

Endangered Livelihoods: Adivasi Seasonal Labour Migration in the Dangs of Gujarat

I. Introduction

Amidst the high profile summits on Vibrant Gujarat, tall claims of the Chief Minister during the national conferences at Mahatma Mandir and the wider craze over the state's glittering growth story, Gujarat today is seen as a "development model" by many including certain sections in the academia. This paper based on a recent study in the Dangs district argues that the so-called "development" in Gujarat has been so uneven that lives and livelihoods of the most marginalised sections of the society – the Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities are in a state of disarray. While there is vast spatial variation of growth in the state wherein the districts of Saurashtra and north Gujarat have a huge share even at undermining the environmental concerns, the people in the south Gujarat on the other hand are bearing the brunt of underdevelopment. Despite the double digit growth of the state, socio-economic conditions of the Scheduled Tribe communities in Gujarat are no different from any other parts of the country. The Dangs, a district with abundant natural resources continues to remain as one of the most backward districts of the country. The tribal communities here have no alternatives rather to resort on seasonal labour migration that constitutes a major portion of their livelihood portfolios. The tribal families in the Dangs migrate to nearby better off areas for 7-8 months in a year in search of better livelihoods. However, mostly being engaged as daily wage labourers, they only end up in saving a very little amid harsh exploitations. Though, the process of seasonal labour migration is believed to be common among the tribal communities in India, what is most surprising is that tribal families in the Dangs have been migrating for last few decades and yet there has been no change in their migration pattern. They have considered seasonal labour migration as an inevitable part of their daily struggle for survival. Development interventions done by the state and other agencies in the district have very little impact though only provide temporary relief to these households. Absolute indifference of the political and bureaucratic masters in implementation of the MGNREGS and siphoning of its funds in the district also further add to the woes of the people.

II. The Dangs of Gujarat

The Dangs is one of the 33 districts of Gujarat. Located in the south Gujarat region, it shares its borders with the neighboring state of Maharashtra. In the north and east, it is bounded by Tapi and Navsari districts of Gujarat and in the south and west by Nasik and Dhule districts of Maharashtra respectively.

The district headquarters is located at Ahwa town. Total geographical area of the Dangs is 1,764 sq. km. The topography of the district is characterized by highly undulating terrains amid dense forests with an area of 1062 sq. km. which is nearly 59% of the total geographical area. The district comprises of one taluka, 70 panchayats and 311 villages. The Dangs has total population of 2,28,291 (only 0.3% of state's population). The district has the population density of 129 persons per sq. km. and registered decadal population growth rate of 21.44% from 2001-2011. The Dangs has the sex ratio of 1007 females for every 1000 males which is the highest in the state and the literacy rate is 76.8% (Census, 2011).

The Dangs is a tribal district predominantly inhabited by the tribes of Konkana, Bhil, Varli, Kotwalia, Kathodi and Gamit which constitute nearly 94.6% of the total population. The total number of BPL families in the district is 33,968, which is 86% of the total families in the district. Majority of the population are dependent on rainfed agriculture and seasonal labour migration for their livelihoods. The Dangs receives an average annual rainfall about 3,000 mm. However, agriculture productivity is very low with only 53949 ha (31%) of the total geographical area is under cultivation and nearly 7500 ha (13.9%) of the cultivable land under irrigation. Rice, millets, pulses, gram, groundnut, wheat and sugarcane are the crops and mango, cashew nut, banana, custard apple and strawberries are the fruits cultivated in the district.

III. The Study and Methodology

This study on adivasi migration in the Dangs was conducted in two phases during April and December, 2013. The primary objective of the study was to understand the pattern, intensity and wider consequences of seasonal labour migration among the adivasi communities in the Dangs. In the first phase, the household survey conducted in April covered 60 respondent tribal households from 12 villages of Ahwa, Subir and Waghai regions. A detailed interview schedule was used for collection of data from the respondent households. Further, in order to understand the plights of the migrant adivasis at worksites during post migration period, fieldwork was also carried out in Gandevi and Bardoli during December in the second phase. Besides the interview schedule used for the household survey, personal interviews and focus group discussions with a comprehensive checklist were the other tools and techniques used for collection of data in the study.

IV. Pattern and Severity of Labour Migration in Dangs

The major findings of the study reveal that seasonal labour migration is a common phenomenon in all the villages surveyed in the Dangs. While the villages in Ahwa region are relatively better off where nearly 27 per cent of the households migrate seasonally, labour migration plays a significant role in the household's economy in the villages of Subir and Waghai regions. Approximately, 48 and 60 per cent households seasonally migrate in these two regions respectively. The following table provides the details of households migrating in the survey villages.

Table-4.1: Status of Migration

Cluster	Village	Total HH	No. of HH Migrating	%HH Migrating
Ahwa	Dhavidod	234	61	26
	Gondalvahir	252	52	21
	Piplyamal	115	52	45
	Vasurna	245	44	18
Subir	Jamala	103	27	26
	Piplaidevi	276	196	71
	Timbarthava	180	45	25
	Vanjarghodi	119	84	71
Waghai	Chichinagavtha			#DIV/0!
	Dungarda	198	86	43
	Kalamkhet	99	86	87

	Patli	51	25	49
Grand Total				

Source: Baseline Survey

However, understanding the underlying reasons of distress labour migration in the Dangs is relatively complex in nature. Coupled with lack of local employment opportunities, insufficient income compels the poor adivasi households in the remote villages to dip in to the vicious debt trap. The adivasi families borrow money from mukkardams – the local labour contractors operate in the village for purchasing agriculture inputs during *chaumasa* (rainy season), meeting consumption needs and other emergency expenses including healthcare treatment. One of the mutually agreed conditions while taking credit is that the borrowing family would repay the debt by working as migrant labourers in harvesting of sugarcane in the sugar factory for which the mukkardam works. This in turn would not only help the family to repay the debt but also earn them some hard cash which is never possible earning from agriculture even if a family has good landholdings. Subsistence agriculture involving cultivation of non-remunerative food crops – rice, jowar and millets in small patches of undulating land barely provides food security to the adivasi households round the year. Thus, the only option left before them is to migrate for sugarcane harvesting in the nearby well-off irrigated areas in the neighboring districts to which they have agreed upon earlier. In the eyes of suppliers of credit, the total absence of resources deprives people of creditworthiness. Another handicap to independent work is the lack of experience in building up and maintaining a clientele. Life at the bottom of the village economy thus depends on wage labour (Breman 1996: 32). Hence, poverty, vicious debt trap, poor return from agriculture and lack of local employment opportunities are the major reasons for seasonal labour migration of the adivasi households in the Dangs.

Sugarcane harvesting in Bardoli in Surat and Gandevi in Navsari districts are the preferred works and destinations of tribal families from the Dangs during the migration period. Large flocks of adivasi couples accompanied by their children from far-flung villages of the Dangs work as migrant labourers in these worksites. The following table provides details of the destination of migrant villagers from the Dangs.

Table-4.2: Destination of Migration

Destination	No. of HH migrating	%age
Bardoli (Surat)	37	62
Gandevi (Navsari)	14	23
Sayan (Surat)	5	8
Surat	2	3
Kamrej (Surat)	1	2
Bamanvel (Navsari)	1	2
Total	60	100

Source: Field Survey

Adult members prefer to migrate either with their entire family including young kids or with their spouse. However, individual migration is very rare as harvesting of sugarcane is done jointly and the duration of migration is relatively longer. The survey shows that nearly 68 per cent of the tribal families migrate along with their entire family members

leaving behind only the elders at home, whereas 32 per cent migrate with their spouse who left their children in custody of elders back at homes in the villages.

However, the most surprising feature in the seasonal migration of adivasis in the Dangs is its prolong-ness. Data show that these households have been migrating to the same places for long time and there have been no changes in their migration patten over the years. It was emerged out during the discussion that some families have been migrating since generations. There is no way out for the younger generation to get escaped from it who rather silently join the process thus perpetuating the seasonal migration further. The following table shows details of the families migrating over the years.

Table-4.3: Prolong-ness of Migration

Migrating since	HH Migrating	%age
01-4 years	17	28
5-10 years	19	32
11-20 years	17	28
>21 years	7	12
Total	60	100

Source: Field Survey

This brings the fact that there has been very little impact of the development interventions done by various government and non-government agencies in the Dangs. This is further corroborated by our observation that the benefit sharing of development interventions has been very skewed in the district wherein very few have derived maximum benefit from the development schemes mostly depriving the deserving sections. The following case study is a live instance of this striking observation.

Sona bhai is a resident of Jamala village in Subir region. He belongs to Gamit – a relatively better off Scheduled Tribe community. Besides being dealer of the village ration/PDS shop for past 15 years, he is also the president of the milk cooperative society in the village. The ration shop covers nearly 2500 families in the nearby four villages including Timerthava. While having discussion, Kailash of Timerthava and Gangaram of Jamala informed us that they have deposited their ration cards with Sona bhai for last 10 years. However, they have not received any rations since then. This made us curious to meet him and knowing the facts. Our discussion with Kailash and Gangaram revealed that most of the households in these two villages migrate to nearby areas for cutting of sugarcane. However, Sona bhai mentions, though many people were migrating in past, very few people in the village migrate now. Being the PDS dealer, informing people about the arrival of rations and distributing rations to them on time are his primary responsibilities. Asked about what does he do with the ration that meant for people like Kailash and Gangaram who are out of the village for a better half of the year, Sona bhai says he regularly estimates the stock of ration after distributing to families in each month. Then only, he sends demand of remaining rations to the concerned office in Ahwa for next month. Further, on being asked about that some people (like Kailash and Gangaram) don't receive their monthly ration and their ration cards are with him since long, he says there was an instruction from the government for computerization of ration

cards. For this, all families were informed to update their ration cards with photos on it. However, very few like Kailash and Gangaram have never come to update their ration cards since then they have deposited the same. Sona bhai says he had also tried to send Uttam (father of Kailash) to a studio in Ahwa to get his photograph, but he did not do it despite being offered the travel fare by Sona bhai from his own pocket. Sona bhai also extends credit to the villagers during their need. For this he does not charge any interest but considers it as a kind of social service! On being asked what does he do if someone takes credit from him but does not repay, he says he calls them to work in his fields and through this they repay the loan. During the time of our discussion, he also shared that there were around 10-15 villagers working in his fields. It appeared to us that either these villagers were working as bonded labourers or working to repay their loans, however, none of them was present with whom we could have confirmed this and known the actual fact behind his claim. Moreover, under his leadership of the village milk cooperative society, Sona bhai has helped nearly 30 poorest families in the village to get milch cattle – cows under the government's tribal development scheme. Few of these beneficiaries have sold out their cows and some are regularly selling milk through the village milk cooperative society he further informed us.

V. Demand of labour, Mukkardams and Labour Recruitment

A major link between the migrant labourers and the factory owners is the Mukkardam – the labour contractor/agent who operates at the village level. Migrants are mobilised in their own villages by gang leaders/brokers or 'mukkadams' – former labourers turned supervisors – who negotiate with contractors/employers, arrange cash advances and long-term work (Mosse et al 2005: 3027). Mukkardam receives demand for labour force from the factory management well in advance before onset of the migrating season. Factory management pays cash advances to the mukkardam who later on pays to the labourers. During the rainy season, the co-operative sugar mills in the plain of south Gujarat use *mukardams* to recruit thousands of harvest workers for the duration of the coming campaign. In villages in the hinterland where the cane cutters originate, the jobbers hand out a cash advances to *koytas*, teams consisting of at least a man and a woman, sometimes accompanied by a child who also works (Bremant 1996: 93). The factory owners pay this amount to mukkardam in two installments – Rs 200/- per pair of labourers in the first week and in another installment of Rs. 200/- in the subsequent week. The mukkardam pays cash in advance in the form of credit to the labourers who need it for their agriculture work and meeting other emergency expenses like health issues that are rampant during the monsoon months. With this they agree to work for him as migrant labourers after the agriculture season. Thus, they are bonded in an informal but yet a formal contract with the mukkardams. In all cases, recruitment starts during the rainy season when there is little work in agriculture. The consequent lack of income means that many marginal peasants and landless labourers have no other choice than to accept the advance held out as bait by the mukardam. They need money not only for food and other daily necessities, including alcohol, but also such expenses which they can only meet once a year: a wedding in the family and repairs to the house (Bremant 1996: 94).

The system of recruiting contract labourers from the poor and remote villages is a three tier system where the mukkardam belongs to the bottom most strata. The mukkadam is probably a poor and indebted migrant's most crucial resource. A mukkadam is the route to work; the source of information on the availability of jobs and the trustworthiness of contractors; they are guarantors and guardians whose role is

continuously underlined by the stories of cheating and nonpayment that accompany every gang back to the village at the end of the season. Mukkadams are the intermediaries between contactors and labourers. In many cases contact with contractors is only through them. They recruit labour, arrange travel, assess/estimate the work, establish the prevailing rates (not in the nakas but at the worksites), negotiate wage rates, condition (shelter, water...), mediate advances from contractors (during the cultivation season) and make payments (Mosse et al 2005: 3022). Everyone can not become a mukkadam. The present mukkadams used to work as labourers like other villagers in the past. After certain period, he develops contacts with the agents at the sugar factory and agrees to become a mukkadam. He is also supported by his fellow villagers with whom he has good kin relations and trustworthiness. Good social and interpersonal relations in the villages, networking skills and the ability to make contacts with the agents/seths at the sugar factory are the basic prerequisites to become a mukkadam. The other mandatory conditions of becoming mukkadam are the investment up to Rs 1.5 lakhs as initial capital, submission of his ration/BPL cards along with filling up an agreement form at the sugar factory. The amount deposited has to be arranged at any cost. There are times when this money is borrowed from a large farmer in the village. Once the mukkadam is financially sound, he returns the amount with interest agreed upon. He is the one responsible to get the exact number of labourers as he is asked by the agents/seths working as bosses above him. For this, the mukkadam is provided with certain amount of cash which is used as an advance payment to the labourers who are willing to migrate to work at these locations. The amount of advance given to the labourers varies from Rs. 400-600/-. After the advances are paid, trucks come from the sugar factory to collect the labourer force in large flocks and they are brought from the villages to the worksites.

Lakshman Singh used to work as a seasonal migrant labourer in the sugarcane factory at Gandevi in Navsari district. During his childhood, he was not good at studies – had to get harsh punishment at school. One fine day, he casually got into a truck going to Gandevi along with other villagers. There, he found about this labour work and the large sum of money that could be fetched there which motivated him to develop further interest and establishing contacts with the agents/seths working in the sugar factory. He soon learnt the tactics and gained popularity among the villagers that ultimately led him to become the mukkadam. Presently, he has 6-7 villages under him and arranges about 100-150 contract labourers for the sugar factory every year.

VI. Migration Cycle, Work Experience and Earnings

The migrating season begins immediately after Diwali in October. Post harvest, mukkadams inform those families who have taken credit and agreed to work in sugar factory. Labourers get accumulated in the village for migration along with their belongings. Trucks arrive from the sugar factory and the labourers are left for the destination with their family members. Also, they are accompanied by the mukkadams. Upon their arrival at the worksites, they are counted and cross checked against the demand and cash advances sent earlier. They are divided into pairs. Work proceeds in pairs which include cutting of sugarcane and tying them in bundles. In the sugar factory at Gandevi, the work of sugarcane cutting demands nearly 18 hours of arduous work in a day including loading of sugarcane. Trucks arrive in the worksite at odd hours – even at midnight. The workers have no choice but to load. Each couple could end up with cutting one ton of sugarcane a day for which they get nearly Rs. 250-270/-. The capacity

of a truck is nearly 15 tons. Loading of sugarcane takes nearly 3-4 hours. On average, two trucks are loaded in a day.

Household earnings from migration depend upon the period of migration, the regularity of work, number of workers, type of work, advances taken, costs incurred and so forth (Mosse et al, 2002; 74). The factory owner pays the migrant couples in lump sum – Rs. 22000-25000/- at the end of the season generally in April when they return to their home after working there nearly for 7-8 months in a year. After the final payment is made, the labourers repay their debt amount to mukkadams which they had taken during the kharif season with an interest rate of 1.5 per cent per month. Migrants recruited through mukkadams depend up on subsistence allowances and shop credit which together with earlier advances bring deductions at the time of payment returning migrants home with much reduced earnings, and in extreme cases with nothing or even further in debt (Breman 1996: 156). The mukkadams are also paid Rs. 5000/- for every 10 ton by the factory owners and also gets an additional Rs. 500 rupees per day. Apart from this, he also receives an amount of Rs. 50/- as commission from each pair of labourers who works under him. The mukkadams also pays back to the sugar factory all the expenses it incurred on the labourers. For a majority, however, labour migration is linked to long-term indebtedness and fails to generate net cash returns and perpetuates below-subsistence livelihoods. The poor find it impossible to work themselves out of debt. In the meantime fresh debts are incurred to meet subsistence and medical needs. Long absence and dependence on distant patrons reduces status, erodes social capital, makes the poor marginal to the networks through which credit (or marriages), benefits from development projects are obtained (Mosse et al 2005: 3028).

Kailash of Timerthava village in the Dangs has been migrating to Navsari for last several years. He and his wife work there as agriculture labourers cutting sugarcane for the factory at Gandevi for 7-8 months each year. Post monsoon, he alone migrates to Surat seeking for temporary labour work in construction sites. Working there for 2-3 months, he returns to his village. Thus, he spends nearly 9-10 months in migration during each year. He has been migrating for last 20 years along with his wife and children. Kailash takes cash advances from Raju of his own village and Laxman Singh from the neighboring village. Raju and Laxman Singh are two different mukkadams operate in Timerthava village. Raju works for a construction company in Surat and Laxman Singh works for the sugar factory in Gandevi. On being asked whether he has a MGNREGS job card, Kailash is not sure but says yes! When asked to show it, he goes inside and gets a card which is actually a card of Rastriya Swasth Vima Yojna issued to him but not the job card. He also does not know its utility. However, he recollects that he has heard about the NREGA which the sarpanch runs in the village and has issued some job cards to his near and dear ones.

VII. Facilities, Living Conditions and Vulnerability

Most of the migrant couples along with their children live in temporary shelters inside the campus of the sugar factory in Gandevi. Their shelter which is only used for sleeping purposes during night is made up off polythene sheets. Migrant labourers are exposed to harsh weather conditions – extreme cold during the winter months and burning heat during the months of March and April. In side the shelters lay a small coat and other articles such as torn mattresses, tiny stock of food grains. Cooking of food is done outside the compact room. Firewood collected during the cutting hours and carried along from the cane fields is the only source of energy used for cooking. Each pair of migrant

couple is provided 25 kg of Jowar and a meager amount of Rs. 30/- for additional expenses once in every fifteen days by the factory management. Deduction is made against the food grains supplied and money given for expenses to the migrant labourers at the time of final payment during the end of the season. Migrant labourers sell out *chimdi* – the residues of sugarcane leftover after cutting to local cattle owners who use it as fodder. Thus, they earn about Rs. 100/- in a day and purchase additional food grains, vegetables and other essential goods including tobacco.

Factory management has installed hand pumps/ taps for provision of water inside the campus. Water fetched from these taps (even sometimes from outside hand pumps) is used for cooking and bathing purposes. However, bathing and sanitation facilities are scarce to find out near the shelters. Through male members temporarily arrange tiny shades for bathing of women and girls near the shelters, lack of (even community) toilets forces them for open defecation. Privacy is frequently compromised near the temporary shelters throughout the entire period of migration. Though, provisions have been made for free medical checkups of migrant labourers in case of emergencies, the entire liabilities lie with the migrants in case of major accidents. Neither are the migrant labourers aware about the insurance provisions nor does the employer provide any compensation in case of any accidental deaths.

Feelings of loneliness, long isolation from own (older) family members, neighbors and kin groups frequently add to the miseries of the migrant labourers at migrating places. However, their plight is further compounded by marginalization, subordination and occasional harassment by the outsiders. Thus, life at this margin of the society is solely left to be governed by the destiny.

VIII. Lost Childhood and Uncertain Future

On an average, each migrant couple has 2-3 children accompanying them during the entire period of migration. Young migrant couples bring their small kids of age groups between 2-5 years and older couples have children of age group 6-12 and elder children even up to 15-16 years of old. Older children (15-17 years old) – mostly school dropouts are also engaged in labour work in cutting of sugarcane along with the parents to supplement their family income, even though they fall under the category of child labourers. Young girls assist their mothers in household works – collecting fuel woods, fetching water, cooking food and taking care of younger siblings at migrating places. In the worksites, while parents are engaged in cutting of sugarcane, young kids accompanying them play around the sugarcane fields and are left unattended.

During the fieldwork, it was also found that migrant labourers who presently work have been migrating with their parents since their childhood. Further, they could foresee no future of their children who are very little educated and occasionally attend schools. Though, there are provisions for free education of children under the Right to Education (RTE) Act which ensures free and compulsory education for children between 6-14 years of age group in the country and makes education as a fundamental rights of every child. However, lives of these children of the migrant labourers revolve in between two extreme ends i.e. a lost childhood and an uncertain future.

IX. Performances of MGNREGS in the Dangs

One of the goals of MGNREGA is to reduce distress rural-urban migration. Given the nature and extent of migration in Dangs, MGNREGA provides a potential opportunity which could have been harnessed to cease the distress labour migration in the district. However, MGNREGS has not been properly implemented in the Dangs in particular and Gujarat in general. Our survey shows that nearly 75% of the respondent households have MGNREGS job cards whereas 25% of the households have never got it. Out of the households who have job cards, only 69% have worked under MGNREGS in the study villages. Favoritism while issuing job cards by sarpanchs, non availability work during crucial months and non payment of wages for long period are the major reasons that force people not to seek works under MGNREGS in the Dangs who rather depend on the usual labour migration for sugarcane cutting in the nearby districts. A recent study in the Dangs reveals the followings.

With regards to NREGS, our inquiry revealed that this scheme had not been implemented in its true spirit. There were many drawbacks. First and foremost was corruption. Elected representatives and government officials concerned were siphoning off money from this scheme for their personal benefit. In spite of many checks, they still managed to find loopholes in the scheme. There were also other problems in Dangs; as per the rules, the Gram Panchayat must provide work once it was demanded by the people. However our study indicated that while on the face of it there was no such demand by the people, but in reality people had demanded work but it was discouraged by officials and Sarpanches, because there was no work available. If these officials had considered their demand of work in such cases, they would have had to pay unemployment allowances, which had adverse impact the official's career. Our data suggested that on an average, only 15–17 days of employment was given to people. Out of 100 respondents, only three reported that they had got 50 days of work in two years. In other words, there is no regular employment available through NREGS. Those who are migrating need assurance of regular work. Besides this, income from migratory work is much higher than what the erratic NREGS employment would fetch. Non-availability of work under NREGS was due to total apathy of government machinery to provide work, and complicated procedure of sanctioning work. So households are left with no choice but to continue migrating to other places for economic reasons. Our inquiry also revealed that migration from Dangs had slowed down in recent years, but that was due to the increase in agricultural production and animal husbandry development. In short, NREGS had not provided any employment guarantee to Dangs. Rather, it had deliberately excluded masses and included the elite of the district into the scheme. Political representatives had started seeing this scheme as an important tool for making money, and thereby established their control over the people. Corruption had become an accepted practice in Dangs, which had serious ramifications in the region, with the masses being alienated from the socio-political system (Joshi 2013: 402-3).

X. Conclusions

Seasonal labour migration is not only the basic survival strategy but also an inevitable part of their daily struggle for most of the poor adivasi families in the Dangs. The lure of earning money through seasonal labour migration invariably ends up in saving of a very little. Besides their own livelihoods, many others are also directly dependent on seasonal migration of adivasis in the Dangs. At the originating villages, these are moneylenders/mukkardams who are directly benefited from it. The cooperative sugar factories also earn a huge margin of the profit through the readily available cheap labour

force of the poor migrant adivasis. Thus, long term indebtedness, interdependence, extreme hardship, harsh exploitation and unsettled lives are the wider consequences of seasonal labour migration in the Dangs which push the poor adivasis to have an endangered livelihood. Seasonal labour migration is irreversibly part of the lives and livelihoods of many of the poorest sections of rural India. Labour migration is not just a means to cope with below subsistence agriculture and debt, but may, as in bhil western India, have become the only means by which valued agrarian lifestyles can be reproduced. For a few, migration is a route to upward social and economic mobility; but for the vast majority migration not only perpetuates debt and dependence, but exposes the poorest to extreme hardship and cruel exploitation. Meanwhile those institutions mandated to protect vulnerable informal workers – labour departments, unions, the law – have largely failed to do so. Instead, adivasi migrant labours depend for work and their welfare upon agents, brokers and contractors who are also their most intimate exploiters (Mosse et al 2005: 3036).

Jan Breman's decades long seminal work provides excellent in-depth analysis of the informal labour economy in the south Gujarat region. However, the situations in the Dangs are no different from rest of the south Gujarat. Citing Breman's work, Baviskar notes while seasonal migration is undertaken as a matter of survival, earnings from which impart a degree of stability to the households in the hills, it hardly ever results in accumulation or reinvestment at home. Historically, there has been a long tradition of adivasis migrating out of their area in search of employment. What is significant now, however, is that such migration has increased to an extent where it affects the lives of almost all adivasi households. Among other factors, Breman attributes the increase in migration to the plains to the decline of a relatively non-monetized economy. While market mechanisms have become more dominant, agriculture productivity has lagged behind in the hills. Since, money must be earned by labour, and local off-farm employment has very low exchange value, seasonal migration becomes necessary as a monetary supplement to the limited production base. And this limited production base continues to shrink due to land degradation, in turn an ecological effect shaped by political economy (Baviskar 2004: 157).

XI. The Road Ahead

Having analysed the pattern, severity, causes and consequences of seasonal labour migration in the above sections, we now turn up to some practical implementable solutions to curb seasonal migration of adivasis in the Dangs. However, it should be noted that completely stopping seasonal migration of the adivasis in the Dangs would be an absurd idea which is never possible. Adivasis in the Dangs have been migrating for centuries. They would continue to do so in future unless there are interventions done to cease the seasonal labour migration, making it less distress and breaking the cycle that would gradually put to an end to it. This further requires sincere collaborative efforts of government agencies and civil society organizations working in the areas with due response from the community. Interventions must continue in both the ends i.e. at the originating villages as well as at the migrating places. Thus, implementation of MGNREGS, improving agriculture based livelihoods, skill development of youths and artisans and protecting rights of the migrant labourers are the core areas where interventions need be done which would eventually provide sustainable livelihoods to the adivasis of the Dangs.

XII. References

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