth made with mud and stone, all houses in linear pattern, sizes vary from 60 sq.ft to 100 sq.ft in both the settlements.***



Map 3.4-3 Showing access to various resources

### Livelihood

The prime asset that is common to all the households in the community is the cart with which they set out by foot every day at about 9a.m. in the morning, going around the streets collecting waste from commercial stores at a price of Rs. 10 per kg. till about 12:30 p.m. in the afternoon, after which they dine at the bhojanalay and carry on with their collection. Most women involved with this work, get back to their homes at about 3 p.m. in the late afternoon, send their kids to school and carry on with their household chores. Men wait for the closing time of the stores (10 p.m. in the night), so as to collect large amounts of waste generated after a day's activity and then return home late night.

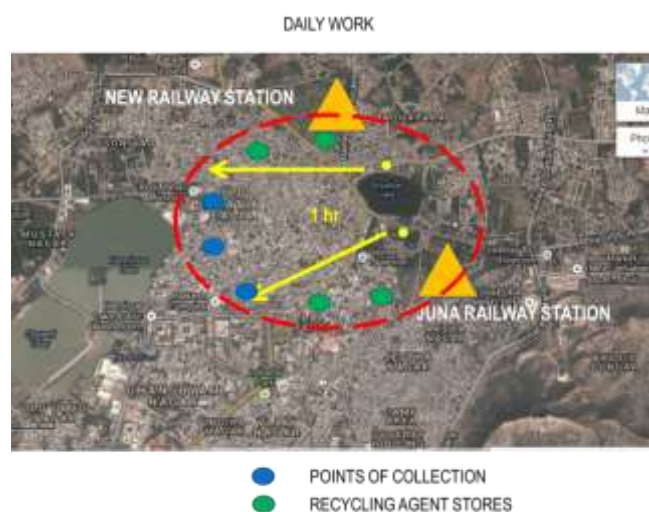


Table 3-3 Showing characteristic features of the settlements in the study area

Settlement A (encroached on government land)	Settlement B (settled on private land)
Ambitious and highly competitive in nature; highly unsatisfied	Satisfied
Besides working as recycling agents-- -sell toddy -undertake others' criminal charges -rear cattle Wife works as domestic help	Recycling agents; Wife and children also work.
Previous cases of child trafficking	Indirect impact of child trafficking. Don't send their kids to school.
Consumption of alcohol, beedi, gutka. Stress leading to domestic violence, constant quarrels. Acknowledge themselves as the prime cause of the disharmony so send their kids to school.	
Risk of being evicted-(space/visibility) Part of their income goes into paying certain amount to dwell on the current piece of land, yet no tenure security.	Ignorant of being evicted.



### Unorganized and vulnerable

One of the salient features of this community is that the aspect of credit is interlinked with livelihood. The representation below depicts the similar and contrasting features related to sources of income and expenditure in the settlements in the study area.

The investment they make is on a daily basis, where they purchase waste at a rate of Rs. 10 per kg. from various commercial establishments, garages, etc. located in and around the city and then sell it to the recycler stores i.e., the kabadiwalas at a rate of Rs. 11 per kg. They feel secure in this kind of a daily job as the investment and returns are back-to-back.

These daily wage workers are at the bottom of a pyramid- where they are not backed by any security from neither the market nor the Government itself. They constantly face the politics of unorganised labour, gender and migration in the context of growing informalisation of labour. Though the market is cited as the logic behind the deregulation of labour, we cannot overlook the role of the state, which is the largest employer of informal labour, in perpetuating informality.

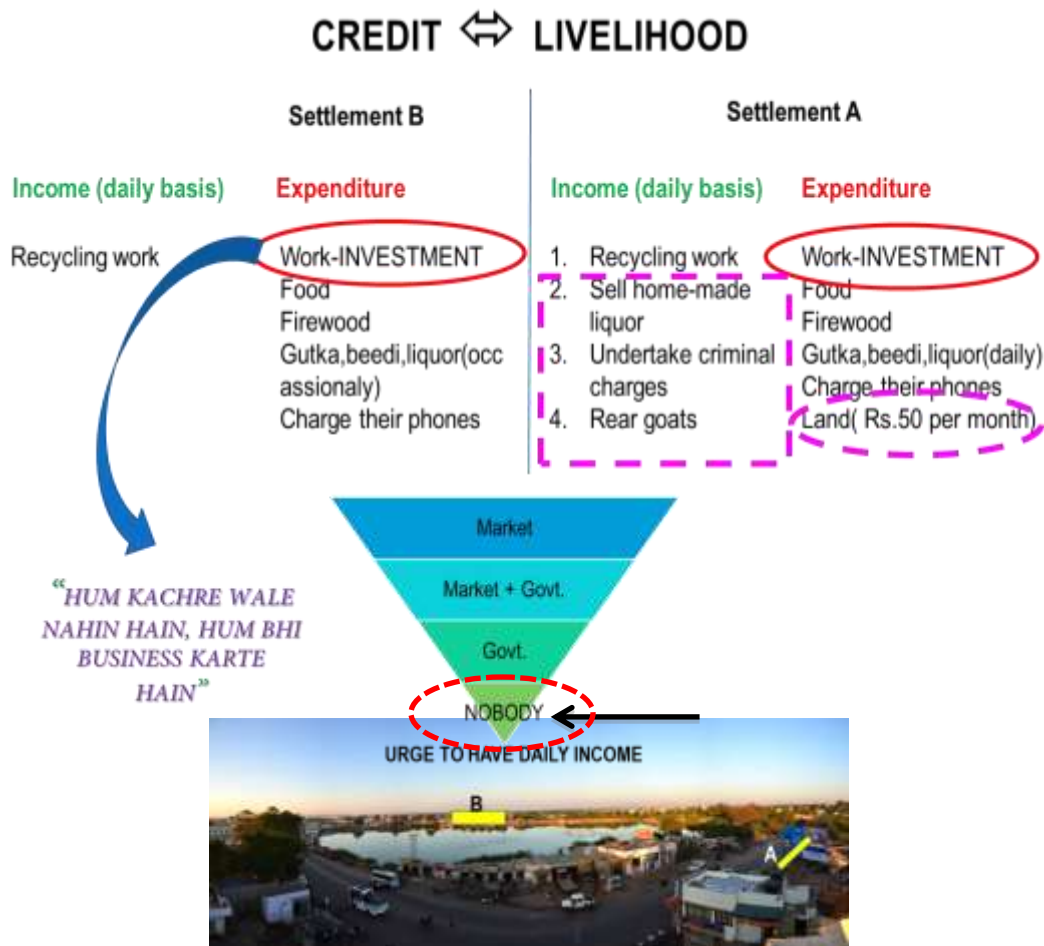


Figure 3.4-2 showing the linkage between credit and livelihood

Most preferred earning on a daily basis and not on a monthly basis. This is the main reason as to why they chose to leave their previous occupation where they were mostly paid at the end of

every month. Hence, they took up 'recycling business' and continued with their current occupation.

### Impact on children (particularly in settlement A)

Discriminative social processes such as social stigma against migrant workers have led to the creation of inequality, undermining trust, and reducing opportunities for interpersonal interactions between migrants and urban residents indirectly trapping children in a vicious cycle of poverty, illiteracy and hopelessness.

Asha, a 15 year old recycler agent residing in this settlement helps her family in collecting, segregating and selling recyclable waste. Previously, Asha was enthusiastic about going to school and joined one, but after a series of bad experiences at school, i.e., being mocked as 'kachrawalah' constantly, referring to the work her parents do, she stopped going to school. This experience of her's wrongly shaped the way she now perceives education. This was clearly evident when Asha markedly said-"padke mein kya karongi? Yeh kaam karke jo paisa mein kama rahi hun wo padne se thodhi milega!"



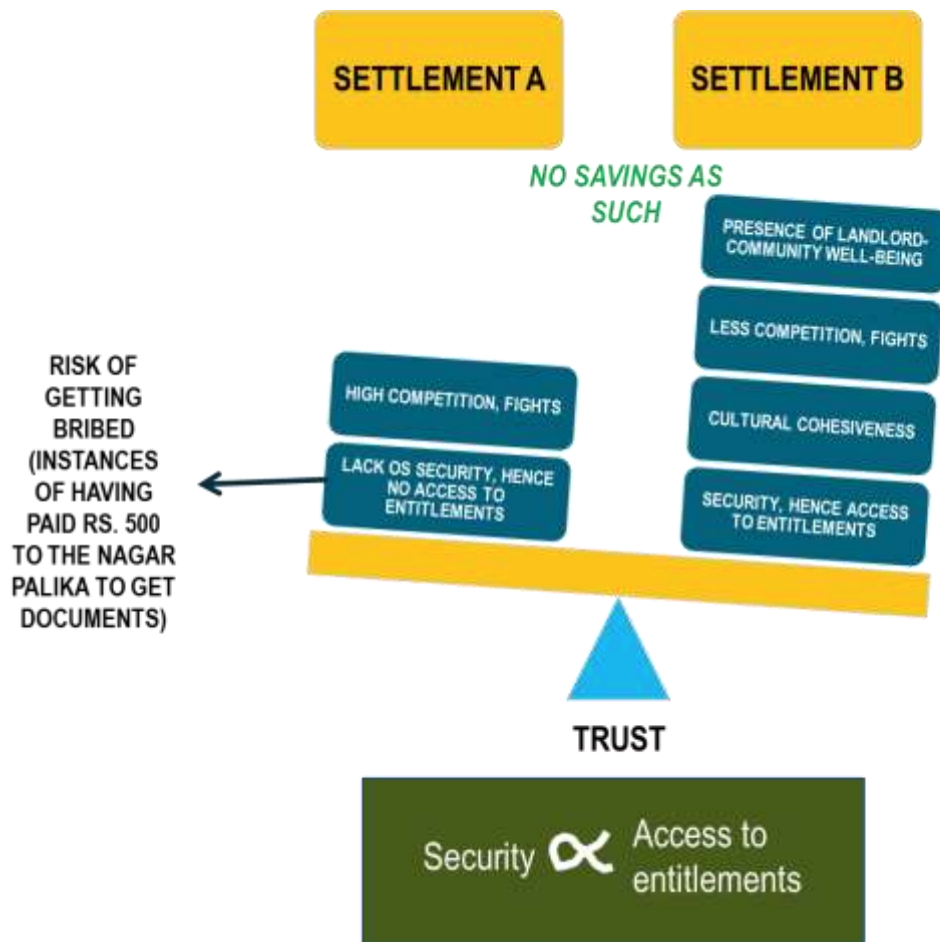
### Networks and Entitlements

A large chunk of the recycler agents are illiterate and unskilled migrants. Because of their marginalised identity, citizenship is very crucial for these people. However, they actively reinforce all the democratic values by participating in elections, and carry all the citizenship markers like voter identity cards etc. Yet, they are subjected to systematic police harassment. Belonging to the unorganised sector, these waste pickers lie outside the ambit of most government social security schemes.

Without network connections, there is no social capital that determines the potential "profits" to be gained for the group. Trust - remains as a main factor in building networks and in getting access to various needs such as; procuring documents like voter id card, ration card, ann suraksha card, etc. This is observable in settlement B, where because of the presence of a landowner, they have had access to availing important documents. (please refer fact sheet 2 in the following page). Trust, reciprocity, and collaboration are three characteristics that determine a strong network connection.

Table 3-4 Entitlements in settlement A and B

Settlement A	Settlement B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ration card , land pattas in their village</li> <li>• No voter id card</li> <li>• No ann suraksha card( 10 kg of wheat a month)-given by Manav Jyoti Org.</li> <li>• Don't know about ann kshetra where there is free bhojan service (run by a pvt trust since 40 yrs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ration card , land pattas in their village</li> <li>• Have voter id card</li> <li>• Have ann suraksha card( 10 kg of wheat a month)-given by Manav Jyoti Org.</li> <li>• Go to ann kshetra where there is free bhojan service (run by a pvt trust since 40 yrs)</li> </ul>



The above diagram depicts the existing differences between the settlements on account of networks and entitlements.

## Silent saviours of Bhuj- hitherto treated as an unwanted lot

The quantity of waste generated in the city of Bhuj, is given in the pie chart below. Out of the total waste generated in the city, 68% of the waste is wet waste, following which, about **27%** of the waste is **recyclable waste**, which is generated largely in the central part of the city. Hence, they have occupied sites close to the wholesale recycling agents and the city center so that their work-place is easily accessible from their dwelling place, keeping the city and our environment clean—and yet constantly yearning for dignity.

From the land mafia to the government officials, exploitation is entrenched at every level. **One has to look at the tag of “illegality” associated with their livelihood.** For example, to gain documents to avail social security schemes, they have bribed officials many a times, but in vain and steal electricity from the supply lines. The spaces they occupy are illegally controlled by officials (sometimes railway officials, police officials, etc.) who extort money from them as rent.

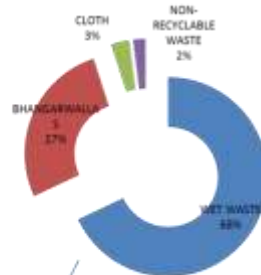
On top of this, the waste pickers are subjected to regular police harassment, and are the first ones to be picked up for questioning, in case of a robbery in a colony they go for waste collection. There are also contrasting instances where, police officials and these migrants share a relationship which is symbiotic in nature. Sometimes, it so happens that these migrants compelled by extremely high ambitions, succumb to inappropriate means of money-making by undertaking false accusations and get paid for it by the officials themselves. This is evident among dwellers in settlement A.

Despite rendering important services to the city and its permanent dwellers, these migrants are clearly perceived as unequal members of the urban landscape. **Their presence is not recognized even on the basis of their contribution to the economy of Bhuj city.** Relationships of distrust, limited opportunities for building networks, social and physical segregation have become common features in the lives of these migrants.

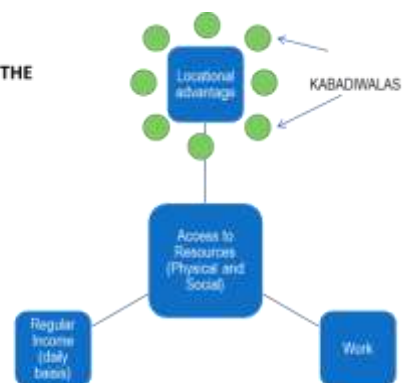
Regardless of the effort they put in, they have small but important aspirations:

- Issuance of an identity card in order to be recognized in the city.
- A dwelling unit in the same locality.
- Medical aid
- Access to documents
- Teacher in the community to impart basic education-reading and writing skills for their children.
- Few of them wanted the Bhuj Nagar Palika to give them jobs in the solid waste management wing, but on a daily pay.

QUANTITY OF WASTE GENERATED IN THE CITY OF BHUJ



Source : STATISTICS TAKEN FROM PPT by Sahjeevan.org





**RAJU—***Dweller in settlement A (situated along the road)**Livelihood-Recycler agent, also undertakes repair work*

Born in Mumbai, brought up in Ahmedabad, studied till 8<sup>th</sup>, has two sisters and a brother, but after the expiry of his mother, his father became a drunkard and sold the land documents back in his hometown and brought him to Bhuj. He had to stop his education to start working in order to contribute to the expenses of the house. After his father's death, he slowly started learning basic repair work (gas stove repair, electrical repairs, etc.) from friends and relatives, and started working. He got married and has three children, two girls and a boy. Later his wife expired due to heart ailments. The eldest girl who is now 25 yrs old is married, has three kids and is settled in a village in Anand district. He visits her occasionally-usually during festivals. His two young kids go to a nearby school run by manav jyoti organization. He says- 'ab mein mera bachon ka sahara, hun aur who mera'.



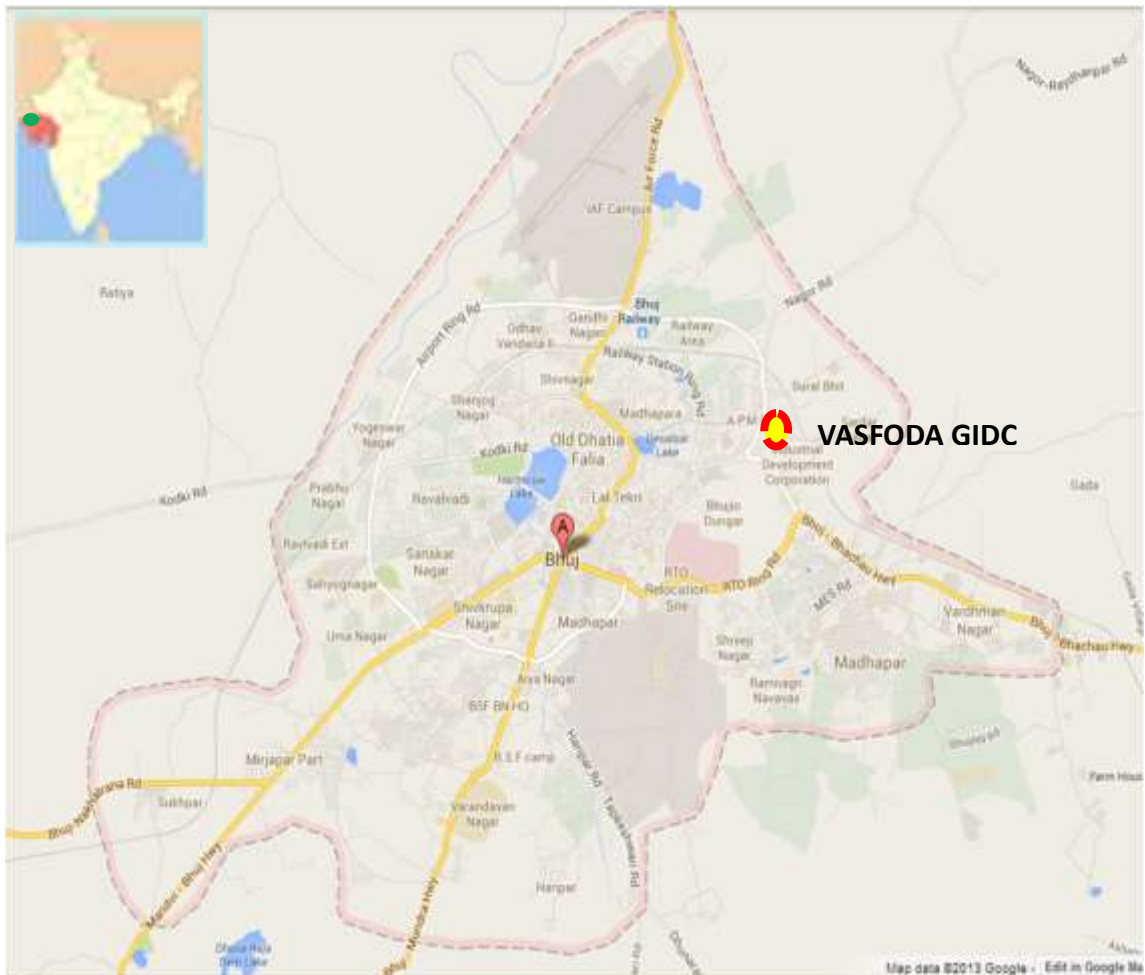
He begins his day at 9 a.m. by going around the city, hawking for repair work. When asked about the nature of his work, he said- "if there are 100 houses in an area, I get to work in about 10 houses and get paid about Rs. 20- 30 per house so I earn about Rs. 200-300 a day, with which I buy groceries for the day. At times, I also go stand at the chowk, so as to get some construction work, to bring down load cement bags at construction sites just to make more money." from trucks or to carry documents prepared, the nagar palika asks him to.

Sometimes, it also happens that he sleeps on an empty stomach. He doesn't have any documents prepared, the nagar palika asks him to pay Rs. 500-600 to start the process of acquiring documents as he doesn't have any proofs. Despite paying the amount to the authorities twice, he failed to get his documents On the day of the massive Bhuj earthquake-he was asked to bring down household articles by an owner of a house which was resting on a single pillar after the earthquake and was paid Rs. 500 for doing so. He is saddened by the fact th provided with basic needs such as-water, electricity, house, sanitation facility, education for their kids and documents as well for that matter. Though they collect wastes for their livelihood, there is a sense of pride-as well as pain when he said- "yeh desh(meaning 'sheher': city of Bhuj) humein galat samjhti hein, humein tokhra marti hein, humein parayah samjhti hein, lekin hum tho yeh desh ko hamara, apna samajhthein hein" at-despite rendering services to the city, they go unnoticed by the government and are not even

His voice gives a sense of his expectations and a vision of a better future for him and his son as went on to say- "mere maa-baap tho mujhe janam dediye, lekin meri janam kis kaam ki nahi rahi, mein padha tha, lekin ab jo mein kaam kar raha hun uski koyi izzat nahi, lekin meri kismet mein nahi rahi. Lekin mein mera beta ko padhana chahta hun. Meri tarah hone nahi duunga."

*Location:*  
**Vasfoda GIDC Area, Madhapar Highway**

*Group Members:*  
**Akash Puri, Gauri Mirashi, Ch. Lavanya , Vijay sapkal**



## 3.5 GIDC AREA, MADHAPAR HIGHWAY

### About the Community

The Vasfoda community is a tribal community traditionally engaged in making *tokris* (baskets) and other bamboo items. This community started migrating to Bhuj from Saurashtra region of Gujarat approximately 30 years ago and settled along the Madhapar Highway. A majority of the men of this community are engaged in greasing work (trucks) where as the women are engaged in rag picking.

### Location Map

This community has settled on private land in the industrial belt (Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation area) on the east side of Bhuj city along the Madhapar SH 42. The major land use in this area is commercial and industrial.



Map 3.5-1 Landuse along Madhapur highway

### History

This community was traditionally engaged in artisan work, creating various items out of *vas (bamboo)*. It is in reference to this activity that they are named - Vasfoda. They lived in Banaskaanta, Kathiawar, Palampur and Saurashtra regions of Gujarat.

They used to get bamboo from jungles of Rajpipla, Ankaleshwar, Netrang etc. The Government would provide them bamboo on subsidized rates of Re. 1 or 2 per bamboo. Even their travel expenditure to collect bamboos and return home was subsidized. Including travel it would cost them Rs. 5 to bring a bamboo home. They would make 3 *tokris* out of one bamboo, and sell each at Rs. 15-18. This way from one bamboo they would earn 45-50 rs.



Figure 3.5-1 Vas Tokri

This artisan work offered a very specific lifestyle that an old man recollected fondly - "*khud naukar, khud malak*", which roughly translates into "*we would work for ourselves*". If they received an order which was to be completed in a week, they would work to ensure that it would be completed in a week. They would work and rest as they needed. Sometimes they wouldn't even accept the orders if they didn't want to work. Also, they worked in coordination with other community members. For example, since bamboos take 6 to 7 years to grow, they would collect bamboo from one particular place, and then abide by community rules to allow time for the bamboo to grow back.

However, after the death of ex-prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, the Gujarat government banned bamboo cutting from the jungles. This ban created a serious question for their livelihood, forcing them to migrate to other occupations and locations.

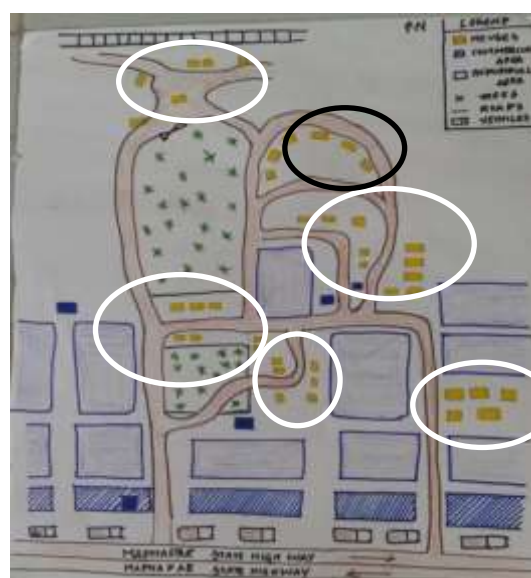
### Present scenario

Approximately thirty years ago, several families migrated to Bhuj and settled near the Madhapar Highway in the GIDC area. Through community networks many others have followed creating a community of roughly 70 households in the area today.

Thirty years after the initial settlers, most of the men are still engaged in greasing work and it is the only source of income for them. Their traditional bamboo work in some ways explains their choice of greasing. In greasing they work as long as they feel like. If they don't want to work, they come back home and take rest even if there are jobs available. If they earn more than average on one day, they skip going to work on next day. If they feel they have earned enough for a day, they pass on any further jobs to their relatives. The nature of this job is very similar to their traditional work.

### Community Map

Figure 3 demonstrates that the people in this community depend heavily on the road network of the city. The settlements of this community are situated around industries into five clusters of 5-15 homes with 300 people. There are 70 dwelling units in this Vasfoda community; there are also Muslim and Gujarat communities that live in this area. Interestingly these communities are engaged in cart-transportation and construction work respectively, highlighting once again the livelihood choice of the Vasfoda people. A railway track marks the northern boundary of this community.



Map 3.5-2 Vasfoda Community Map

### Demographic details

The total population in the community is 282 people- among them 49% are men and 51% were women. On average, most households consist of 4-5 members. Familial and marital bonds connect most households to one another. 54% of the population consists of children.

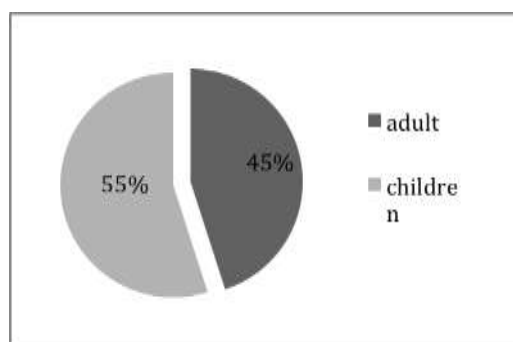
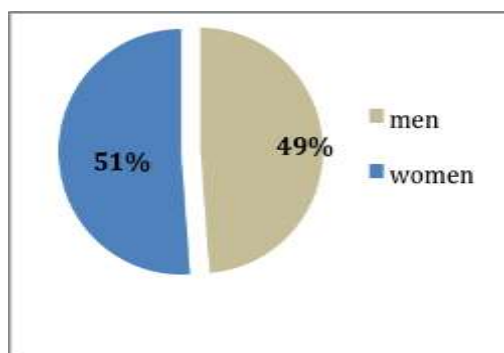


Chart 3.5-2 Showing population distribution in the settlements studied

## Resource Mapping

Figure 5 shows the different resource on which the people of this community depend. For their daily items they depend on the grocery shop near the community. Firewood is available in the surrounding areas. Water is available at an open valve of a pipeline that runs from the Narmada. Households that have women and children who can walk to this valve across the railway tracks get their drinking water from here. Water for non-drinking purpose is bought from a private-provider at Rs. 200 per 2000 liter tank. Households who cannot for any reason access the valve buy drinking water as well. The community depends on other parts of the city only for hospital services, shopping and for entertainment (talkies). Sanitation facilities are non-existent.



Map 3.5-3 Resource map

## Livelihood

Most of the community men are engaged in greasing. They apply grease to the vehicles, which normally includes trucks, buses and other commercial vehicles. Women of this community are engaged in rag picking. Hence, greasing and rag picking are two main sources of livelihood. Both men and women go out for work in the morning and come back only in the evening.

Men move short distances alongside the highway in search of jobs. Their territory is limited to the places where trucks halt for repairing. They earn 70 to 80 Rs per vehicle. They require half a kg of grease for 1 vehicle and one kg grease costs 50 Rs. Which means their pure profit are 40-45 rs per vehicle. Earlier they used to use apply grease by hands but they have been using a greasing machine for the past few years. This machine costs Rs 400-450 and lasts 6-8 months if maintained properly. On an average, they earn Rs 250 – 300 per day. On Sunday they work till noon only as they don't get much work.

Women earn Rs. 150 – 200/day. The nature of their work is quite different from the men. Some collect scrap from around the GIDC area while others travel to other parts of the city and collect waste plastic, paper, metals, etc and sell it to the scrap dealer. They get paid depending on what they collect. For example, metal is 15 Rs/kg and paper items are 10 Rs/kg.



Figure 3.5-2 People engaged in greasing and ragpicking

## Credit

Although this community does not have access to formal credit systems they often require credit on a day-to-day basis. For various reasons households in this community are not able to save money or resources. For example, Surekhaben told us that if they ever buy groceries and grains in bulk there is always the danger of cows coming into their house and eating it. Having experienced this a few times she has stopped buying more than she requires for one day.

This cycle of day-to-day income-expenditure seems to have become a pattern. Their daily expenditure depends on their income. At the end of the work day they purchase all the ingredients they need for dinner and return home. After dinner consumption of alcohol and betting are the ways in which they spend the rest of their money. While we first received this information from chaiwalas and other store owners in the area, it was confirmed by several men from the community itself. One of them also said that if one day they earn surplus income they won't work for coming few days and spend remaining amount of money. *Aaj hi kamaya, aaj hi khaya* is how he summed up their financial pattern.

In the absence of savings, families need to take credit to fulfil their basic needs like vegetable, grocery on days when they are unable to find sufficient work. So they take these items on credit basis and pay for it on next day. While shopkeepers do allow them to get food grains and other items they do not provide them credit beyond Rs. 500 because they know they might not be repaid. The chaiwala also gives them some credit in getting tea, guthka and paan which can go up to Rs. 80.

Some women have a much more structured daily credit system. At the beginning of everyday they get Rs. 100 from the scrapdealer for the 'bhada' (charges) for a ride to different parts of the city. At the end of the day, when they sell the scrap, the dealer subtracts Rs. 100 from their total payment.

An interesting form of saving that we came across was that some families store part of the scrap they gather throughout the week and sell a larger quantity on Sunday. Sunday is not a very productive day in terms of income. Madhapar highway also shuts down by 3 pm. So there is no work on that day. Therefore for Sunday they use this strategy. The scrapdealer said '*Sunday ko maas machchi khana hota hai in logon ko.. daaru aur sattebazi bhi chalti hai*'.

For loans larger than those offered by the shopkeepers and scrap dealer, this community relies on the informal system. In the absence of formal documents, job security and steady incomes, they are almost completely cut off from the formal credit system. Therefore, they rely on informal financial institutes like private money lenders (seths). They were unwilling to expose the identity of their seths. These loans are available to them at 2-3 takka (1 takka = 12%). These loans are used in cases of medical emergencies, weddings and other family events and festivities.

When a team from Setu accompanied us to this community they found a scholarship letter for two children of a family. This scholarship, of Rs. 400, is supposed to be a school matter, independent of the formal documentation of the child. Based solely on the letter from the school, each child is entitled to a free 0-balance bank account where this scholarship money is deposited. Despite having this letter the family has been unable to open accounts because the bank manager has been asking for bribe money. Even this small access of the formal system has been denied.

## Networks

We have seen how network played an important role in the establishment of this community but its role does not end there. In fact it is these networks that enabled this community to retain its existence in this city. Their networks can be categorized as social, occupational, and regional networks.

As part of their social networks, they have maintained good relations among themselves in the community. They help each other on several occasions like marriages, funeral rites, emergencies, etc. To mention an instance, while working under a truck a man died few years ago. His wife was not able to perform his last rites as she had no money. The community helped to perform the rites by contributing money. Also, they live in 5 small clusters very close to others so help is available at any time of the day. They maintain these social relations in their occupation also. If a man gets enough trucks for a day and another man doesn't find a job that day then the former will pass on some jobs to the latter.

Also they have good relations with chaiwalas, garage owners, automobile shop owners, grocery shopkeepers, etc. They also share very friendly relations with truck drivers. When a driver has to get greasing done, he comes looking for a particular person whom he knows personally. This shows a level of trust they have created with the people in their occupation. Also, if any of the people mentioned above come to know about any kind of grease work, they inform the "greasewalas" over the phone. Mobile technology has therefore played an important role in their livelihood. All their communication is done over phone so that they no longer have to move alongs the highway extensively in search of job. They also have an unofficial agent named Mukesh. He basically repairs chairs but he also brings job for them. They all stay in touch with him in case they don't find any job. In return they pay Mukesh a small portion of their earning which is an individual choice.

Though they have left their village long ago, some of them still have maintained relations with the people back in the village. They often visit their village to seek blessing of their Goddess and to bring the ration, which they get at subsidized rate (since their ration card is still from their native place). As they don't live in the village any more they have maintained strong relations with the shopkeeper in the village so that nothing goes wrong and regular supply of food grains is ensured. But in return the village head ask them to come for voting and cast their vote in his favor. This is how they have managed to balance urban and rural relations and networks to facilitate their survival in the city.

## Children

The most noticeable thing about children in this community is their sheer number. As noted in the demographic structure, 54% of the population comprises of children (chart 2). Not only is the number of children in every family more, there are several families where widows/ widowers living with their parents/ parents-in-law are looking after several children. For example, we met a woman who lives with her son, daughter-in-law and son-in-law. Her daughter passed away leaving behind four little children. This woman now begs on the road to help take care of the children.



Figure 3.5-3 Showing children in the community

We were told that only 7 children from the entire community go to school. We met one such boy, but even he did not attend school regularly. When we asked what he was studying in school, he was able to tell us “the 9th chapter of the math textbook”, but was unable to describe what was in this chapter. There are several reasons that community members gave us for not sending their children to school –

- *Zamana kharab hai toh ladkiyon ke liye safe nahi hai* (the world out there is not safe, especially for girls)
- Distance – school bahut door hai, railway tracks bhi cross karna padta hai toh safe nahi lagta. Chalthe hue jane ko borrr bhi hota hai.
- Absence of Birth Certificate – delivery ghar pe hoti hai aur certificate ke bina school mein dakhla nahi milta.

The third is the most common reason. In spite of knowing this, many births continue to happen at home. On one hand there seems to be a distrust towards doctors when the women say “*doctor se darr lagta hai.. kya pata kya kar dega*”. And on other a delivery in a government hospital also costs Rs. 2000. The local dai is able to deliver a child for much less.

The younger children are easily visible in the community - playing outside their homes or walking around in the GIDC area. Many young children, both boys and girls, are visible at the water tap near the railway tracks taking water to their families. Even though the railway tracks are sited as a problem when talking about access to school, many children are sent to cross the tracks and fetch water.

Older children in the 15-18 years age group, especially boys, are not as visible in the community because they start working and contributing to their households. Girls tend to accompany their mothers and boys their fathers in ragpicking and greasing respectively. In households where the women don’t work the girls help with household chores and taking care of younger siblings.

## Entitlements

As demonstrated in chart 3, only 13% of the community members have voter IDs and only 26% have birth certificates. A majority of those who have a voter ID have to return to the village to vote as the ID has been issued from the village. Only a few families have been able to access a ration card from the city of Bhuj, while some others continue to use their village ration cards to access affordable food grains. One lady also has an Artisan Photo ID, which she refuses to reveal in front of other community members in fear of raising suspicion as to how she was the only one to get it. In such a situation, where a majority of the community has no proof of residence or identity, the community as a whole has remained invisible to the state and its schemes.

Most households report that they have made several attempts to obtain documents from Bhuj. Some of them tried to transfer or get new entitlements in city but they failed all the time because of lack of awareness, corruption and the time required for these lengthy processes. Over the years they have been evicted several times and several politicians have made promises of legal and formal entitlements. However, nothing seems to have changed on this front.

Another problem we came across was the loss of documents in the absence of safe and secure places to store them. For example, Meeraben, a mother of 5 children said that only 2 of her

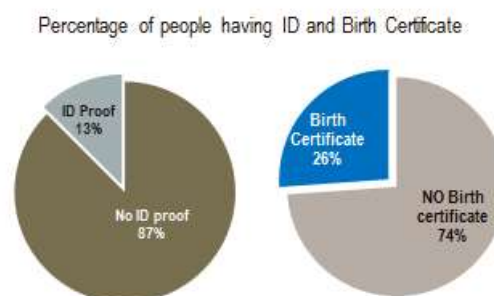


Chart 3.5-3 Showing people having birth certificate and id proof



children were born in a hospital and had a birth certificate. However she lost both these documents when heavy rains flooded her house three years ago.

In their desperation to access some form of entitlement in the city, almost all families have fallen prey to fraud. Many report that three times they have paid Rs.500 to different individuals who promised to make their ID cards for them. None of them was ever seen in the community again. When asked why they pay the money without any guarantee/ verification Sureshbhai responds "*humari umeed toh bani hai ki shayad yeh wala sachch mein kuch kar dega*".

A bigger problem arises when community members, unaware of the proper procedures, believe that by filling the form, brought to them by an unauthorized individual, their work has been done. When they do not receive any benefits, they think that despite having completed the formalities the government continues to ignore them. This has fostered a sense of antagonism towards all governmental institutions. This was brought to our notice during our session with Setu. On some occasion when the government is really trying to provide services, private fraud agencies that issue false documents create a huge misunderstanding by making the people believe that the government is intentionally ignoring them.

We saw this first hand when several people from the Vasfoda community showed us cards issued to them under the 'Swarna Jayanti Rojgar Yojana'. This card was meant to help them access some services in the city. Each household had paid Rs. 600 for these cards and they complained that despite getting the card, they had seen no benefits. When Rameshbhai from Setu saw these cards, he immediately recognized that the signatures on it were scanned and that these were fake cards

On the one hand, the Vasfoda community is desperately seeking entitlements from the city of Bhuj and on the other is unaware of how to access them as well as how to use the ones they already have. On the request of Setu we have created a survey that documents all the households that we visited, the number of people in each and the documents they have. The survey data has been attached at the end of the report.

### **Emerging Questions**

Spending a week interacting with the Banskfoda community has raised some critical questions in our minds. On the first day itself when we realized that they started settling here over 30 years ago we were faced with the question of whether or not they were still *migrants* in the city. A majority of the population has spent almost all of their life in Bhuj. The connections to the village are still alive but not uniformly; several families do not visit their village at all.

While at least part of the community has already lost rural entitlements the city has, in 30 years, not been able to provide for the most basic of their needs – food, water, shelter and electricity. Some of us had the opportunity to visit Gandhinagri and Ganeshnagar before we met the Vasfoda community. The contrasting ways in which these communities adapted to the city have made us curious as to why the Vasfoda people have remained invisible in the city. While they identify the private land ownership of the land on which they are settled as a huge vulnerability, we believe that the question requires further research.

And finally what has emerged clearly is the interconnectedness of housing, livelihoods, access to credits and entitlements. The strongest connection we witnessed was in the fact that livelihood plays a central role in the housing decisions made by this community. The Madhapar highway, an infrastructural product of the city, and the economic prominence of Bhuj in the Kutch region are critical to their survival in the city. The permanence of the housing structure is not as important a criterion as sustained access to the highway.

Repeated eviction poses as much a threat to their livelihood as to their housing – forcing them to move further away from the highway. Any intervention aimed at providing shelter cannot isolate the issues of housing and livelihoods.

## Stories from Madhapur Highway

### Deva Vira

Deva Vira (age 44) is one of these greasing men who works on Madhapur highway and earns around Rs. 200 per day. His wife Meera (age 39) works as rag picker and also contributes Rs. 150-200 to the household. They have four sons and one daughter. His daughter Kajal (age 20) got married and moved to her in-laws house near Jamnager in Kathiawad. One of his sons died in an accident at Hamirsar Lake when he and his friend had gone to hangout in the city. His two sons (age 18 and 15) also work as greasing boys on the same highway.

His young son, Dilip, (age 12) washes dishes in a *Chiwda*-making factory for a couple of hours everyday and earns around Rs. 1000 per month. For the rest of the day he walks around the GIDC area playing with his friends. He has a heavy breakfast in the morning, and is out most of the day. Meera is not sure what he eats during the day. Since everyone is out working, they do not prepare lunch at home. Sometimes he asks for Rs. 10 and eats biscuits or other such items throughout the day. A heavy dinner is prepared for the night.

They sometimes go to the *Chiwda*-factory after dinner to watch TV with the caretaker. When asked about his future, Dilip says ‘jo kaam milega wohi kar lenge’.



Figure 3.5-4 Deva Vira with wife Meera and son Dilip

Deva comes from Kathiawad region and belongs to the Vasfoda community. His family was also engaged in the traditional Banskfoda occupation of making *tokris* from *bans* (*bamboo*). When this livelihood option became unviable, he started looking for alternatives. For a while, he continued working in the village breaking scrap water pumping motor and selling the parts. After his father's death, family disputes became frequent, therefore Meera and he decided to leave the family house and move to another place. They lived and worked in a mining industry for a while before Deva's *mausi*, who was already living along the Madhapur Highway, asked them to come to Bhuj. They lived with her for a while before setting up a *kachcha* house for his family of 4. Over time, they were able to build a cement house with a *patre ka chatt*. With its strategic location along the highway, his house was a huge asset. A mechanic even tried to persuade them to sell it so that he could use it to set up his own workshop. He offered Rs. 1,65,000 for it. Deva refused to sell because it had become a nice home for them. However, his house was eventually demolished and he is unable to give details about why or by whom. Since then, he has not considered building a *pakka* house, because without land entitlement there is no certainty of shelter.

After the demolition, his family moved to the other side of the highway where the land is privately owned (GIDC industrialists). They were evicted several times, each time setting up a little further. With every move the configuration of their setting has changed. From being in a cluster of 11 houses, at present they live isolated from other houses. They claim that the place where they live presently is government land. An old

Muslim watchman at a private company saw his situation and helped him connect with a government worker who could tell him which land was public. He believes that the risk of demolition is less.

In their kachcha hut, Deva and his family have a few utensils, clothes, a khat and a few godadis. They also house a dog and her 6 puppies feeding them milk and roti regularly. They don't have access to any urban development schemes because they don't have any ID/ ration card from Bhuj city. They have nothing to

show for the 15 years that they have spent in the city. They did have the birth certificates of two of their children who were born in Bhuj. However, they lost these when their hut was flooded due to heavy rains three years ago. They do have a letter from Manav Jyoti signed by the Mamlatdar, based on which they get 10 kg of wheat free of cost every month. A relative who lives in another slum in Bhuj introduced this scheme to them. Besides this, they avoid buying grocery in bulk for a week because they always have threat of cows coming in their house and eating it. Similarly, there are threats to money, jewellery and utensils because of lack of safety in house.

Deva has no hope of any help coming from the political and economic elite of the Bansfoda community. He says '*ab who bade log ho gaye hai.. humare bare mein kyu sochenge*'. Instead he has come to depend on people who live around him and has built support systems in the city – a seth in the city who lends/ gives him money, grocery walas and chai walas who help him when needed. For the future of his children he says '*unke naseeb mein jo hoga wohi hoga*'.

### **Sureshbhai Wagajibhai Chauhan**

Sureshbhai Wagajibhai Chauhan is 35 years old. He was born in Ahmadabad and was raised up in Kathiawar (Gujarat). He was 5 years old when he came to Bhuj with his parents. His family had to leave Ahmedabad because of communal conflicts and his father came to Bhuj through a network of his own people and settled here in Bhuj. His father took this job of applying grease to trucks that ply on the Madhapar highway. Suresh's family business was to make baskets from Bamboos which they used to get (from Govt.) on subsidized rates from the jungle. Later State Government banned bamboo cutting from jungle, which created a question for their survival. This is the same story with most of them living in this settlement.

Sureshbhai is the eldest son in the family and he has two sisters and a brother. His father died at the age of 60 because of cancer. His mother Leelaben is 60 years old. He married Gita when he was 22 and has 2 sons and a daughter. His eldest son Mahesh is 15 years old and youngest son Rohit is 5 years old. His only daughter Bindiya is 10 years old. His brother also lives next to his hut in the same locality. His siblings are also married.

Sureshbhai started working when he was about 14-15 years old. Since then he is been working as a grease applier only. His job is not permanent and neither is there any certainty of getting work the next morning. He earns Rs. 200-250 /day on an average. He needs to search for job every morning and works till evening. He buys grease at Rs. 50 /day. One vehicle needs half a Kg of grease. Also, for the past 10 years he has been helping an NGO named "Manavjyot" to work in his community. His wife also works as a rag picker and earns about 150-200/day. His children go to school called "Aawas". But their schooling is not regular. Often children accompany their parents at work.



Figure 3.5-5 Sureshbhai (second from right) with his family

His house is very temporary and is made up of bamboos and clothes or any plastic materials. He is always afraid of being evicted from the place since it is private land. He has been displaced 4 times in last 30 years.

There is no water connection but he has managed an informal electric connection which allows his family to have light and watch TV at night. His wife has to bring drinking water from a broken valve near railway tracks 1 km from his house. He buys water for daily use from a water supplier at a rate of rs. 200 /2000 lit. This water lasts for 4-5 days. Their sanitation practices are also very poor. Open defecation is a common practice.

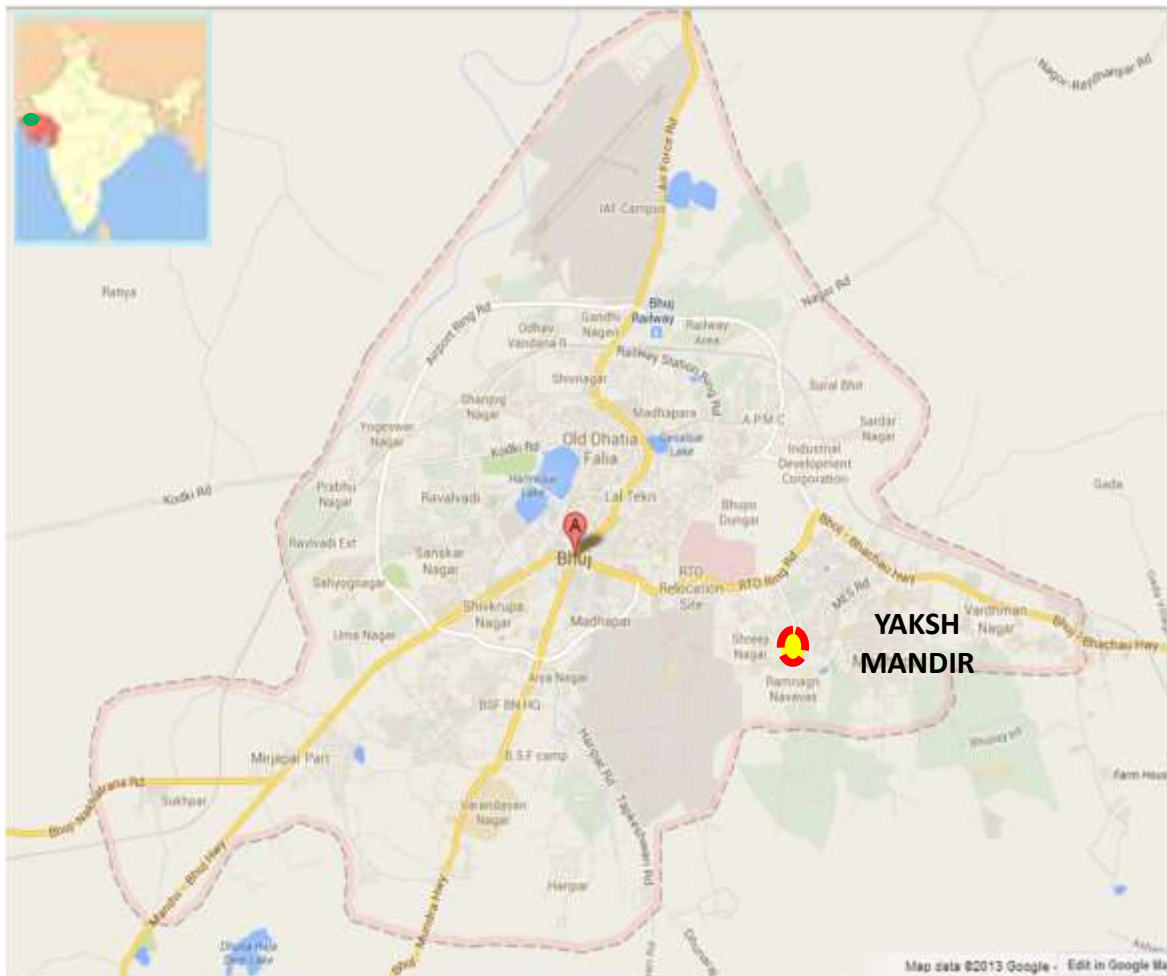
He hardly has any relatives back in the village but goes back there on some occasions like functions, marriages, etc. Their “Kuldevi” named “Khodiyar Maa” is back there in the village, so this also is a reason to travel back to village. He holds BPL card also and goes back to his village to bring subsidized food grains at regular intervals. To do so he has strong connections and good relations with village people. He goes by train and one time fair is 50 Rs. At the end of the day he saves very little.

He said though our work looks like very safe to do, there are some challenges in it. He mentioned one person died while working under the truck. After his death the community performed his rites and all the expenditure was borne by community only.

His aspirations are that he should get increased wages and should be able to possess legal land from where he will never be displaced. Leelaben, his mother, adds that “*pakka ghar humne kabhi dekha nai.. toh hum kaise bataye ki hume kaisa ghar chahiye.. bas zameen ho jahan se hume hataya na jaye aur jo humare rozgar (highway) se nazdeek ho*”

*Location:*  
**Yaksha Mandir**

*Group Members:*  
**Pratibha Caleb, Shardul Manurkar**



## 3.6 YAKSHA MANDIR

### Overview

This community consists of 15 households of 'Gond tribe' all of them originally belonging to Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Primarily, they are involved in traditional methods of treating ailments by using ayurvedic medicinal herbs commonly known as jadi-booti. According to one of the eldest informant, his ancestors started migrating to various cities of Gujarat in early decades of 20th century. One of the striking feature of this community is migration pattern is similar to nomads. There is no fixed pattern of movement and possess no place of their own hence they keep on moving from one place to another after every 8-10 years. This not only makes them more vulnerable but also creates entitlement complexities which aggravate problems related to livelihood, future of children and et al.



Map 3.6-1 Showing migration into Gujarat

### History

These settlers are originally from Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh and Nashik district of Maharashtra and belong to the Gond tribes of central India. Few of them claim to be decedents of royal family of Gonds commonly known as 'RajGonds'. Their ancestors started moving out in search of better livelihood opportunities in neighbouring states. Though lack of livelihood opportunities is one of the prime push factors, there are many supplementing circumstances such as conflict in village, beliefs related to evil eye and black magic.

## Spatial

The settlement is located on the Madhapar highway, opposite Yaksh mandir. The land is owned by the Government. It is a large expanse of flat vacant land which is used once in a year for the mela. However this particular community confines itself to only a small area of the land with 15 household distributed in a linear fashion, divided by a self asserted path. This land is being occupied by the community since last 10-15 years. Their settlement is highly transient in nature. They do not occupy this part of land throughout the year. They spend 8-9 months of a year in this type of shelter and for rest of the days they go back to their semi-permanent base in nearby village Adipur which is roughly 40Km away from the city of Bhuj.



Figure 3.6-1 Resource map made by children in the community

## Nature of settlement

In terms of housing typology, their shelter is made of very rudimentary material. It is supported by bamboo frame and covered by sari and other clothing material. Typically size of a tenement varies between 30-40sqft. Floors are coated with mud and cow dung. There is small 'chulah' outside each hut made up of bricks and mud put together which is used for cooking purpose. Usually a tenement is divided into two compartments.



Figure 3.6-2 Tenements made of bamboo and cloth

## Resources

Firewood and water are the most basic requirements for this community. They source water for domestic use from a nearby pond whereas drinking water is provided by an owner of semi pucca house located a few meters away from their settlement, free of cost. Firewood is collected from the surrounding areas and at times from Bhujia hill located a few kilometres away. This is one of the major pull factor that the city of Bhuj offers them which is not available in the village of Adipur.

At times they access other services provided by city such as health service in Government hospital, transport service which are available at a considerable distance from their settlement. One of the informants told us that in case of emergency they prefer to go to a private medical facility than government medical hospital.

Children in this community lack regular access to formal education. There are no government or private schools in the neighbourhood area. Yaksha Mandir provides education facility to these children through a trust but it is not regular.



Map 3.6-2 Resource map

Groceries and vegetables are purchased on a daily basis from shops located ahead of the road. Health facilities are availed from the Government hospital and for minor sicknesses they refer to private practitioners.

What is progressive about their community is that they have begun to accept institutionalised delivery for women. Majority of the recent births have taken place in hospitals and have been provided with birth certificates.

## Livelihood

As forest dwellers, they possess good knowledge of medicinal herbs and plants, thus they were involved in practicing traditional methods of diagnosing and prescribing ayurvedic drugs (jadi-booti). They set up their stalls at various locations in the city like bus stand, market, and railway station in the cities or towns. They do not have a permit to setup stalls on the roadside so they are constantly vulnerable to eviction. They setup shop wherever they find space by spreading a plastic sheet on the ground and displaying their medicines in the suitcase. At times they also roam around various office complexes, offering their medicine to the people there. In this way



one is able to build a good rapport with the people here and form a network which often goes beyond just the particular city further towards other clients in other cities like Mumbai.

There is no formal method of transferring knowledge from one generation to next generation. A child starts observing and accompanying his father in the field and learns the required skills necessary to continue this occupation. Required raw material is procured either from Junagarh or from Panchmarhi.



The diagnosis is done by observing pulse of a person. For example a 60 year old lady from Akola was suffering from a nose bleed for several years. She had gone to several doctors and in spite of taking several tests and medicines they could not find a cure to her ailment. Finally, she found cure by these traditional medicines. Thus perform the role of a doctor, pharmacist and finally a chemist together.

### Credit

Monthly income for a single household ranges between Rs 2000-4000. However it also varies through different seasons. As per the informant income is more during winter and considerably less during the rainy season. Thus during this season they opt for other sources to supplement their income like selling of stickers and posters at various locations in the city.

70% of their daily income is spent on the groceries (ration) and vegetables. Other daily expenditure includes travelling from home to workplace and back, and in recent years, expense on mobiles has also become a crucial component.

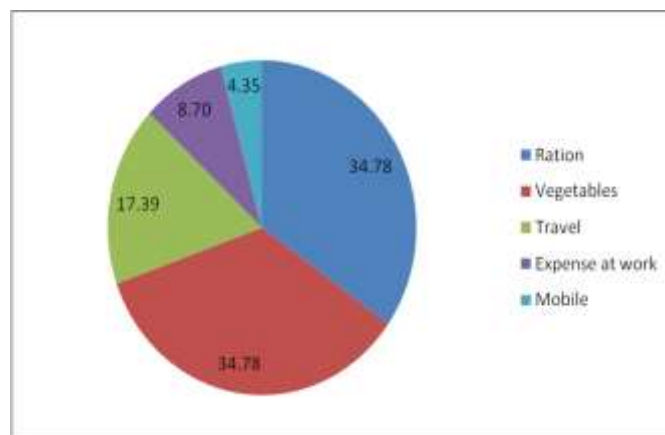


Chart 3.6-1 Showing daily expenditure

A considerable amount of their income is spent on marriages and festivals. At times they are compelled to borrow at an exorbitant rate of interest (100%). Irrespective of time period, the amount to be repaid is double. For example, Ramsingh ji had borrowed Rs 40,000 for his daughter's marriage and successfully repaid the amount with interest within 5 years. However in the case of default, the issue is referred to the Jati Panchayat.

Due to lack of legal papers, they are unable open bank accounts, thus the facility of saving is a difficult proposition for them.

### **Entitlements**

In spite of being from tribal community, very few household possess a certificate from a competent authority about their identity. Hence they are unavailable to avail the entitlements like ration, free education to their children and benefits under various government schemes like Indira Awas Yojana.

Inter- state migration augments the problems between the needs of these people and the functioning of the state authorities. The informants have reported that some of their relatives had received benefits under different Government schemes at their native places. They complained that the Gujarat Government has still not provided them with such benefits.

Thus there is a mismatch between the understanding of the criteria for availing of these benefits by the community and the State Government.

### **Children**

In this entire process of migration, the children are the ones who have to silently bear the brunt of the instability that migration causes.



Their education and to a certain extent their childhood is jeopardized due to the unfortunate circumstances of having to constantly move around with their parents not getting a chance to attend school for a considerable period of time. Thus there is a frequent disruption in the schooling of these children. Often this disruption can be attributed to the change in medium of instruction in schools. For example Jalaram had studied upto 6th standard in Madhya Pradesh, however now that his family is settled here in Gujarat, he is not able to comprehend what is taught in school, since the medium of instruction is in Gujarati.

## Analysis

Most of the families in this community are migrating from one place to other since last 30 years. For example Ramsinghji in his 62 years of life has changed five places and still uncertain about his future. Since last 10-15 years most of them have been settled in nearby village Adipur. When asked about their preference to get settle, almost each of them is willing to settle in Adipur. However it is interesting to know that the Adipur village charges for the basic facilities like water and firewood and that one of the prominent push factor that drives them out of the village. Whereas the Bhuj city provides these basic needs for free of cost that is one of the major pull factor that they spend 8-9 months in a year in the Bhuj city.

Permanence in temporariness is a term we would like to use to best describe their situation in terms of shelter. The present location is a common site for migrants such as these who come in search for work in and around Bhuj and leave when they feel that they might find better opportunities else. However they seem to make a mark in this particular place in Bhuj. Across all families there a sense of happiness and satisfaction for their present location. An interesting thing that we found out was that when they leave for Adipur they do not dismantle their tent. What is most interesting is that even if they do dismantle their tent, a new settler will never build his/her shelter on that same property but will find place elsewhere. Thus there seems to be a slight degree of ownership of space that they people enjoy and thus permanence in a temporary setting.

### CAUSES FOR MIGRATION



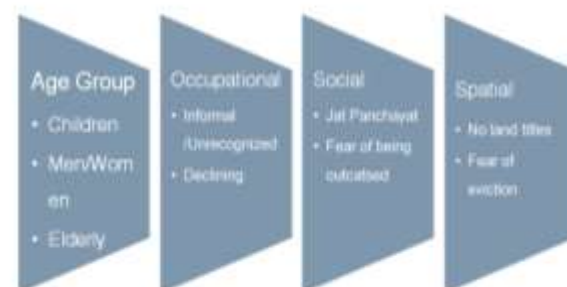
Having immense knowledge about medicinal herbs, the source of this knowledge has been handed down through generations. As a result this knowledge has not got formal recognition. Changing perceptions and advancement in the formal medical knowledge has led to the decline in the demand of traditional ayurvedic medicines.

The younger generation belonging to this community is not willing to take this traditional work as full time job. They have now gradually begun to diversify into small scale catering businesses during weddings. They have begun to learn different regional as well as continental recipes such as Gujarati, Punjabi, south Indian, Chinese and even Oonji bhai mentioned that his son has begun to learn how to cook Italian dishes.

## Vulnerability

Assessment of vulnerability of migrants is one of the core theme of this study. We have tried to categorise vulnerability of the community under the different heads as mentioned in above diagram. First being age group or broadly demographic vulnerability. Children in this category are susceptible to different diseases due to lack of immunization and access (affordability) to health facility in their early childhood. This results into malnutrition and situation

### VULNERABILITY



in augmented by lack of education. Thus transient nature of livelihood of parents takes a great toll future generation. Men are constantly under threat of sustainability of their livelihood. Whereas women in this community are constantly under pressure for making arrangements for basic needs such as water and firewood. Elderly people are left unattended as their children are away from home.

Strong intra-community bonds have both advantages as well as disadvantages. As a tribal community, mandates and rulings of 'Jati-Panchayat' have very wide reach and acceptance. Any deviance to the mandates of Jati-panchayat attracts severe punishment and often that person or family is out casted. Thus they are under fear of being out casted.

Spatial vulnerability is all pervasive. As they do not possess land, they are under constant threat of evacuation by administration or land owner.

The expenditure pattern we observed strictly follows Angel's law indicating a major chunk of income is spent on the food items. Many people expressed their interest in opening a bank account that will help them to save some part of their earnings. This indicates that irrespective of magnitude of income they are willing to save certain sum that will secure their future. Financial vulnerability is at the core and increases their susceptibility to other vulnerabilities.

## **Reflections**

In the last 10 days spent with the community our interaction with them has been fruitful. Our task was to understand the community, their present situation and their needs. So that it would help in the implementation of the RAY scheme in Bhuj. However, the situation on ground changed our understanding of migrants. We began to look beyond just the need of housing for the migrants and began to look at different themes of livelihood, entitlements, networking etc.

Our understanding brought out some key observations about this community. First being that education is seen as being an important part in the lives of their children. However the cost of education is often exceeds in relation to the quality of education imparted to these children. The informants in the community mentioned that they pay Rs 850 per year as school fees in Adipur but in return there is no regular schooling.

Something that we sensed from the community was the willingness to learn and to acquire new skills in order to adapt to the changing nature of their occupation.

Bhuj being a small city, it is easy to get around. However we sensed a certain social distant that seemed to divide the community from the rest of the city, much more than the actual physical distance. Their thoughts and views on Bhuj were always from an outsider's perspective and they never viewed the city to be their own.

Another thought which crossed our minds was that the world is now focussing on knowledge based service. This community of jadi-booti walas has clearly provided knowledge based services for centuries; however the informal nature of their knowledge makes them redundant. Thus there needs to be a way in which their knowledge can be formalised, this resulting in tribal integration, rather than tribal assimilation.

## Human stories

### *Ram Singhji (Rainu) Rajond*

61 year old Rainuji proudly tells us his surname as Rajgind which makes him a part of lineage of royal family of Gonds who were once ruling the forests of central India spread across three states.

We have all studied the later part of this history in terms of how the British invaded and plundered them economically and culturally as well. This is a small attempt to understand the life of the tribal community of Gond who are temporarily settled in and around the city of Bhuj.

In front of Yaksha mandir off the Madhapur highway there are about 15 families who are primarily involved in prescribing and selling ayurvedic medicines locally known as 'jadibooti'.

Rainuji was 10 years old when he left his birthplace in search of better opportunities with his parents. His parents were part of a caravan which consisted of about 40-50 families. Initially they spent 8-10 years in Ahemadbad and later they moved to Baroda where Rainuji got married and spent 4-5 years practicing selling of ayurvedic medicines. After Baroda he settled in Gandhidham for another 8-10 years. As construction of Mundra port started, their families got evicted from the land and once again their journey started to find a new place. Since the last 15 years about 150 families of Gonds have been settled (or camped) in Adipur.

Rainuji and his family spend 8-9 months in a year in the Bhuj city. He sets up his shop on the pavements in crowded places like the bus stand with a suitcase. At times he also visits administrative offices and, police stations in the city and offers medicines. His monthly income varies between 2000 -4000. He pointed out seasonal variation in income levels, as winter season gives good returns whereas income decreases significantly in the rainy season. He clearly mentioned declining trend of his traditional livelihood and lack of interest of new generation to carry on with the same profession. Both of his sons are involved in small scale catering business, and this is the case with almost every family where the younger generation is seeking out alternative options to sustain themselves.



**Figure 3.6-3 Ram Singhji at his workplace**

**Shankar Kankaria**

Shankar bhai proudly shows us his folder comprising almost all of his life achievements. It comprises of recommendations from some of his patients, pictures taken of him with eminent people at various melas and other legal documents he possesses. He very confidently reads out what is written in each document and talks about his journey to Bhuj. He is originally from Madhya Pradesh belonging to the Gond tribe. His father along with the rest of his family travelled to various places in Maharashtra and Gujarat in search for better opportunities. Finally they reached Rajkot by the time



**Figure 3.6-4 Shankar bhai during his prayers**

Shankar was fifteen and he started working in an engineering company working on connecting rods. However life was not easy in Rajkot where they lived in a community that performed black magic. Stuck within this community, it led to the untimely death of his elder brother. Further interrogation on this story was not possible because Shankar bhai burst into tears and preferred not to talk about it.

This incident had led to their exodus from Rajkot and found refuge in the Kachchh, adopting Adipur as their main base camp and from there they constantly move locations, staying at a particular location for not more than 3-4 months. His present location is in Bhuj from where he keeps visiting his customers in Nakhatrana and Anjar.

According to him, the temporary structure of their shelter is of least importance to him. He confesses to have not given much thought to how their shelter is to be setup. What is most important to them is assurance of not getting evicted and where they can receive the basic services of fuel and water easily.

Although he never received any kind of formal education, out of his own desire to learn he learnt how to read and write in Hindi and Marathi. This gave him a sense of empowerment to be able to get his legal documents together. He has managed to get two election cards for his wife and himself. One belongs to Khandwa in Madhya Pradesh and the other is of Adipur in Gujarat. He has one daughter and 7 sons, none of whom have been able to receive proper education due to the temporary nature of their stay in any given location.

Money for him is an entity which helps them to live one day at a time. Saving is a far of thought, because their daily income is so meagre and so irregular that it is very difficult to save. However in the last couple of years due to decline in their own occupation they have realised that saving is something that may help.

Declining trend of traditional occupation has led to uncertain of the mode of livelihood, thus leading to constant migration in search for better opportunities. This has created multiple issues pertaining to identity, access to credit and has severely affected the education of their children due to constant displacement. Thus the vicious cycle of poverty continues, making them vulnerable more than ever.

## 3.7 STORIES FROM OTHER LOCATIONS

As our class chose 6 settlements to work with which had similar looking issues of basic entitlement and temporary structures, some other settlements were left behind, mainly because they were more settled in nature. But the journey of meeting people from these various spaces, even for a little while was an enriching experience for the team. Here are the few memorable stories from such spaces-

### **Sural Bheet Road**

This settlement derives its name from the name of the road, where the community is settled on either side. It is a secluded space near the Gujarat Electricity Board. On one side of the road lie the pre earthquake migrants mainly from the maaldhaari community from Haripur, while on the other side are the migrants who came in post the earthquake. The livelihood of the community ranges widely and similar occupations live in similar regions. The team met Kumbhaars, cement block makers, charcoal vendors, construction labourers, brick makers and the maaldhaaris all in the same area.

Though most of the community here is of the settled type as they have been there for a long time and have all entitlements except land rights, the area had a distinct sense of buzzing activity all around. For most livelihoods in the area, the need for space was most common. The Kumbhaars, the cement and brick block makers, the maaldhaaris etc needed a certain amount of space attached to their house to carry out their day to day work. Through the years, the families had built for themselves that space, some moving here for the precise reason- want for space to build.

Some of the work networks were also complementary, as was found about Baba Iliyaas dada and his brothers. He himself was a construction labourer who worked on contract along with his wife and daughter. His brother made charcoal from the wild shrubs and bushes growing around. And another brother owned a donkey cart. Together one made the charcoal and loaded it onto the donkey cart and sold it in the market. In this way, they seemed to be connected to each other and complementing their trades with one another.

There was also a shift in occupation as was seen in the settlement. On speaking to Karsan ji the maaldhaari community, he told us how it was a difficult occupation to sustain so he had to move away from it. The Kumbhaar family we spoke to also said that they don't think their children were interested in taking forward this traditional as it was not viable. It did not deter us from watching the range of mud equipment that was being made there- tandoor ovens, mud stoves, piggy banks, vases, shrines, pots and pans, etc.

### **Ganeshnagar**

Ganeshnagar is a large, mixed residential area with a prominent rabari settlement. The rabaris come from areas such as Nakhatrana and Abdasa. The key driver was the lack of stable livelihoods. The situation of drought was a major factor since village livelihoods were largely animal husbandry based. In their words, they found work for four days and remained workless for about another four to five.

Families remember coming here 22 to 30 years back. A few came and others followed. They initially settled in an area called Rajvada, then moved to Patelwadi and finally to Ganeshnagar. The place was close to a 'vay' (well/water source) and thus people started settling there.

Ganeshnagar was considered an auspicious name and later a Ganesh temple was built to anchor it.

When they first came, the rabaris engaged in piecemeal house work (even the menfolk). Gradually the livelihoods settled into a niche area of milk distribution. The primary occupation now is milk distribution, while a few own cattle and are engaged in milk production. Milk is collected from villages about 20-40 kms away in small tempos and brought to Bhuj. The milk is put in cold storage units where spaces are rented out (most are owned by Patels), and cans have a systematic method of labelling according to the family name. Cow milk is presently (Dec 2013) at 25-30 rupees a litre.

Almost all the women work as household help. Rates are 200/job. No internal formal or informal organisation of labour exists between them. Rabari women up to the age of 50-60 too, are found engaging in household work.

Some work as drivers for private cars and jeeps. The younger boys mention some in their community opting for ITI and taking up work as electricians, welders etc.

The settlement houses other communities such as brahmans too. It is thus understood as divisions of faliyas and vaas. The rabari vaas comprises of rabari families that live in compound units where extended families tend to stay next to each other and share some common open spaces/utilities. The houses tend to face into internal streets and not the primary streets. The womenfolk did not identify any particular authority in Ganeshnagar or any informal institution that tended to the needs of the settlement. The residents identify no real issues with their settlement. They say by god's grace things are good now. They have chhakdas coming close to their homes. The settlement now has electricity and water connections. Water is not continuous, it is provided about once or twice a week and needs to be stored. The only thing the place lacks is pucca roads. There is no internal water logging reported. There are shops interspersed at regular intervals, which include kirana-walas, tailors etc.

The children go to a nearby school. Young girls tend to drop out after primary schooling. The boys too continue only on the basis of self-interest. Marriageable age of girls is considered as 18-19 and of boys as around 21 and onwards.

There is no real space in Ganeshnagar for the new settlers to come and build homes. They thus rent out houses or take over homes where the owners wish to sell. Rental rates start at about 1000 rupees/month for a typical house. Milk distribution is largely considered to be a profitable occupation. The trouble comes in times of drought, especially for those who own cattle. The cattle have to then be taken to areas as far out as Ahmedabad for grazing.

The rabaris have no real internal hierarchy in terms of class, but they follow some norms for marriage (They do not marry within certain groups). Some rabaris mention their family members being on the other side of the border in Pakistan. They are however, not in touch with them.

### **Community in the Vicinity of the Air Force Base**

This community is located on the opposite side of the Air force base in the city of Bhuj. We were told that in total there were 30 to 35 houses and they were predominantly from MP. When we actually visited the community we counted 56 houses in total. Also there was another community just behind this community and these people are from Bihar.

The settlement came to existence after earthquake. These people are Predominantly from Alirajpur district of Madhya Pradesh and few of them are from Bihar. They are all construction



workers working for a private builder from Bihar named Paal builder for 7 days a week from 9 am to 5 pm without any holiday. They work inside the Air Force Campus as helpers. They live with their families in a small block house which was provided by the builder himself. They are provided with free electricity and water connection. There is no provision for sanitation and open defecation is a common practice. Both men and women work at the same site for the very same builder.

Working at the construction site as labourers is the only livelihood for this community. They all work for Paal builder. There are two types of work profiles, one as a helper and another as a "Karigar". Karigar is a more skilled person than helper. Helpers are paid 200/day if it's a man. Woman helper is paid 190/day. Karigars are men only and they earn 500 to 550/day.

They don't have a particular common history. Though they are all from one place mostly, they have their own individual stories. Some are here for money, some just want to be away from home, some are bachelors who want to roam around the country through means of work but for most of them money is the sole purpose of their work. They work for 7 days a week. For which they are paid on per day basis but only receive their income at the end of the month.

This settlement is one of its own kinds. Here, houses are provided by the builder with water and electricity. Wages are given on daily basis. Work location is safe and very close to their settlement so that they don't even have to spend a single penny on traveling. Because of all these facilities and location advantages many people from the Alirajpur district of MP have to migrate in this settlement.

There is no fixed, regular and common pattern of migration. There are people in this community who have been living here since last 13-14 years at the same time there are people who came here just few months back. For most of the people regular availability of work is the main factor which drives them here. Those for whom money is the only reason to work here are staying for last several years. They go to their villages for festivals or some important occasions. But many people keep coming and going on a regular interval. They come, work for 4-5 months on an average and go back to their native place. They have their families back in the village and own some land. They go back for agricultural activities and come back in seasons when there is no work available. By doing so, they can continue with their farming too. There are some people who mentioned that they don't really work for money, they work for a change. These people have their families and home back in the village. When they feel that they should work they come here and work, which is also like a change for them. There are some exceptions also who are here just because they don't want to stay back at home. These kind of people are mostly youngsters. They like to switch jobs from time to time so that they can visit and see different cities. They also work for 4 – 5 months and leave the job.

There are few people from Bihar and Himachal Pradesh. There are just 2 men from Himachal Pradesh and they work as refrigeration maintenance people. They also work for 7-8 months at a time. They work for a different builder. People from Bihar also work for a different builder. One common thing among all of their work is that there is no legal bond with the builder which enables them to leave and get a job anywhere else at any point of time.

They all live in a small block houses provided by the builder with water and electricity connections. These blocks are approximately 7 by 8 feet long. There are total 56 blocks. They are quite aware of the fact that when the construction is over they will have to vacate the land. They have minimal belongings in their houses. Very few people have television sets. There is a visible difference in the houses of helpers and "Karigars". Karigars have bigger houses and they have little more belongings with T.V. and tube lights whereas helpers don't have all these things. There are two water taps provided to them and no sanitation facility. They defecate on an open ground close to their locality. They use firewood for cooking which they need to collect from

their surroundings. Both men and women collect firewood and also bring vegetables from nearby market. For health issues they go to the private doctors and not to the government hospitals though they provide free treatments. According to them, government hospitals procedure is time consuming and they might lose next day's wage if they don't recover soon.

The main reason for this unique migration pattern is networks. They have contacts with many more contractors, supervisors and builders. There is always an availability of work so both the employee and employers are always in contact with each other. Also there is a mouth to mouth publicity of work.

Cell phones play an important role in maintaining and increasing the network. All their communication is conducted on phone only. Availability of job and well established networks enables them to come up with such a unique migration pattern.

People prefer working here because of the availability of basic facilities like housing, water and electricity supply. But people living in this locality work for different builders and do different work. Also the contractors are charged minimally for water and electricity bills which led us to an interpretation that the contractors are asked to build temporary houses for workers by the government since it is a government project. Hence, this settlement pattern may be a good example for the RAY project initiated by the central government which has a provision for temporary migration.

People in the community are predominantly in the age group of 20 to 50. Elderly and children are not so visible. In most cases they leave children behind in the village with elderly people to study. They save as much as possible and send it back to their village. and those who are living alone, mostly bachelors, manage to send more than half of the income home.

They demand increase in the wages from 200 to 250 or 300/day. Apart from wage increase they don't really have any aspirations from employer. One thing which was prominently visible among all of them was their reluctance for sharing information.

### Shanti Nagar

Another settlement visited by the team was the Shanti Nagar settlement located at the fringes of a gutter, which was once a pond and a chief source of water for the inhabitants. We spoke to a family there that had about 25-30 households in the area, all related to one another. The first members of the family to have come here was around 50 years ago, and we had the opportunity of speaking to them. This was what they had to say-

The head of this family, Mohamad Ali ji came with his wife almost 50 years ago where the place was a pond and space to keep their cattle. They come from the Ahliades sect of the Shias, and later many more members of their family joined them here. They were Hindus living in the vicinity from the Rajgaur community, but they liked them and have never had any conflict with them.

The family now has 6 sons, 3 of them married and having children of their own. They have built houses next to one another in the same place. Other extended family also lives with them, thus making them one big family of 30 households. They also intermarry within the family. In their words 'ghar ki ladkiyon ko ghar pe hi rakhte hai. Bahaar nai dete.'

Their cattle, around 16 cows and 3 buffaloes are tethered around 2 km from their house in a forest clearing. This is also because there is a lack of space around where they live. Thus the cattle milk provides them their chief source of livelihood. The family sends their children to private schools as well as madrasas. They hope their children would go and become tea vendors

and work in salaried jobs. Only one of their grandchildren has expressed the need to pursue looking after cattle, they said.

The family tells us how the pond they live next to was turned into a gutter when the houses in the vicinity built sewer lines that led to it. And each year during the rains, the water level rises and engulfs their house in gutter water for 2-3 days. The sons told us how the first time this flooding happened; Mohammad ji refused to leave the house and almost drowned. He had to be carried out by the sons.

### Bapadayalunagar

Bapadayalunagar is a largely muslim-dominated settlement. In the times of princely rule, there existed a panjrapole (cattleshed) in this area. Animal rearers thus arrived from nearing villages with their animals and settled in adjoining areas. The current location is settled on kabrastan (graveyard) lands. The family members of the settlers have been trickling in ever since. About 200 families are estimated to have been added over the past 10 years, with an average of about 12 families a year. However the peripheries don't seem to be expanding that rapidly. Of the entire area, Sheikh faliyu is reported to be expanding at the fastest pace. They are goat traders, many of whom leave their goats in the nearing villages and pick them up when they need to trade.

The typical typology is that of a dwelling unit within a large walled space. The land plots are fairly large and the tendency is to build along the peripheries, thereby always leaving space for expansion and accommodating additional members within the compound. House units are the single room type which also helps in addition. The residents mention a very strong network of information within the settlement where they know of every single household, and 'trouble making' members are often asked to leave.

Upon arriving at the home of Fatimaben, an active SHG member, we learned that that the family had just bid adieu to their aunt from Pakistan, who had come on a special visit to get her son married. They explained that the kind of visa granted was such that the visiting family was not allowed to leave the city/town that they had declared they would be visiting at the time of applying for a visa. None of Fatimaben's family had, however, visited Pakistan as yet.

It is at the home of Fatimaben that we met one of the very few interstate migrant families of Bapadayalunagar. The primary occupation of this family was panipuri vending and they hailed from UP (near Jaunpur in Benaras district). The family first arrived at neighbouring Gandhinagari to stay at the home of the husband's elder brother, then moved here on rent and gradually found a single room to buy. When the son married, they subdivided the same room into two to make personal space for the new couple.

The family does not own a ration card, though they do mention an instance where they paid a tout about 800 rupees for getting the ration card made. The children do not go to school. Only the eldest son is engaged in pani puri vending, as the father is no longer engaged in the enterprise. The family prefers to keep to themselves. The one surprising factor was that almost every woman in Bapadayalunagar is associated with an SHG, save for this family. Theirs is the only family in the settlement that yet does not have a toilet facility in their home. They have also not responded to any of the awareness campaigns for getting legal documentation in place.

What came across as a striking aspect here was that despite having lived in the neighbourhood for over 10 years, the particular family had not particularly built any social capital in their immediate vicinity. The lady of the household, Shakuntala, maintained that the only reason for this was that they did not wish to, even unintentionally, create any opportunities of discord or misgiving with the neighbours.

## Gandhi Nagari

Gandhi Nagari is a 25 year old settlement that lies in the heart of the city and has a whole range of migrants from different parts of the states as well as other states and having diverse means of livelihood.

We met a kiraanawaala who had been here for longer than the rule of the king. He spoke of how people moved here before and after the earthquake because the space was unclaimed. He remembers paying taxes for the land many years ago, which later stopped. He has also filed for rights of the land to the Nagar Pallika.

Another woman who was staying in Gandhi Nagari told us her experience of the earthquake. She remembers her house destroyed by the earthquake and how she and her family were staying on the road. Food packets would be sent by helicopters of the Air Force and camps were set up. She also told us how her house was rebuilt. Foreign philanthropists helped rebuild her house and asked only for blessings in return. She says 'apni sarkar ne kuch nahi kiya lekin vilayati ajnabi ne ghar baandh ke diya.'

In this way the team met shopkeepers, pundits, chai waalas, ice cream waalas, maaldhaaris, and even clerks and office going people in the Gandhi Nagari settlement. An outsider who had set shop in the vicinity told us how old the settlement was and how now it was difficult to gain entry into the settlement. The team also met young girls working on bandhini work on contract for manufactures in the city.

## Thelewaalas (Street hawkers)

From our various conversations with communities, we were told that migrants coming in from Rajasthan chiefly sold paani puri or ice cream. So we also tried to trace the migrants from the source point itself, on an active primary road opposite the Reliance Mall. Here were some of our findings

The paani puri waalas in Bhuj mostly belong to Rajasthan. This was verified from the market place. Localites also made paani puri, but it was of a different kind. The Rajasthanis styles were preferred. On asking what was so special about them, a local thelewaala said that they learn to make it from Rajasthan and they didn't know what the difference was. It was a craft that they specialised in.

We also spoke to a local contractor who employed people from the north east, particularly Nepal, to run fast food joints. He said many of the people from Nepal were settled in Bhuj for a long time, some who were even born here. They have a strong internal network, and it is often the employer who takes on the responsibility of their lodging and food. The same contractor also mentioned that nowadays, it was getting difficult to get rental housing for them which was pakka in nature because of all the paperwork needed. What ends up happening thus is that landlords of illegal settlements are the only ones who give housing without the needed paperwork, as they themselves are unwilling to approach the police for necessary verification.

It was also told to the team that the carnival of Rann and the oncoming tourism was the best time for enterprises to thrive. While competition was increasing, the Kutchi love for food and the openness in the attitude of the city dwellers to embrace efforts at livelihood earning by any aspirant, came across as both the pull and keep factors.

## 4 EMERGING THEMATIC FINDINGS

In approaching a group of dwellers, taking on the notion of them being a community was an aspect that was most strikingly challenged in our experiences. In fact, **what was challenged was not only the notion of a community, its enclosure and its boundaries, but also the concept of stability that did not necessarily associate with an idea of permanence.** Each of these settlements feature migrants from a particular region, largely Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, and some parts of Gujarat. The migrants also largely belong to a single religious community. Thus there did exist a perceived understanding of where a migrant from a particular area would set up home upon arrival in the city (amidst similar families, and aided by a strong information network of existing family members). Yet, it came as a fair surprise that several people did not associate or communicate with their immediate neighbours in the cluster unless they were part of an extended family. The 'matter of fact'ness with which this was put forth was worded simply as *"there is no light here during the night for us to even see, and by the time our daily chores are done, where is the time to socialise?"*<sup>5</sup>

Unlike the other construction labourers' settlements, the people at the RTO area would leave their children in the settlement. The group of students studying this area came up with the observation very soon into the study that it was only amidst the children that the sense of them 'living together' emerged. These children spent time together during the day, and were able to place their friends and their respective houses within the settlement. However, in several of the other locations, the children in the age group of 5-16 were completely absent, thereby disallowing even this circle of association to formulate.

A fair number of the migrants returned to their villages during key festivals. When asked how those who stayed back celebrated the occasions, there came across a strong reference to Jubilee Circle as the place where all the gathering and festivity took place. Jubilee Circle seemed to be where the consolidation of an idea of a community seemed to manifest, not necessarily as one that lived together, but which put themselves out to a similar pattern of opportunity, realisation and variability in the access to livelihood.

But in parallel, instances of solidarity and support have also been noted, sometimes explicitly and often very implicitly. At the Bhujiyoo settlement, the accidental death of a construction labourer on site at Bhuj brought people together to pool in money and get his body to be sent to the native village (at Madhya Pradesh) for the final rites to be conducted. Similarly, at the cluster opposite the Leva Patel Hospital (and in an arrangement probably common to various other locations too), there came across an unsaid understanding that anybody who wished to build their huts on an empty slot of land could go ahead and do so, without having to consult or communicate with the existing dwellers. Empty hutments were often pointed out to newly arriving families and the new occupants, in turn, asked to vacate should the original family return. Moreover, while all the households shared common sources of water and went through the same amount of drudgery to procure it, there were no fights for water amongst the migrant communities themselves that were reported by any of them. Could these be considered as **undertoned/unstated norms of governance that actually existed despite the seeming absence of them**, whereby what was shared and laid out was a level plane for accessing a

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<sup>5</sup> This brings to light the long working hours of the migrant community, from sunrise to sunset. These include the added but unaccounted hours spent in the procurement of work on a daily basis.

means of subsistence and livelihood, and what was protected was one's own capacity for claiming it?

When tracing the roots of these settlements and the stimuli that bring them to city, the understanding is that the push and pull factors are fairly homogeneous in character. But after the preliminary visits to migrant settlements, the single common picture that the term 'migrant' had stood for earlier in our minds was pulled to the fore and questioned. As we moved ahead from basic questions, the heterogeneity observed within and across settlements led to the term being articulated in varied forms. The migrants came across as a **heterogeneous group in a supposedly homogenous predisposition**.

The Vasfoda community records 30 years of movement within Bhuj, the only consistent reference being the highway and its ties to their livelihood which has remained unchanged. With the younger generation relating themselves lesser to the native villages, then by what rationale does the tag 'migrant' apply to them, is a question for further research. Yet, when their conditions in terms of entitlements, living conditions and identity in the city are considered, they vary not much from the seasonal migrants or the Gond tribals with their traditional medicinal knowledge. However, they vary greatly from the settled residents of areas such as Ganeshnagar and Gandhinagari (largely comprised of migrants from surrounding villages of Bhuj), who also speak of a presence in the city for more than 30 years. The presence of these communities in the same state today as they did been on arrival at Bhuj highlights an emerging 'insider vs outsider' variation. This brings attention onto another phenomenon that deserves elaboration, and which has been further articulated as a **'social construct of otherness'**.

In the backdrop of a slowdown in building construction in Bhuj, this is further reflected in the subtle hostility that some natives hold towards the migrants, especially those seen as competition for construction labour. During an interview of construction labourers at Jubilee Circle, one of the natives stated *'these migrants...they get water, food etc. live on all services for free...and they don't have any expenditure, where will we go if all the work is taken by them?'*

This sense of 'othering' them is not restricted within the attitudes of the locals alone. It was mirrored also in the hostility of the more settled migrants and those in more regularised, secured jobs towards the daily wage labourers. The widespread perception is that daily wage labour as a choice arises out of the desire to remain free of accountability and responsibility that a settled job brought upon. It was thought also as a need for money on a daily basis for spending on activities such as alcohol consumption, something that a monthly salary did not facilitate.

Engaging in daily wages stems from a slightly different reality for those who engage in them. Their need to return at regular intervals to their native villages for attending to their fields and their familial commitments often makes it difficult to enter or retain more permanent employment. The uncertainty of work availability upon return encourages them to not build up or leave behind permanent possessions (including hutments) in their locations of work. This temporary structure of the hutment, in turn, is more prone to invasion by animals and thieves, compelling them to not store valuables inside and also to procure food on a daily basis. Thus, one can observe a complete cycle in which the social construct of their life as unsettled and non-reliable is reinforced by the conditions of their coping mechanisms.

**The temporariness of housing comes across often as deliberate and desirable**, a strategy to allow them to pursue livelihood opportunities elsewhere. While it was unexpected to receive a response to the query, *'ye ghar aapne kab banaya?'* as, *'ye ghar thodi hi hai, ye jhopada hai. ghar to gaon me hai'*, what that actually implied was unfolded over the subsequent days of interacting with them, and finally when three families who had been residing in Bhuj for as many as eight years disappeared overnight for another city on the penultimate day of the study.

It also started becoming remotely apparent that those with more years of existence in the city and stronger local networks tended to take up positions of dominance over the newer/more mobile families. A choice to not associate with any larger social grouping and spend their time as a single household in the cluster could also perhaps be attributed as a means to defy the vulnerability that such an alliance might otherwise bestow.

Moreover, there are examples of how there have been attempts on their part to stabilise their money earning, spending and saving patterns even within their conditions of variability, the existence of the Panditji being a case in point. Many of the community members in fact mentioned handing over their savings to Panditji so that they would not spend it out on drinking. Many have left their children back in the villages in order to secure continuity in their education, and this in itself raises a cost that they aim to fulfil by working in the city. This brings us on to another key aspect that has emerged over the course of the study, which is the **placement of children in the aspirational circle of migrants.**

The children of the migrants hold a position which is vulnerable in its own ways. While most parents are aware of the need for the children to be allowed basic education, how they have managed to succeed in this requires further delving. Some migrant parents understand the vulnerability in continuing the same profession as theirs and intend to bring the children out of that loop. However the situation has not been that conducive for this. Although parents from the Desalsar lake settlements have been able to enrol their children in schools, the larger societal attitude that the children have to face in schools deters them from attending school. Even if construction labourers are financially able to send the children to schools in Bhuj, enrolment is not possible due to lack of residence and identity proofs. In another instance, a Trust based in Bhuj began to provide education for migrant children by offering them study material, uniforms and bus services to the school for free. However the medium of instruction being in Gujarati, the children dropped out of school within two months of enrolment.

The safety of the children is also at stake especially of those with parents on construction sites where they cannot be monitored all the time and similarly at the settlements where the huts are prone to theft, animal intrusion and evacuation. Thus with education being possible only in the villages, older children leave from the city to be at the village till they turn older to return to the city for work. However this does not imply that the quality of education is of any standard either. After having established mechanisms for enabling an education for their children, a lapse in education quality and provisioning back in the villages renders the arrangement meaningless, and reintroduces the children into the loop of vulnerability they were originally planned to escape. The laying out of the RTE in this context holds significance. It is, in fact, in the discussion on children, that the question of 'need for an enclosure' re-emerges.

Some common issues persisting in all the settlements studied

- Age is no consideration when it comes to children working in situations where families need support- either workwise or in terms of taking care of siblings and households
- Greater the vulnerability of the parents' occupations greater the chances that the children will be forced to take charge in case of any mishaps
- Lack of birth certificates, and if there are, the inability to use them across states where they come to work
- Further issues build on the aforesaid problem, such as educational, age-proof related etc. required to obtain further documents

Although we started our research with a focus on the housing needs of the migrant communities in Bhuj, we quickly realised that **housing is not the central determining choice** that most

migrants make. A powerful observation and one that was shared largely across all groups was how the most ardent efforts made by the community members was in the way of procuring formal identity documentation for themselves (it is to be noted here that the one form of formal identity that existed with almost all the community members was the voter id card which allowed them to cast a vote). Housing, in that sense, came across as an aspect that they perceived a certain amount of agency in. Most have migrated to Bhuj for the livelihood opportunities that it offers and it is livelihood that is central to decision-making about housing. For the construction workers near RTO, and the grease workers in the GIDC area, proximity to Jubilee circle and the Madhapar Highway respectively, is more important than the permanence of the structure of housing or the services provided. These communities have used their networks and resources in strategic ways to cope with the lack of infrastructure and services. As in the case of the communities that access drinking water from nearby institutions, the city has also in some ways facilitated informal access.

Given the centrality of livelihood to decisions about housing, we tried to understand the choice of livelihood. The reconstruction work after the earthquake of 2001 is clearly one of the factors that boosted migration of construction labourers to this city. However in the case of the Vasfoda community in GIDC area and the Yaksha Mandir community, we were able to track choice of livelihood to cultural attitudes towards work and traditional knowledge respectively. The community at the Yaksha Mandir is witnessing a gradual decline in their traditional livelihood based on medicinal knowledge. The elders have accepted the choice of their children to diversify into other livelihood options (most have chosen cooking at hotels/ dhabas). Interestingly, the Vasfoda community, due to loss of its traditional livelihood, has chosen an urban livelihood (greasing) with similar work patterns. With boys as young as 15 years joining their fathers in greasing, few from this community have diversified to other livelihood options. While they have maintained access to the Madhapar highway despite successive evictions in the past 30 years, they remain highly vulnerable to loss of livelihood due to relocation. They have, in the past, already suffered the consequences of erratic and paternalistic policy, whereby the death of a political leader led to the discontinuing of a support scheme (provisioning of bamboo), and almost stripped them of their livelihood instantaneously. In a slightly similar vein, even the more long term and settled migrants mentioned being granted lands by the Rajah back in his time, but having no documented proof, they are unable to assert the same. An immediate parallel to this can be drawn to the patronage of a single benevolent individual who has let up a part of his private lands for some of the migrants near Desalsar lake to dwell on. While this has enabled them to procure a relatively more settled life, a change of heirs and their priorities might just serve to dislocate them in future years. Similar is the case of the Panditji with whom some of the migrant communities save money, where his not being around in future time may leave them bereft of such facility or vulnerable to possible exploitative intentions of the next person who assumes the role. However, this must not discount the role that such informal support plays in the survival of these migrant communities.

The understanding that migration has played and continues to play a large part in the progress of the nation remains unheeded by policy. The waste pickers near Desalsar lake are silently filling in a critical gap in waste collection in the city, the services of the Vasfoda community crucially plug into the city's thriving transport industry, and the role of migrant labour in the construction sector, the second largest in the country today after agriculture, is well established. Our work with migrant communities in Bhuj has shed light on the fundamental assumptions that underlie urban policy in the nation at large. The reduction of the urban citizen to a standard settled salaried family man has led to policy-making that ignores the vast number of migrants who earn daily wages, whose families are simultaneously located in various parts of the country and who themselves live and negotiate with the city as well as their native place continuously.



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## **Transit**

*The man who takes away  
a handful of cement  
in his lunchbox, each day  
To smoothen the floor he sleeps on  
his home, of plastic roofs and tin walls*

*Will never meet  
the little girl  
who builds castles on debris  
on a hillock of bricks and mortar  
inviting stray dogs as play dates  
on a dust infused construction site*

*The couple  
Eating their meal in darkness  
for the fear of being evicted, today  
a mere candle will give them away  
in a flicker, their lives destroyed*

*Are indisposed  
to see the man who struggles  
with the loss of his family trade  
unlearning the skill of his ancestors  
to a blind, progressive state*

*The woman, who sweeps your floor  
unflinchingly tolerant  
protecting a pride that holds her back  
from begging in her own village*

*Does not recognize  
The newly wed bride, forced to move  
from the support of a new family  
onto a desecrating footpath  
adorned only by a husbands faith.*

*These strangers  
Have nothing in common  
Except movement  
From fear and loss  
For dreams and hope  
For space, freedom, solitude, respect*

*For their need to belong  
For their choice to live...*

**Nikita Dcruz, 04 December 2013**



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2013



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