

**INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION**

**Sectoral Activities Programme**

**BUILDING, CIVIL ENGINEERING AND  
PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE**

**ELEVENTH SESSION  
GENEVA, 1987**

**Measures to overcome obstacles  
to the observance in the  
construction industry of ILO standards**



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ISBN 92-2-105710-0

ISSN 0259-1545

*First published 1986*

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**SPARC** - Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres was launched in December 1984 by a group of trained social workers, scientists and researchers concerned about the problems of poor migrants in the city of Bombay. Since pavement dwellers are the most isolated, and among these women bear the brunt of poverty, SPARC decided to focus on women pavement dwellers. The non-formal educational process is used to form women's groups in each community.

**CRY** - Child Relief and you is a registered Indian Public Trust mobilising resources and professional skills to generate funds in innovative ways. Funds, which are then channelised to projects working in the area of education, nutrition, and health and foster care throughout India.



**Published by** DR. INDU BALAGOPAL on behalf of Mobile Creches - Bombay,  
Oxford House, Apollo Bunder, Bombay 400 039. Telephone : 202 08 69.

**Printed at** PARMAR XEROX, 185 Perin Nariman Street, Fort, Bombay 400 001.  
Telephone : 26 46 24.

Migration of families and communities from one ecological setting to another takes place around the world. The reasons for migration vary. The hopes, the motivations and the compulsions range over a wide span. In India, every day, every hour, people move from village to city -- leaving parched land, seeking a living wage.

Building construction workers who come to the big cities, build, and move on are merely transient shadows. Without roots and without identities, these faceless men and women are constantly on the move along with their children.

In the last fifteen years, Mobile Creches Bombay, a voluntary organization has functioned in construction sites in the city, providing centres where children could play, learn and rest, while the mothers worked. In the course of their day long stay, the infants, toddlers, preschool age children and children under twelve have their health and educational needs attended to, in a congenial milieu. Briefly at least, the joys of childhood become a reality.

It is most appropriate that the Mobile Creches should undertake a study of the population they serve. This was done with the professional assistance and collaboration of SPAC, an organization that has demonstrated capability for research with urban problems. This combination of institutional strengths gave the research enterprise a hybrid hardiness. The field staff of the Mobile Creches were trained to be the investigators and their acceptability to the labour was a definite asset.

The findings of the study will be of interest to policy makers, demographers and those concerned with the management of migrants. This report is presented to readers for perusal and feedback.

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# INTRODUCTION

## PREAMBLE :

Eighteen years ago, Meera Mahadevar reacted spontaneously to a child playing in the sun on a heap of rubble while her mother carried bricks and mortar at a building site where a monument to Mahatma Gandhi was being erected. Little would she have realised that her emotional response would open the doors for a whole commune of neglected and forgotten people :

It was a small beginning. A tent was put up to shelter the children on the construction site to protect the toddlers from the sun and dust. Some supplementary milk was provided to appease the child whose labourer mother could not, or rather dare not, spare ten minutes to breast feed her child. Some activities were devised for the children of different ages. Through the years Mobile Creches has gradually emerged into a well established, reputed organisation. In fact, a pioneer of a movement and a reference point for child care.

## TARGET GROUP :

To understand the ethos and philosophy of the Mobile Creches programme, one has to have a clear picture of the target group they work with and the constraints of working with them - or rather, of working on construction sites. The development of the programme, the focus and the direction, has been a slow process with many trials and tribulations. If the migrant labourers are exploited, in fighting for welfare of labour, Mobile Creches' staff have felt many a time that even their effectiveness has been curbed by the self interest of the powers that be.

### Profile of a construction worker :

He is a young, able bodied but not a very sturdy man, in his early thirties, who was born and has lived in a remote rural area, where his family possesses a small piece of land and a house. He has never been to school and is only conversant with his mother tongue which is different from the languages spoken in Bombay. He is one of many marginalised farmers who have no means of livelihood in the village due to severe drought conditions. His little piece of land is uncultivable, and there is no chance of any income. He then decides to move to the city.

He is one unknown man. Thousands like him come from the villages which are hot, dry, dusty and not easily accessible by any form of transport. There is hardly any vegetation and many have not seen rain for a number of years. There is no money to borrow and no provisions to buy.

The young men are mostly married and have one or two malnourished children to provide for. So when they hear of an outlet - a paradise in which there is work and wages for not only themselves but also their wives - they are attracted by the proposition. They leave their meagre assets to their old parents or elderly relatives for tending and protecting, and prepare to leave for the big city with bag and baggage, each accompanied by his immediate family.



We can very well picture the plight of this village farmer when he first arrives in the busy megalopolis. His is the traumatic experience of entering a new and very different world.

### The family :

The whole prospect of surviving in this alien environment is so frightening, that the families decide to stick together and take solace from each other.

They have usually come with a Mukkadam or labour contractor, who takes charge of them and provides them with employment. He also arranges for their accommodation; the space and the materials of sack cloth, tin sheets or mats - to build their own little shacks on the construction sites. He becomes their spokesman, their interpreter, their provider. As a result, even if they are not officially financially bonded to him, they become virtually his slaves.

This practice of being under one middle man partially explains the pattern of migration of these people. They usually move in groups or clusters, and it is not uncommon to find many families of the same village in one construction site. This staying together gives them some stability and security in an otherwise uncertain and transient existence. If they do not belong anywhere and have no place to call their own, they at least belong to each other.

Having taken the plunge to leave home in search of work, these people learn to accept their lot without a murmur. With the constant threat of being thrown out of their jobs if they dare to question anything, they prefer to quietly live and work under depressing and sometimes wretched conditions, as long as they earn enough money to feed the family.

It is in these surroundings that a whole world of children is growing. Sometimes the children are hardly distinguishable from the rubble in which they are playing, merging with the background. The children have no idea of the city in which they are living, for they have never been outside the compound of the construction site.

Their fathers and mothers are at work all day, and the children are left to fend for themselves. For the children it is a choice between neglect if the mother works, and starvation, if the mother decides not to work. After a hard day's work, the young mother who is herself undernourished and anaemic, has obviously no time or energy to worry about the future of her children. That she provide food and clothing for them is her immediate concern. Education takes the lowest priority - in fact, it hardly ever features in her thoughts.

These workers have relegated education as something that is beyond their reach. Years of deprivation and exploitation have made them apathetic, and this indifference to their children's future is reflected in their passive attitude to the services that Mobile Creches offers. In fact, they have been so impoverished physically, mentally and emotionally, that they cannot appreciate the impact of professional child care. They have not given a thought to bettering their children's lot by providing them education or improved health care. They have taken it for granted that their children will grow up to be unskilled labourers like themselves, to work on construction sites. This hopelessness proves to be quite a barrier to break through.

## Pattern of employment on a construction site<sup>11</sup>

In the building industry in the big cities the contractors hold sway over the pattern of hiring and firing the workers. Almost all labourers are employed on daily wages and have no security in their jobs. They are usually appointed through the labour contractor, and more often than not, are not aware of who their principal employer is, or who pays them their wages. In other words, it is organised exploitation of the unorganised sector.

On a typical building site, the earliest workers to arrive are the Mukkadams with a few unskilled workers recruited to carry mud. While the pile drivers are at work, the unskilled workers - both men and women - work below ground level to transport the mud that is displaced. Very often, the subsoil water seeps in, and these workers (the women holding babes in one arm) walk up slippery slopes in the slush carrying heavy loads on their heads.

If an old building is being razed before a new multi-storey apartment is built, the building breakers come in. They are a different lot from the unskilled labourers who move in when building starts.

As the massive concrete blocks come up, more and more unskilled labourers move in with their families. By now, the earth has been dug down to 20 feet below ground, and the women and children walk up the narrow planks that are precariously perched and serve as temporary bridges. There are no railings to hold on to - only the scaffolding. The older children soon develop the agility of mountain goats, and learn to run up and down these narrow bridges.

As the building progresses, and each storey comes up, the women have to climb higher with each load. There are only open staircases, and floors with no walls, with water dripping from everywhere (obviously necessary before the cement sets).

It is at this stage that we have our largest target group on a site. On a big construction site, there could be upto 200-300 families with as many children below the age of ten years. On any given day, we can see at least 70-80 children wandering on the site, usually in groups of two or three with the older children carrying their younger siblings on their hips.

As we have stated earlier, these workers owe allegiance to the labour contractor who has brought them from the village and if for any reason he decides to move out of the site, his ten or fifteen families move with him. The reasons usually given are some disagreement with the principal employer, and more commonly, not receiving the wages from the builder. This is one more factor that is responsible for the constant movement of the construction workers. As we shall see later, there are other reasons for their transience.

While these labourers are moving higher up in the building as the storeys are being built, they find it difficult to negotiate the open staircases, or sometimes dangerous and open lifts (just a wooden plank going up and down in an open shaft) with their babies on their hips. So then the infants are left in the care of the older sibling who is often barely 4 years old!

In the building industry, while the brick laying or concreting is going on in one part of the building, the skilled workers - masons, tile layers, fitters and welders - move in. It has been our observation that they are usually from other regions of the country, and not all of them bring their families. This group is followed by plasterers, painters, plumbers and electricians.

So it is obvious that though a building sometimes takes years to be completed, the same workers are not employed for the total duration. Different unskilled and skilled groups of workers follow each other to meet the phased demands of construction.

But here again we have to understand that even for the duration of brick laying or concreting, the groups of families are not static in one construction site. Since they are from small agricultural families to start with, and still have some land holdings in the village, they go back to their homes during the monsoons to plough the land and sow the seeds. However, it is not as if all the labourers leave Bombay during the monsoons. There is no set pattern, and the movement is sporadic and unpredictable.

Another important reason is that they all have roots in the village, and return there for festivals and celebrations like marriages.

This then is the explanation for the high turnover of families on construction sites - so far, observed only through the children's attendance at the creches.

## **MOBILE CRECHES :**

### **Brief History :**

Starting with a creche in a tent, intended to care for infants only, the organisation soon found itself up against several problems. First, the poor health and sanitary conditions in the labour camps made the running of a creche a far from simple baby sitting enterprise. It involved a complex chain of activities including clinical and preventive health care, nutrition and the creation of basic standards of child care for children in such circumstances. Second, the older children had also to be attended to, and this meant the evolution of a programme of nursery and primary education which would not only keep the children engaged, but be suited to the special needs and requirements of the situation. Third, the virtual absence of any category of workers trained to deal with such a wide-range or such a wide variety of skills and activities led to the setting-up and slow evolution of a programme of training and to the combination of training with management which is characteristic of the programme today. Lastly, the need to communicate with parents and to involve the adult community in the programme led to the development of the programme of Lok Doot, the theatre group.

In addition, there were the problems of recognition, funding, accommodation, etc. besides the special ones of working with building contractors and co-ordination with several government departments. Later on, the agency carried day-care programmes to resettlement colonies, catering to the needs of children of working

mothers belonging to the lowest economic groups, engaged in such occupations as domestic service, scavenging, hawking and vending, waste collection, etc. With some modification, the same programme design is offered.

### *The Programme as it is today :*

At any given time, there are about twenty-five centres in operation in Delhi and about twenty in Bombay and three in Pune. On construction sites, the centres are housed in very simple accommodation provided by the contractors, either a small two-room shed with a little open space in front of it and a kitchen-cum-store or similar accommodation improvised in a semi-finished portion of the building under construction. In resettlements, low-cost structures using local materials have been put up to house the centres. Children in the age group 0-12 are to be found in the centres : For convenience they are divided into three groups creche (0-3) balwadi (3-6) and informal primary education (6 plus). In practice however, the grouping is not rigid and there is considerable freedom of movement. This enables older children to comfort and take care of the younger ones keeping the infants on their laps or beside them while they study or play, and the babies return to their own age group as they develop self-confidence. The daily creche routines emphasise cleanliness, nutrition and affectionate interaction with adults. One of a panel of doctors visits each centre once a week for treatment of cases, and advice on preventive health, and follow-up is done by the staff. On construction sites, the mothers come in once or twice a day to breast feed their infants. Advice to mothers on health, nutrition, family planning, and child care is usually given informally at meetings during the day or when the staff go on their daily morning routine rounds.

The daily programme for the children of balwadi consists of a wide variety of structured and unstructured play, using simple low-cost and easily available and replaceable materials and equipment. Educational games, arts and crafts, experiences with natural materials and songs and dances form the core of this programme which gradually prepares the child, through participation in a structured programme for the more serious business of learning. The children above 6 years of age get formal lessons in language, mathematics and social studies, and are helped to acquire at least the basic skills of literacy and numeracy in a short term. However, informal methods of teaching are used, stressing play, games, and hand-work. Older children who have been helped to get admission in the local municipal schools, usually come back for at least a few hours every day for personal tutorial help, and for participation in other activities like art, music, games and sports.

The usual daily routine is as follows, from 8.30 to 10.30 a.m. cleaning and setting up of the centre with the help of all staff members and the older children. Daily visits to homes to collect some of the children and to meet the parents is part of the routine. Children are helped to wash, games are played and prayers held. Then the children are given milk and ragi (a locally grown cereal, rich in iron and proteins). Between 10.00 a.m. and mid-day : Organised play and educational activities for all children according to age-level; Twelve noon : A supplementary

- 3) To inculcate research orientation and basic research skills in all Mobile Creches staff, through their active participation in the design and implementation of the study, including data collection.
- 4) To present the major findings of the study to concerned government officials and planning bodies, with a view to influencing policy.

### Methodology :

Before the methodology of the study is described in detail, it is necessary to describe the roles played by SPARC and Mobile Creches more specifically. SPARC was to train the staff of Mobile Creches to carry out the study, and provide supportive supervision and guidance throughout the study. This meant training in identifying the variables, framing the questionnaire, pretesting, data collection, coding, analysis of results and report writing.

By carrying out the various research tasks under SPARC's guidance, it was hoped that each member of the Mobile Creches staff would acquire both the skills and the confidence to conduct research. This would ultimately prove to be an asset to the organisation.

### As it was planned :

The first step of the methodology was to conduct workshops with each cadre of the staff - i.e. the Planning Group (7 senior Mobile Creche Workers), Supervisors (21), Creche In-charges (21), Teachers (34) and Creche Workers (50) - to acquaint them with the purpose, nature and scope of study, the tasks involved and the importance of the study to their work and the organisation. These workshops would also be used to identify specific research questions raised by the staff to be incorporated into the study. It was planned that these workshops will be conducted by each level of worker for the next level. For example, one such workshop would be conducted by SPARC staff for the planning group. The Planning Group would then conduct a similar exercise for the supervisors, who would then do it for the In-charges, and so on.

Following this, and based on the feedback received from the workshops, SPARC and the Mobile Creches Executive Committee and Planning Group would design a questionnaire. Through another series of workshops, a short 'mock' study would be conducted with the staff, and the questionnaire presented to them. The mock study would be a simulation exercise where the workers would be taken through the entire research cycle to familiarise them with (and demystify) the research process. The mock study would be based on some aspect of their own lives, perhaps their own migration history.

The group was very receptive to the idea of participatory research, and began with a tentative listing of the various areas they would like to explore and understand.

The following meetings were all forums for feedback from the field workers of all levels: teachers, supervisors and creche workers. These exercises helped establish a better rapport between the different cadres.

The next stage in the research study was developing the questionnaire. Every staff member was encouraged to take part in formulating the questions, and categorising them as also in doing the investigating. They were also initiated into the "magic" of developing a code book and interpreting the data.

Pretesting was done through mock studies which were analysed as to the methodology of administering the questions, as well as interpreting of answers. It also helped to time the actual exercise, so that a reasonable questionnaire emerged.

The questions were short listed and the objective of asking each question was rationalised. Then the time plan vis-a-vis staff posting and staggering of regular work was evolved, keeping in view the constraint that the investigation had to be done in just 2 weeks, because of the transience of the community.

All the literate staff of Mobile Creches took an active part in the research work including the coding. By this time, every member had gained the confidence and command over the basic tools of research used in this study.

By the end of December, the coding had been finished. The forms were handed over to the Tata Institute of Social Sciences for data processing. As we started getting the punched data, we found that there had been some inadvertent errors. Our supervisors enthusiastically went to the Institute, looked through the forms, and located the coding errors. In the process, they also learnt about data processing and computer programming.

So obviously, the outcome of this study is twofold -

- 1) a comprehensive study of more than two thousand families of migrant construction workers revealing new facts and confirming many hypotheses and
- 2) familiarisation of Mobile Creches staff with survey methods as well as with computer data processing and analysis.

The third stage of taking the information back to the Mobile Creches team who will then transmit it to the community will take us well into 1988 !

And of course, using this information to influence policy makers is another chapter altogether.

Role play and other techniques would be used to prepare them for administering the questionnaire, and to sensitise them to their own biases and other pitfalls of data collection. These workshops would also be used to determine the exact number of families to be surveyed from each construction site where a creche is functioning. The staff would be asked to act this information as part of the training.

Finally, the logistics and time frame of data collection would be devised as the last task of the workshops : viz., number of questionnaires to be filled by each worker, duration of each, supervisory responsibilities and problem solving.

After data collection was completed, the questionnaires would be coded by the workers themselves (for which task they would have been trained in the preparatory workshops) under the guidance of their supervisors and SPARC staff. The data would then be electronically processed by a local EDP unit.

Through a final series of workshops, the results would be shared with all workers, who would participate in their interpretation and analysis. The English report would be written jointly by SPARC and Mobile Creches senior workers, and a Hindi and a Marathi version would be prepared by selected Mobile Creches workers. In addition, individual workers would be encouraged to write articles about the survey and its findings for the language dailies and magazines.

Copies of the report will be given to civic, state and central government officials, planning authorities, research and documentation centres, and any concerned individuals. One copy of the summary report will be given to every Mobile Creches worker.

#### Estimated Time-frame of the study :

Preparatory work	-	6 months
Data Collection	-	2 to 4 weeks
Data Processing, Analysis, Reports Writing and Printing	-	3 months

The time allotted for data collection appears to be very short. This is essential because the turnover of workers on construction sites is so rapid that allowing more than a four week period would mean surveying another set of workers altogether. It is feasible however, to capture a 'static' set of workers within one month.

#### The exercise :

Having planned the survey in detail, we conducted a series of training meetings, mostly with the senior cadre of supervisors and SPARC members.

The first orientation meeting was 1) To discuss the role of research as a tool in socio-economic development, 2) To elicit the group's perceptions, feelings and past experience with research, 3) To discuss the philosophy and principles of participatory research.





## I. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The total population covered by this study was 7,090 individuals, living on 17 different construction sites situated all over Bombay city. The total number of households surveyed was 2,076.

The survey was undertaken only in construction sites where Mobile Creches centres were functioning.

This has been done because of accessibility and co-operation from the workers and builders on sites where the Mobile Creches is already established and where there is good rapport with the target groups.

The number of households per site is presented in Table 1:1 and is more or less proportionate to the size of the construction project on each site. The geographic location of the sites covered is indicated in the map.

### LOCATION OF SITES SURVEYED

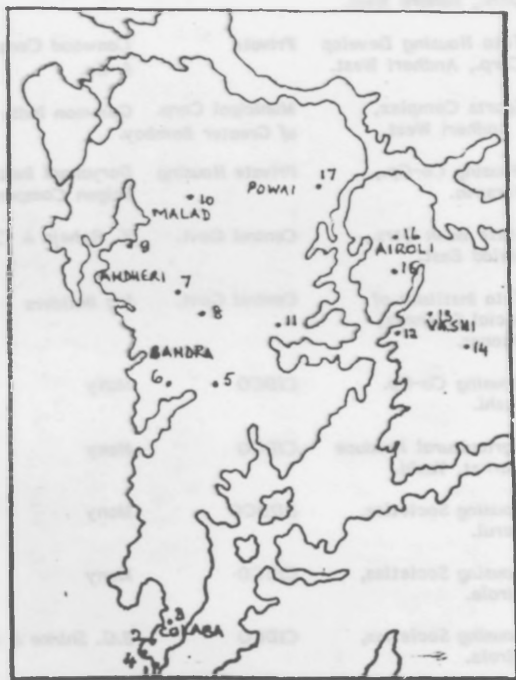


TABLE 1 : 1

No.	Site	Principal Employer	Contractor	House-holds	Percentage
1.	Sailors' Quarters, Navy Nagar, Colaba.	Central Govt.	Telepole Mfg. Co.	22	1.06
2.	World Trade Centre, Admins. Offices, Cuffe Parade.	Visweswaraya Trade Centre	Shapoorji Pallonji & Co.	180	8.68
3.	Ghatge Patil & Co. Wodehouse Road, Colaba.	Private	Shapoorji Pallonji & Co.	76	3.66
4.	IDBI Office, Cuffe Parade.	Central Govt.	B.E. Billimoria & Co.	201	9.68
5.	Office Premises, Bandra East.	Private Offices	Chaudhary & Chaudhary	47	2.26
6.	O.N.G.C. Officers' Qtrs., Bandra West.	Central Govt.	B.G. Shirke & Co.	80	3.85
7.	Tata Housing Develop Corp., Andheri West.	Private	Conwood Construction & Co.	42	2.02
8.	Sports Complex, Andheri West.	Municipal Corp. of Greater Bombay.	Gammon India	64	3.08
9.	Housing Co-Op., Versova.	Private Housing	Daryanani Indo Saigon Company.	76	3.66
10.	State Bank Qtrs., Malad East.	Central Govt.	K. Raheja & Co.	117	5.64
11.	Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Deonar.	Central Govt.	Jog Builders	45	2.17
12.	Housing Co-Op. Vashi.	CIDCO	Many	79	3.81
13.	Agricultural Produce Market, Vashi.	CIDCO	Many	125	6.02
14.	Housing Societies, Nerul.	HUDCO	Many	66	3.18
15.	Housing Societies, Airole.	CIDCO	Many	103	4.96
16.	Housing Societies, Airole.	CIDCO	B.G. Shirke & Co.	604	29.09
17.	Stone Quarries, Powai.	Private	Bombay Stone Crushing Co.	149	7.18
TOTAL ...				2076	100.00

Taking the total number of individuals covered by the study, the sex distribution shows a ratio of 1:0.8 in favour of males, as shown in Table 1:2.

TABLE 1: 2

SEX DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION		
Sex	Number	Percent
Males	3931	55%
Females	3159	45%
Total	7090	100%

### Age Distribution :

An age-wise distribution of the two sexes shows that in the age groups below 20 years, the percentage of females of the total female population is greater, while in the adult group (21 and above), the male population shows a higher percentage. (Table 1:3)

TABLE 1: 3

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF MALE AND FEMALE						
Age	Male No.	Male %	Female No.	Female %	No.	%
0 - 1 year	163	4.1%	141	4.5%	304	4.3%
1 - 5 years	619	15.8%	600	19.0%	1219	17.2%
6 - 10 years	445	11.3%	427	13.5%	872	12.3%
11 - 15 years	263	6.7%	230	7.3%	493	6.9%
16 - 20 years	400	10.2%	444	14.1%	844	11.9%
21 - 35 years	1471	37.4%	1037	32.8%	2508	35.4%
36 - 50 years	460	11.7%	213	6.7%	673	9.5%
51 years &	91	2.3%	50	1.6%	141	2.0%
Don't know	19	0.5%	17	0.5%	36	0.5%
Total	3931	100.0%	3159	100.0%	7090	100.0%

It is to be noted that most of the families surveyed were young nuclear families with only one or two children. The women in these families have only begun their reproductive span with 1096 out of 1760 females having children below 5 years of age (Table 1:4) and therefore the total number of children below 15 years of age is only 2880, giving the average number of children per household as 1.3.

TABLE 1 : 4

AGE OF YOUNGEST CHILD		
Age	No.	%
0 - 1 year	399	19.2%
1 - 5 years	697	33.6%
6 - 10 years	171	8.2%
11 - 15 years	86	4.1%
16 - 20 years	36	1.7%
Over 21 Years	33	1.7%
No Children	654	31.5%
Total	2076	100.0%

**Marital Status :** In the overall population the percentage of married and unmarried individuals is almost evenly divided with 50.3% and 48.5% respectively. But in Tables 1:5 and 1:6 which shows the age-wise distribution of marital status, we find that in the 0-15 age group, 18 male children and 57 female children are married. Among the females in the 11 to 15 age group, 49 out of 230 or 21% are married, while in the age group 16 to 20 years of age as many as 89% are married. Among the males in the 16-20 age groups, 121 out of 400 are married showing a proportion of nearly one-third. Of the rest of the adult male population (2022) (21 years and above), 1757 or 86% are married. These figures indicate the strong trend towards early marriages especially among women. 1210 out of 1300 - i.e. 93% of the adult female population that were surveyed were married before the age of 20 years.

TABLE 1 : 5

MARITAL STATUS OF MALES						
Age	Unmarried	Married	Divorced	Widowed	Deserted	Total
< 10 years	1216	11	-	-	-	1227
11 - 15 years	253	9	-	1	-	263
16 - 20 years	279	121	-	-	-	400
21 - 35 years	247	1220	2	-	2	1471
36 - 50 years	7	452	-	1	-	460
51 years &	3	87	-	1	-	91
Don't know	16	3	-	-	-	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>1903</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3931</b>

TABLE 1 : 6

MARITAL STATUS OF FEMALES						
Age	Unmarried	Married	Divorced	Widowed	Deserted	Total
< 10 years	1158	9	1	-	-	1168
11 - 15 years	181	49	-	-	-	230
16 - 20 years	46	397	-	-	1	444
21 - 35 years	12	1000	8	15	2	1037
36 - 50 years	3	183	3	22	2	213
51 years &	3	29	3	15	-	50
Don't know	13	2	1	1	-	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>1416</b>	<b>1669</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3159</b>

Religion : The break up of religion followed is given in Table 1:7. The largest number are Hindus, followed by Neo Buddhists, Muslims and then Christians. The high percentage of Neo-Buddhists may reflect the fact that a large proportion of the backward classes, who also tend to be landless turn to construction work for survival.

TABLE 1 : 7

HOUSEHOLD DISTRIBUTION OF RELIGION		
Religion	Number	Percent
Hindu	1476	71.1%
Muslim	209	10.1%
Buddhist	316	15.2%
Christian	27	1.3%
Others	48	2.3%
Total	2076	100.0%

*Language :* As for language, Table 1:8 shows the distribution with the Marathi speaking population as the majority group with 43.4% while Hindi/Urdu follows with 20.2% and Kannada at 14.7%. While this gives the overall distribution, it has to be noted that the Marathi speaking population is concentrated in two centres of our survey - i.e. B.G. Shirke & Co., Bandra and Airoli. Since the number surveyed in these two centres is almost 30% of the total population surveyed, this is not a true indication of the language distribution. The language predominant in the other 15 areas is given in Table 1:8a. This has been detailed to show that these migrant groups are further isolated by language in Bombay. Nearly 54% are made up by Urdu, Kannada and Telugu speaking families.

TABLE 1 : 8

HOUSEHOLD LANGUAGE DISTRIBUTION		
Language	Number	Percent
Marathi	901	43.4%
Hindi-Urdu	420	20.2%
Kannada	304	14.7%
Telugu	175	8.4%
Tamil	28	1.4%
Bengali	25	1.2%
Malayalam	21	1.0%
Others	202	9.7%
Total	2076	100.0%

TABLE 1 : 8a

LANGUAGE WITHOUT 2 CENTRES	
Number	Percent
408	29.4%
310	22.3%
279	20.1%
166	12.0%
26	1.9%
19	1.4%
13	0.9%
167	12.0%
1388	100.0%

**Family Size :** Table 1:9 shows the number of family members per household, which includes one, two or three generations. The household density indicates the space available per capita given the total household area of an average 10 sq. ft.

TABLE 1: 9

NUMBER OF FAMILY MEMBERS PER HOUSEHOLD		
Number of Family Members	Households	Percentage
Living alone	449	21.6%
Two Members	316	15.2%
Three	361	17.4%
Four	368	17.7%
Five	283	13.6%
Six	151	7.3%
Seven	92	4.4%
Eight	32	1.6%
Nine	11	0.5%
Ten	10	0.5%
Eleven	2	0.1%
Twelve	1	0.1%
Total	2076	100.0%

**MIGRATION HISTORY :**

It is a well established fact that the vast majority of construction workers in Bombay city and indeed in most urban areas in the country are migrants from rural areas. This survey has not revealed anything different. It has only substantiated the fact.

What is interesting however are the points of origin and the patterns of migration which have emerged.

Origin : Table II:1, showing the districts and states of origin of these families is worth studying closely. Firstly, we see that nearly half of these families are from Maharashtra state, while nearly one quarter are from neighbouring Karnataka. Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh are contributing over 8% each, with Bihar close behind. Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Rajasthan, Orissa, Gujarat and Punjab provide the rest. In other words, families or individuals from virtually every state in India are working in the construction industry of Bombay city.

**TABLE II : 1-**

HOUSEHOLD DISTRIBUTION OF STATE OF ORIGIN		
State	Number	Percent
Maharashtra	985	47.45%
Karnataka	489	23.56%
Andhra Pradesh	171	8.24%
Madhya Pradesh	22	1.06%
Uttar Pradesh	169	8.14%
Bihar	108	5.20%
West Bengal	20	0.96%
Tamil Nadu	25	1.20%
Kerala	26	1.25%
Rajasthan	5	0.24%
Punjab	2	0.10%
Orissa	37	1.78%
Gujarat	5	0.24%
Nepal	7	0.34%
Others	5	0.24%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2076</b>	<b>100.00%</b>



What is even more revealing, however, is that there are just ten districts from which the largest number of families have migrated for construction work. Table II:2 shows that firstly ten districts alone account for nearly 56% or more than half of all the households. If this sample of over 2000 households is considered representative of the total construction worker population in the city, then this means that just ten districts—6 from Maharashtra and 3 from Karnataka and 1 from Andhra Pradesh are contributing over half of the city's construction labour.

Secondly, just one district - viz. Gulbarga in Karnataka alone accounts for 15% of all the construction workers. Such an order of out-migration cannot be accidental.

TABLE II : 2

## TOP TEN DISTRICTS OF ORIGIN

District	Number	Percent
Gulbarga	311	14.98%
Beed	206	9.92%
Solapur	152	7.32%
Latur	139	6.70%
Osmanabad	92	4.43%
Bijapur	82	3.95%
Parbhani	48	2.31%
Bidar	45	2.17%
Ahmednagar	44	2.12%
Mehboobnagar	39	1.88%
Total	1158	55.78%
Other Districts	918	44.22%
Total	2076	100.00%

It will be noticed that the vast majority of the districts given in Table II:2 read like a map of the underdeveloped areas of India - or like a poverty map.

This migration pattern from specific districts - large numbers (1158 households out of 2076 to be precise) from so few districts is perhaps also indicative of a possible well organised system operating directly between Bombay and these areas.



**Patterns of migration :** To understand the migration pattern of these groups, we have to see when these families left their rural home and when they came to Bombay for work. Table II:3 shows that most families have migrated straight to Bombay, whenever they left their village.

The purpose of juxtaposing two questions - 'When they left the village' and 'when they came to Bombay' - was to understand the nature of migration. Table II:3 indicates that there were hardly any intermediate points of migration, since there is little difference between the two sets of data.

TABLE II : 3

MIGRATION HISTORY					
Number of Years ago		LEFT VILLAGE		CAME TO BOMBAY	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
-	1 year	427	20.6%	481	23.2%
1	- 5 years	788	38.0%	810	39.0%
6	- 10 years	405	19.5%	397	19.1%
11	- 20 years	324	15.6%	275	13.3%
21	- 30 years	66	3.2%	58	2.8%
31	- 40 years	13	0.6%	10	0.5%
41	years and	3	0.1%	3	0.1%
	Don't know	50	2.4%	42	2.0%
Total	.....	2076	100.0%	2076	100.0%

It is also evident that the majority of these families are comparatively recent migrants to the city, with 1,291 out of 2076 or 62.2% of them having come to Bombay in the past 5 years.

Furthermore, we see that the last 20 years account for the bulk of this migration, since nearly 95% left their villages, and came to Bombay in this period. - This is not surprising in view of the construction boom of the last two decades in Bombay and for that matter, in most of the metropolitan areas in the country.

TABLE II : 4 and II : 4a

PATTERN OF MIGRATION					
INTER - CITY			INTRA - BOMBAY		
No. of Sites	Number	Percent	No. of Sites	Number	Percent
1	1632	78.6%	1	858	41.3%
2	271	13.1%	2	533	25.7%
3	70	3.4%	3	261	13.5%
4	35	1.7%	4	176	8.5%
5	11	0.5%	5	114	5.5%
6	11	0.5%	6	50	2.4%
7	1	0.1%	7	23	1.1%
8	2	0.1%	8	29	1.4%
9	14	0.7%	9	11	0.5%
Don't know	29	1.3%	Don't know	1	0.1%
Total	..... 2076	100.0%	Total	..... 2076	100.0%

Another aspect of migration which we attempted to understand in the study was the rate of inter-city and intra-city migration, since these exposures would have several effects on the quality of life of these families. Table II:4 and Table II:4a depict the movements of these families.

Here we find that the majority - 78.6% of the families have migrated directly to Bombay, while only a fifth of the total had been on construction sites in other places. Table II:4a shows that 41.3% of all the households were working on the same site ever since their arrival in the city, while only about half as many had arrived in Bombay within the last year.

This means that nearly half of these families are working on massive long-term building projects of much more than a year's duration. Presumably these major projects should be able to provide decent facilities for their workers by virtue of the magnitude of investments going into them. We would also tend to assume that they were in permanent employment with the contractor. Even this is belied.

**Source of information :** The final facet of migration history relates to how the workers became aware of Bombay as a potentially viable point of emigration, and who helped them in their movement.

Table II:5 : indicates the source of knowledge about availability of work in Bombay. 34.2% of the respondents have said that their own family members or relatives had told them, while 4.8% came with their spouses. 26.4% answered that they came to know from their neighbours, while 25% said they came by themselves, perhaps by hearsay. This supports our earlier observation that there is a strong pattern of migration from specific areas because information is obtained by word of mouth and therefore confined to particular districts from where they came.

TABLE II : 5

INFORMATION ABOUT WORK IN BOMBAY		
Source	Number	Percent
Family/Relatives	710	34.2%
Spouse	99	4.8%
Friend/Neighbour	548	26.4%
Company	31	1.5%
Mukadam	142	6.8%
By himself	519	25.0%
Some one else	21	1.0%
No response	6	0.3%
Total	2076	100.0%

Assistance : In reply to the question of who assisted the people in coming to Bombay, 38.3% said that their relatives had helped them. While it is clear that the family has been the chief source of support in migrating to Bombay, 21.8% said that other villagers, friends and neighbours had helped them. The Mukkadam/. Thekedar or labour contractor is cited by 6.5% of families as having assisted their migration. Interestingly, nearly 30% of households stated that no one had helped them, and that they had come on their own. Table II:6.

TABLE II : 6

ASSISTANCE IN MIGRATING		
Source	Number	Percent
Family	162	7.8%
Relatives	631	30.4%
Village Neighbours	452	21.8%
Mukadam	135	6.5%
Others	74	3.6%
No One	605	29.1%
Don't Know	17	0.8%
Total	.....	2076
		100.0%

**Reasons for migration :** Now we come to the crucial question of what caused these families to leave their rural home and migrate to the city and live the alienated harsh and backbreaking lives of construction workers. What moves them to accept the exploitation and insecurity of life in the city? There is irony in their being perpetually homeless while building flats and shopping complexes for the affluent, or office monoliths which they or their progeny will never step into. How do they cope with the fear of being dismissed and jobless if they make any attempt to even ask for their legitimate wages or question their lot? What makes them feel that all this wretchedness is better than their plight at home in the village?

Table II:7 provides some of the answers. Of the approximately 2700 reasons given by respondents the single largest one was lack of employment. Nearly half of all the responses fall into this reason. In most responses unemployment was also closely linked to drought.

TABLE II : 7

REASONS FOR MIGRATION		
Reason	Number	Percent
Unemployment/For Employment	1358	49.5%
Drought	812	29.6%
Poverty/Hunger/Low Income	219	8.0%
Landless/Less Land	203	7.4%
After Marriage/Disputes/ Destitute	111	4.0%
For Education	5	0.2%
Other Reasons	37	1.3%
Total	.....	2745 100.0%

Note : Multiple reasons were given by respondents.

### III. ECONOMIC PROFILE

In discussing the economic situation of these construction worker families, we shall first look at their economic links with their villages and the non-migrant sections of their families and then move onto to their status in the city.

#### A. Rural -

**Assets owned :** The question was 'what were their assets still owned in the village and who looks after these?'. Most of the assets owned were land, house and jewellery and more than 200 individual responses were that they had nothing, and nobody was looking after them. **Table III:1.**

TABLE III : 1

ASSETS IN VILLAGE		
Assets	Number	Percent
House	493	23.7%
Field/Farm	43	2.0%
House + Farm	547	26.3%
House, Farm + Cattle	469	22.6%
All Above + Others	190	9.2%
House + Other	18	0.9%
Shop	14	0.7%
Not Known	38	1.8%
Nothing	264	12.7%
Total	2076	100.0%

**Family Support :** As shown in Table III:1a in the majority of cases, these village level assets are in the care of parents or siblings (70.6%) or other relatives (14.8%) thus pointing to the fact that their family links are very strong. A relatively small group has pawned, rented, closed down or made other arrangements with their village holdings.

The next tables Table III:2 and III:2a relate to the urban rural/flow of income highlighting the inter-dependence of the migrant wage earners in the city and their rural relatives. 60% of all families send money to their relatives in the village, and more than 30% do so at least once a month. Nearly half the recipients of such remittances are the parents of the migrants.

This provides a further dimension to the reasons for migration. Since nearly 99% of those receiving money from the workers are immediate family members (parents, siblings or children), the role of migration in strengthening the economic status of marginalised rural families becomes quite evident.

TABLE III : 1a

CARETAKERS OF ASSETS		
Person	Number	Percent
Parents/Siblings	1394	70.6%
Other Relatives	292	14.8%
Thekedar/Mukadam	8	0.4%
Pawned/Rented	28	1.4%
Others	9	0.5%
Closed	55	2.8%
Don't Know	132	6.7%
Not Disclosed	56	2.8%
Total	1974	100.0%
No Assets	102	
Total	2076	

TABLE III : 2

TABLE III : 2a

MONEY SENT HOME AND TO WHOM					
Sent	Number	Percent	Person	Number	Percent
Positive	1246	60%	Mother/ Father	995	47.8%
Negative	810	39%	Siblings	119	5.7%
Don't Know	20	1%	Son/Daughter	41	2.0%
			Other	91	4.4%
			Relatives		
			Don't Know	20	1.0%
			Not Applicable	810	39.0%
Total	2076	100%	Total	2076	100.0%

However, the amount sent every month is less than Rs.100/- in 29.6% of cases and those sending less than Rs.500/- per month make up a total of 55.8% Nearly 39% said they did not send any money home. Table III:3.



TABLE III : 3

AMOUNT SENT TO VILLAGE PER MONTH		
Rupees	Number	Percent
< Rs. 100	614	29.6%
Rs. 101 - 500	543	26.2%
Rs. 501 - 1000	67	3.2%
> Rs. 1000	22	1.0%
Don't Know	20	1.0%
Do not send	810	39.0%
Total	2076	100.0%

B. **Urban :** We now move onto the economic situation of these construction workers in the city.

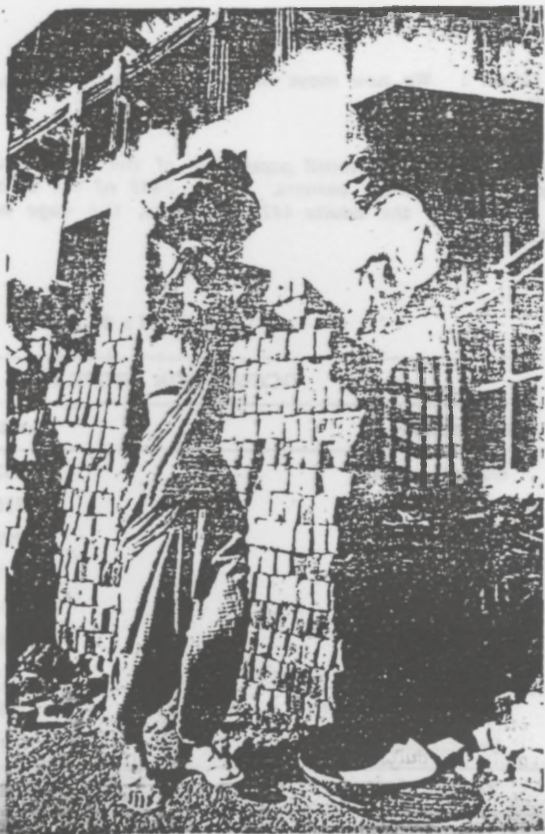
**Occupation :** In the overall population of the study - viz. - 7090 - more than 50% or 3583 are wage earners. Since 2889 of the total are children under 15 years of age, of the adults (4201 persons), the wage earners cover more than 80% (Table III:4).

TABLE III : 4

OCCUPATION PROFILE			
Occupation	Number	Percent	Percent
Manual Labour	1933	53.4%	
Mason	219	6.0%	
Carpenter	228	6.3%	
Fitter/Welder	175	4.8%	
Stone Breaker	84	2.3%	
Mistry	86	2.4%	
Other Construction Work	652	18.0%	
All other occupations	206	5.7%	
Unemployed adults	39	1.1%	
Total	3622	100.0%	51.0%
Total Population	7090		100.0%

Table III:4 gives the details of the occupations we came across in the survey. The largest single group is the unskilled manual labourers variously known as 'Bigari', 'Mazdoor', 'Mathikam', etc. These people are the building blocks of the construction industry - the load lifters, brick and mud carriers, etc. - the faceless workers who carry heavy loads up and down half-finished buildings, precariously perched on ledges at great risk to life and limb. This group comprises both men and women in almost equal proportions, and forms the majority of the target population of Mobile Creches.

The relatively skilled occupations of carpenter, mason, fitter, welder and mistry account for about 20% of the workers. The remaining group of construction site occupations include both skilled workers like plumbers, painters, machine operators, lift operators, etc. as well as unskilled work like tea boys, water carriers, helpers, watchmen, etc. A few construction related occupations which are more white collar jobs such as supervisor, store-keeper, engineer, clerk, peon and security personnel are also included. The number of persons in non-construction occupations are mostly women (Table III:6). This includes housewives, domestic servants, vegetable vendors, fish sellers etc. Out of the total population of 4201 individuals above 15 years, only 39 were found to be unemployed.



In Table III:4a we have listed all the occupations to give the reader an idea of the diverse jobs in the construction industry.

TABLE III : 4a

OCCUPATION			
Unskilled	Mud & Brick Carriers	1933	27.3%
	Mukkadam	58	0.5%
	Thekedar	30	0.4%
Skilled	Supervisor	51	0.7%
	Mixer Operator	25	0.4%
	Mason	219	3.1%
	Driver	57	0.8%
	Wireman, Electrician	35	0.5%
	Plumber	33	0.5%
	Carpenter	228	3.2%
	Watchman	61	0.9%
	Mechanic	46	0.6%
	Plasterer	16	0.2%
	Fitter, Welder	175	2.5%
	Painter	20	0.3%
	Lift Operator	6	0.1%
Crane Operator	17	0.2%	
Related Occupation	Peon	24	0.3%
	Store Keeper	6	0.1%
	Water Carriers	34	0.5%
	Canteen Man	9	0.1%
	Security Man	2	--
	Mistry	86	1.2%
	Tile layer & polisher	24	0.4%
	Stone Breaker	84	1.2%
	Engineer	6	0.1%
	Gardener	7	0.1%
	Sweeper	6	0.1%
	Work Outside the site	Fish Vendor	34
Domestic Work		58	0.8%
Vegetable Vendor		16	0.2%
Other work		60	0.9%
Office peon		3	--
Shop assistant		3	--
Unemployed		39	0.6%
Students		1490	21.0%
Children not attending school (0.3 to 10 years)		480	6.8%
Others	Unemployed boys (11-18 years)	53	0.7%
	Unemployed girls (11-18 years)	60	0.9%
	Housewives (11 and above)	747	10.5%
	Very young and old persons	711	10.0%
	No response	38	0.5%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7090</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

As far as sex differentials in occupation are concerned it is very clear that women have no access to or opportunity to enter the more skilled jobs, which are traditional male preserves (Table III:5).

TABLE III : 5

Occupation	SEX DISTRIBUTION OF WAGE EARNERS				Total
	Male		Female		
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Manual Labour	1039	53.8%	594	46.2%	1933
Mason	212	96.8%	7	3.2%	219
Carpenter	225	96.7%	3	1.3%	228
Electric Welder	175	100.0%	-	-	175
Stone Breaker	72	87.7%	12	14.3%	84
Mistry	86	100.0%	-	-	86
Other Construction Work	652	100.0%	-	-	652
Other Occupations	87	42.2%	119	57.8%	206
Unemployed Adults	28	71.8%	11	28.2%	39
Total	2576	71.1%	1046	28.9%	3622
					100%

Table III:6 shows that at least among the surveyed group, the majority - nearly 70% - are working six days a week, and another 18% are working all seven days. If we include those who were employed five days per week, we find that the percentage is 94. This means that irregularity of work is not a serious problem for these migrant groups.

TABLE III : 6

	NUMBER OF DAYS WORKED PER WEEK								Total
	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Irregular	
Number	3	8	59	133	207	2459	660	54	3583
Percent	0.1%	0.2%	1.7%	3.7%	5.8%	68.6%	18.4%	1.5%	100%

The crux of the economic question is of course income. Table III:7 showing the distribution of employed persons by wages earned per day is most revealing. Almost two-thirds of all workers earn less than Rs.20/- per day, which is the minimum wage for Bombay. Only 9% get more than Rs.30/- per day, which would give them a monthly income needed for a decent standard of living.

On the other hand, when compared with income levels prevailing in the rural area (particularly the districts from which the bulk of these families have migrated) the fact that the majority is now earning more than Rs.10 - per day and get work for at least five days in the week is probably viewed by them as a great improvement in their economic status.

TABLE III : 7

INCOME PER DAY			
Rupees		Number	Percent
Rs. 1 - 5		70	2.0%
Rs. 6 - 10		769	21.5%
Rs. 11 - 20		1445	40.3%
Rs. 21 - 30		906	25.3%
Rs. 31 - 40		202	5.6%
Rs. 41 - 50		80	2.2%
Rs. 51 and above		57	1.6%
Irregular		54	1.5%
Total	.....	3583	100.0%

Table III:8 shows that children from 6 years and above start working and the number of working children totals 219 and that their average daily income is not more than Rs.20 - per day, with a few earning more.

TABLE III : 8

Age in Years	AGE X INCOME							Irregular or Don't know	Total
	Rs. 5 - 5	Rs. 6 - 10	Rs. 11 - 20	Rs. 20 - 30	Rs. 31 - 40	Rs. 41 - 50	Rs.50		
Upto 10 years	6	20	3						29
11 - 15 years	25	71	82	29	3			10	220
16 - 20 years	24	148	238	114	21	13	11	43	612
21 - 35 years	36	405	798	589	140	14	31	45	2058
36 - 50 years	7	85	254	155	36	12	9	29	587
Above 51 years	-	7	42	21	2	2	3	-	77
Unemployed	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	39	39
Total	98	736	1417	908	202	41	54	166	3622

But more significant is the sex differential of income. Earlier in Table III:5 we had seen that there were 1039 unskilled males as compared to 894 females doing unskilled labour which is approximately 86%. But the income levels show that only 291 females or about 26% are paid Rs.11-20 per day, while 625 females out of 769 people who earn Rs.6-10 per day make up 81% in this income group. In other words, since the total number of males and females earning less than Rs.20/- per day is nearly the same as the total number of males and females engaged in unskilled labour, it is clear in the break up that the female labourers are paid less than the males for the same work that they do! This is clear discrimination and is a violation of the Contract Labour Act! (Table III:9)

TABLE III : 9

GENDER X INCOME						
Rupees	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
1 - 5	30	43%	40	57%	70	1.0%
6 - 10	144	19%	625	81%	769	10.8%
11 - 20	1154	80%	291	20%	1445	20.4%
21 - 30	802	89%	104	11%	906	12.8%
31 - 40	195	97%	7	3%	202	2.8%
41 - 50	77	96%	3	4%	80	1.1%
More than 50	57	100%	-	-	57	0.8%
Irregular	29	54%	25	46%	54	0.8%
Total earning	2488	69%	1095	31%	3583	50.5%
Applicable	1443	41%	2064	59%	3507	49.5%
Total	3931	100.0%	3159	100%	7090	100.0%

	Male	Female
Refer (Table III:5)		
Unskilled	1039	: 894
Rs. 6-10	144	: 625
Rs.11-20	1154	: 291

It is noteworthy here that out of a population of 1991 females above the age of 11 years, only 747 were described as housewives who are not earning wages. This means that more than 50% of the women on construction sites are engaged in some occupation outside their home, obviously resulting in neglect of their children. It is to this targeted group that Mobile Creches primarily reaches out.

This concern about the neglected child is supported by the fact that there are a total of 2889 children under the age of 15 years, with children under 5 making up 1524 to be cared for.

TABLE III : 9a

NUMBER OF HOUSEWIVES NOT EARNING WAGES				
Age	Number	Percent	Total	Percent
11 - 15 years	29	12%	230	7.3%
16 - 20 years	217	49%	444	14.1%
21 - 35 years	403	39%	1037	25.8%
36 - 50 years	76	37%	213	5.7%
51 years and above	20	40%	50	1.5%
Don't Know			17	0.5%
Total	747		1991	63.0%
Children below 10 years	-		1168	37.0%
Total			3159	100.0%

Having looked at income levels, we move on to study the amount cut in wages at source. Prior to this survey, the Mobile Creches staff believed that ad hoc cuts in wages reduced the meagre income further for these construction workers. It was felt that these cuts are another form of exploitation of their fear and ignorance. Reportedly these cuts are justified as being for water, cooking fuel, rent, electricity, etc.

Table III:10 shows that 12.1% of households reported wage cuts at source. This means that perhaps only one or two builders are actually cutting their wages. The others perhaps give a 'cut' from their wages to the Mukkadam and others after they are paid.

TABLE III-10

	CUT IN WAGES						Total
	Rs.10.	Rs.11.25.	Rs.26.50.	Rs.51.100.	Rs.100.	Don't Know	
Number	18	51	79	63	18	22	251
Percent	7.2%	20.3%	31.5%	25.1%	7.2%	8.7%	100%

Percentage of households reporting cuts 12.1%

**Indebtedness :** The next critical issue is of indebtedness among sections like construction workers who are generally unorganised and occupy the lowest socio-economic stratum. However Table III:11 depicting the magnitude of indebtedness shows that only 17% of all households reported having any debts.

TABLE III-11

MAGNITUDE OF INDEBTEDNESS		
RUPEES	NUMBER	PERCENT
1. Less than -100	27	7.5%
2. 101-500	90	25.0%
3. 501-1,000	56	15.6%
4. 1,001-3,000	92	25.6%
5. 3,001-5,000	48	13.3%
6. 5,001-10,000	35	9.7%
7. 10,001-20,000	9	2.5%
8. 20,000 and above	3	0.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Percentage of households indebted 17%

This could be attributed to a number of reasons: 1) These households are living within their means, with both men and women working and relatively few have had to borrow. This may be connected with the fact that the bulk of these are young families with just one or two children, and so have not yet encountered the usual milestones which entail heavy borrowing i.e. marriage, purchase of land, serious illness, emigration outside the country, etc.

2) Possibly respondents have not disclosed indebtedness. It is our own observation that the Mukkadams (or labour contractor) is the chief source of credit for the labourers he assists and controls. Being wary of this survey (Mukkadams on many sites insisted on scrutinising the questionnaire and sometimes even accompanied the investigators for interview of the workers., the respondents may have been warned not to disclose the truth, or they might have been afraid to do so. This is seen in Table III:11a which reflects their perception of who pays them.

3) In cases where the respondent was a woman, she may not have been aware of her husband's debts, or out of prudence, kept her counsel.

4) It is well known that poverty stricken people have developed strong defence mechanisms against revealing certain information that may expose their real status, or may lead to further exploitation. In general, it is very difficult to get accurate answers to sensitive questions like income, indebtedness and alcoholism. So even though this survey was conducted by the Mobile Creches staff who are familiar figures with the families and who have established a rapport with them, they may not have been able to elicit honest responses to this question.



TABLE III-11a

EMPLOYER - WAGE PAYER		
Mukadam	273	13.2 %
Contractor	1767	85.1 %
Company	3	0.1 %
Other	2	0.1 %
Don't Know	31	1.5 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>2076</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>

A study of the family income and expenditure pattern (Table III:12) showed that the majority of families - 1876 - had an income of less than Rs.1500/- per month. On the expenditure side, 2019 families showed less than an expense of Rs.1500/- per month. Families earning between Rs.100/- to Rs.750/- per month, number 976 as opposed to the number of families showing an expenditure of upto Rs.750/- being 1514. That is, only 60% of families spending upto Rs.750/- per month are earning the amount, while the other 40% are spending more than they earn.

These are perhaps some of the families that are in debt and are living beyond their means.

TABLE III : 12

## INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Rupees	INCOME		EXPENDITURE	
	No.	%	No.	%
Rs.250	19	0.9%	109	5.2%
251 - 500	357	17.2%	707	34.1%
501 - 750	600	28.9%	698	33.6%
751 - 1000	452	21.8%	325	15.7%
1001 - 1500	448	21.6%	180	8.7%
1501 - 2000	115	5.5%	22	1.1%
2001 - 2500	38	1.8%	5	0.2%
2501 - 3000	27	1.3%	2	0.1%
Rs.3000	20	1.0%	-	-
Don't Know			28	1.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2076</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2076</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

It is interesting, that as the income level goes higher, the number of families showing the same amount of expenditure gradually shows a decline. This means that once the basic needs are met, the workers are willing to save. This also underscores the fact that no family can be expected to survive on an income of less than Rs.750/- per month.

**Savings :** From the question of cuts in wages and indebtedness, we move onto to that of savings - Table III:13. Some 762 families, or 37% of all households reported savings, many in more than one form. Some of the factors mentioned under reasons for non disclosure of indebtedness seem to be directly borne out by the data relating to savings.

For example, we see that the largest single saving practice is in the form of money kept at home! This combined with the other traditional form of savings - viz. jewellery, together accounts for nearly 50% of all reported savings. Another 15% reported savings in the form of land or a house in the village. This throws light on how these families perceive or interpret the concept of savings. The specific question addressed to them was 'In what form do you save?' or 'Aap kis roop main bachat karte hain?' to which 'land in the village' or 'house in the village' were some of the volunteered responses. This means that for many, the concept of assets and savings is the same - they view their assets as their main form of saving, their security in times of economic crisis. But this 'saving' in the form of land or house may not have been acquired with their saving from income over expenditure, and should not be interpreted as such.

TABLE III : 13

## SAVINGS

Form of Saving	Number	Percent
1. Jewellery	64	8.4 %
2. Land in Village	37	4.8%
3. House in Village	73	9.6 %
4. Money in safekeeping with someone	34	4.5 %
5. Money kept at home	310	40.7 %
6. Bank Account	218	28.6 %
7. Other Forms	26	3.4 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>762</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>

Number of households reporting saving : 762 = 37 %

Number of households not saving : 1314 = 63 %

But the fact that 63% of respondents reported no savings at all is perhaps the most revealing factor of their economic status.

The lack of stability of this population plays an important part in their practice of saving. With their high mobility, they see themselves as people in constant transit from one site to another, with no home to call their own in the city. This is perhaps the reason why keeping their savings at home, or in the safe keeping of a known person is a more prevalent practice than banking. In addition, a low level of exposure to institutional savings systems and procedures as well as lack of confidence in them may be responsible for the fact that only 218 or less than 30% of those who saved any money had bank accounts.

This also indicates the lack of accessibility of these services to people who have no status or contacts to vouch for them.

**Motivation for saving :** The next indicator we explored was the reason for saving to gauge both their attitudes and aspirations. Table III:14 shows the varied responses we got as the reasons for saving. Among those who were able to save, the single most important motivating factor appears to be the uncertainties of the future faced by these families. Thus 34% of reasons were given as 'for secure future'. ('Bhavishya ke liye'). The purchase of land or a house (20%) as a reason for saving seems to reflect the hope of being able to save enough through construction work to return to their villages in relative security and stability. Anticipation of future obligations like marriage of children, or unpredictable crises are the next most important reasons given for saving. The repayment of debts and other factors seem to provide the least impetus for saving and is the response of a very small percentage. But it should be noted here that this correlated with the fact that very few confessed indebtedness in the first place.

TABLE III : 14

REASONS FOR SAVING			
1.	For the future	233	34.0%
2.	For sudden crisis	53	7.7%
3.	Children's education	99	14.5%
4.	To buy house	81	11.8%
5.	To buy land	57	8.3%
6.	Wedding expenditure	132	19.3%
7.	Loan repayment	25	3.7%
8.	Other reasons	5	0.7%
Total		685	100.0%

The responses are overlapping - not additive.

All these factors underscore the desperation of these groups, with ignorance and illiteracy making them more vulnerable to exploitation.

However, in trying to understand their cultural practices and traditional customs, we tried to assess their expenditure on weddings, celebration of festivals, etc. Table III:15 shows that wedding expenditure seems to be an accepted practice and is almost equal for parents of boys and girls. The expenditure level for girls marriages is only marginally higher. But the fact that most families spend between Rs.1,000/- and Rs.10,000/- for a wedding is revealing.

TABLE III : 15

WEDDING EXPENDITURE				
Rupees	Girls	%	Boys	%
< 1,000	25	1.2%	19	0.9%
1,001 - 3,000	139	6.7%	109	5.3%
3,001 - 5,000	175	8.4%	144	6.9%
5,001 - 10,000	150	7.2%	134	6.4%
10,000 - 20,000	70	3.4%	51	2.5%
Over 20,000	33	1.6%	12	0.6%
Not applicable	1484	71.5%	1607	77.4%
Total	2076	100.0%	2076	100.0%

The other parameter - the number of festivals celebrated - was interesting too. Nearly 60% of families said that they celebrated at least 6-10 festivals in the year, and assuming an average expenditure of Rs.50/- per festival, this itself accounted for Rs.50/- per month or Rs.500/- per year. (Table III:16)

TABLE III : 16

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED		
Number of Festivals	Number	Percent
1 - 5	535	25.77%
6 - 10	1208	58.19%
11 - 15	318	15.32%
16	3	0.14%
N I L	12	0.58%
Total	2076	100.00%

## IV. EDUCATION

We tried to assess the literacy levels of the individuals by asking how many could read and write ('Aapka ghar main kisko padhana-likhna aatha hain?'). The picture that emerged is given in Table IV:1. This data contains both surprising and predictable features.

TABLE IV : 1

LITERACY LEVELS			
	Number	Percent	Percent of Total
Males	1196	42.0%	16.9%
Females	327	11.5%	4.6%
Children	1325	46.5%	18.7%
Total Literate	2848	100.0%	40.2%
Individuals Surveyed	7090	-	

The fact that 40% of this population claim they can read and write appears rather high. However, these are the number of literate individuals and not households. At the household level, only 30% on an average have a literate member and this, more often than not, is likely to be a child. Among the adults, only 16.9% male and 4.6% females are literate.

The very low proportion of literate women (only 11.5% even out of all literate persons) reflects the poor status of women in this group. Supplementing the family income, cooking and child bearing are assisted roles. Literacy takes very low priority.

Perhaps the most positive feature, and heartening too, is the relatively high proportion of literate children in this data. (This will be further elaborated in the next section on status of children).

To get a sense of the attitude or value placed on education by this population, the question 'Do you think education is necessary?' was asked. To this there was an overwhelming response of 93% in the affirmative. It would seem that regardless of levels of literacy, there is a latent aspiration for education - if not for themselves at least for their children. Whether the exigencies of their life situation will permit them to realise this goal is another matter.

## V. STATUS OF CHILDREN

As an organisation whose focus is on the children of construction workers, Mobile Creches felt that the status and situation of children must be examined. Although several aspects of child status will be dealt with in the section on health, we present some findings here which highlight the position of children in the community. Table V:1 gives some of the key statistics of how children are occupied.

TABLE V : 1

CHILDREN AND OCCUPATION		
Occupation	Number	Percent
Children in Mobile Creches	984	34.1%
In Municipal Schools	485	16.8%
College Students	7	0.2%
In Private Schools	17	0.6%
Children at Home - Below 3 years	501	17.3%
Children at Home - 3-10 years	488	16.9%
Non-Schooling, Non Working Children 11-15 years	113	3.9%
Working Children	249	8.6%
Housewives	29	1.0%
Blank	16	0.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2889</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Children in Mobile Creches :** Firstly since this survey was carried out only on those construction sites where centres of the Mobile Creches are established, it is not surprising that 34% of the total are attending these creches. On the other hand, this number comprises only 64% of the children aged 0-5 years (1524 children) who are living on the site.

This factor needs to be further explored and elaborated. There is a phenomenal number of 540 children who are on the construction sites covered by our survey, but who do not come to the creches. This could be due to two main reasons. Firstly, their mothers are not working, and are at home and do not see the need to send them to the creche, or secondly, some women are apprehensive about the unknown, and prefer to keep their children within their field of vision as they work. This is observed particularly in new creches where the community has had very little exposure to the demands of city life. Moreover they do not comprehend the need for any institutional care.

TABLE V : 2

SEX DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS				
Institution	Males	Females	Total	Percent Total
Mobile Creches	495 50.3%	489 49.7%	984 100%	55.9%
Municipal School	315 64.9%	170 35.1%	485 100%	32.5%
Private School	10 58.8%	7 41.2%	17 100%	1.1%
College	5 71.4%	2 28.6%	7 100%	0.5%
Total	825 55.3%	668 44.7%	1493	100.0%

Table V:2 reveals the sex distribution of children seeking education. It is heartening to note that of the children attending Mobile Creches, there is an equal distribution of boys and girls. Amongst the children attending the municipal schools, there are 65% males and only 35% females, revealing the general bias towards educating boys in preference to girls.

**Municipal School Children :** Again in Table V:2 we notice that less than 17% of the children are in elementary education in municipal schools, though children of this group comprise 35.5% of the child population. This is not surprising because the majority of children of migrant construction workers never get a chance to get admitted into any formal schooling. Their parents are so pre-occupied with their own labour and wage-earning to sustain the family, that they have no time or energy to give a thought to their children's future. Most often the children are left to fend for themselves and are seen wandering around the construction site or playing in the rubble. Many of the children are encouraged to work and contribute to the family income. If not, they at least do the household chores, guard the meagre belongings and look after their younger siblings. These children are generally not spared or released for attending school.

Another important point is that this population cannot avail of the existing municipal school admission procedures without the intervention of a welfare agency. They most often do not possess birth certificates denoting date and place of birth, and this is a big hurdle for anyone seeking admission into school.

The second factor is that their mother tongue is different from the medium of instruction, and the parents are not sure if they want their children to learn the local language - Marathi - especially if they are Urdu speaking.

This brings us to the third obstacle - the accessibility of the school. Children live on remote construction sites that are not even connected by regular bus or train services yet, or have to cross busy arterial roads with heavy traffic. There is nobody to escort the children to school. And finally, when the parents move from the construction site, the children have to drop out of school.

Thus, with so many factors acting as detriments, it is creditable that 185 children are in Municipal Schools, while another 17 are in private schools, and 7 even in college. This shows the high degree of motivation these children have which enables them to seek education against so many odds. It will be seen that 29 children in the age group 11-15 years, attend Mobile Creches which means that though they cannot attend regular schools, they are keen to learn.

**Working Children :** In the age group 11-15, there are 53 boys & 60 girls who do not go to school. By the age of 11 years many children are engaged in wage work. 177 children said they were working as unskilled labourers on the construction sites, while 35 children or so claimed to be doing more specialised jobs like masonry, plumbing, carpentry, welding etc. Another 40 were engaged as tea boys and peons and perhaps the girls were either busy with fish or vegetable vending or were working as domestic servants. 29 girls in the age group 11-15 years were married and have been classified as housewives (Refer Table III:9a)

TABLE V : 3

WORKING CHILDREN X OCCUPATION		
Occupation	Number	Percent
Unskilled Labourer	177	71.0%
Carpenter, Plumber	6	2.4%
Fitter, Welder	6	2.4%
Painter	1	0.4%
Peon	3	1.4%
Water Carrier	6	2.4%
Canteen Boy	5	2.0%
Helper	4	1.6%
Stone Breaker	2	0.8%
Sweeper	1	0.4%
Gardener	3	1.2%
Fish Vendor	12	4.8%
Domestic Worker	8	3.2%
Other	15	6.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



## VI. HEALTH

It is widely accepted that the health status of a given population is a good index of their overall socio-economic situation. Even the Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI) which is now used as a more sensitive indicator of development than Gross National Product (GNP) includes Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) as one of its indices.

**Illnesses encountered :** As a basic parameter of morbidity, we first asked them what illnesses they had and how many persons had had any illness in the past one month at the time of the survey.

Table VI:1 gives the number of persons who fell ill, showing nearly 41% of households reporting at least one sick person. But of the total population covered, only 1112 out of 7090, or about 16% persons reported any kind of sickness.

TABLE VI : 1

MORBIDITY IN THE PAST ONE MONTH		
Number of persons in household	Number	Percent
One per household	642	31.0%
Two per household	127	6.1%
Three per household	31	1.5%
Four per household	12	0.6%
Five per household	2	0.1%
Six per household	2	0.1%
More than seven	3	0.1%
No one ill	1227	59.1%
Blank	30	1.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2076</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

On analysing the type of illness (Table VI:2) it was found that there were hardly any major illnesses reported. Fevers (39.7%) and coughs and colds (21.9%) were the major health problems encountered in the total number of households. However, taking the number of reported illnesses as 932, fevers, coughs and colds, and aches and pains make up the majority. On the surface these appear like relatively low morbidity illnesses, while in actual fact they could be including more serious ailments like pneumonia, tuberculosis, leprosy, etc.

TABLE VI : 2

CAUSEWISE MORBIDITY IN PRECEDING SIX MONTHS		
Cause of Illness	Number	Percent
Fevers	370	39.7%
Coughs and Colds	204	21.9%
Aches and Pains	136	14.6%
Diarrhoea	49	5.3%
Tuberculosis	23	2.5%
General Weakness	19	2.0%
Infectious Diseases	16	1.7%
Skin Infections	15	1.6%
Jaundice	11	1.2%
All other major ailments	4	0.4%
Minor Ailments	85	9.1%
Total	932	100.0%

The low percentage of diarrhoea may appear incongruous or misleading, but it should be remembered that this study was done only in sites where Mobile Creches is in action. The particularly low incidence of diarrhoea reported is due to the health education given to the community by the staff of Mobile Creches, and specifically through the Child-to-Child programme.

However, it could also be showing a low percentage due to underreporting of this condition. People report illnesses in the frame-work of their own health culture and in India, a 'runny stomach' is rarely regarded as an ailment until it becomes so severe as to result in the individual being incapacitated. Or in the case of young babies, it is interpreted as being due to teething and is considered to be the normal pattern.

The same observation may apply to reporting of all the other illnesses as well. The actual incidence and prevalence of these and many other health problems may be far greater - while respondents have only reported those episodes that they and their families regarded as 'illnesses' which impaired their normal functioning.

On the other hand, it should be remembered that this survey is done on construction worker families on building sites. It has been observed that most of them

are young adults, and it is obvious that only the able-bodied people with no major illnesses would migrate for intensive hard labour in the cities under harsh living conditions. And in actual clinical practice in the construction sites, even the incidence of tuberculosis is very low in the new migrants, as compared to the higher percentage in the population that has been in Bombay city for five or more years :

This is something for the health authorities to think about regarding health detection camps and ensuring patient compliance in the treatment of tuberculosis. This brings us to the larger issue of urban health and the limitations of the services available. We shall soon see this drawback supported by our findings.

**Utilisation of Health Services :** We took up two interlinked issues of the pattern of utilisation of health services in the city, combined with the level of expenditure incurred for health care. Table VI:3 depicts sources of treatment and expenditure on treatment.

TABLE VI : 3

SOURCE OF TREATMENT AND EXPENDITURE									
Source of Trt.	Nil	Rs.10	Rs.11 - 20	Rs.21 - 30	Rs.31 - 50	Rs.50	Rs.100	Don't Know	Total
Private Doctor	7 25.0%	245 61.6%	853 91.5%	326 93.7%	154 89.0%	31 83.8%	90 83.3%	-	1706 82.2%
Private Doctor & Municipal Dispensary	-	9 2.2%	28 3.0%	10 2.9%	9 5.2%	4 10.8%	6 5.6%	-	66 3.2%
Private Doctor & Home Remedies	-	2 0.5%	4 0.4%	-	-	-	-	-	6 0.3%
Indigenous Helpers	-	1 0.3%	1 0.1%	1 0.3%	-	-	1 0.9%	-	4 0.2%
Government & Mun. Hospitals	9 32.1%	125 31.4%	44 4.7%	9 2.5%	10 5.8%	2 5.4%	9 8.4%	-	208 10.0%
Others	2 7.2%	16 4.0%	2 0.2%	2 0.6%	-	-	2 1.8%	11 21.6%	35 1.7%
Don't Know	10 35.7%	-	1 0.1%	-	-	-	-	40 78.4%	51 2.4%
Total	28 100%	398 100%	933 100%	348 100%	173 100%	37 100%	108 100%	51 100%	2076 100%
Percent of Total	1.4%	19.2%	44.9%	16.8%	8.3%	1.8%	5.2%	2.4%	100%

What these figures really show is that despite the fact that construction workers are physically located in urban areas, they live in isolation from local services, and are unable to utilise hospitals and dispensaries. A combination of factors are responsible for this.

Are the reasons mainly ignorance, backwardness and superstition? Far from it. Almost all respondents have said that they do seek treatment when anyone is ill. Private practitioners (allopathic) seem to hold almost total sway over these people, being the main source of treatment sought by 82.2% of all households. This is surprising, because they are expensive compared to the hospital services ostensibly available free of charge. The private doctors take the lion's share of all the expenditure on health by this group.

The phenomenon of dual sources of treatment is also seen here, with 76 households (or 3.7% of the total) having combined different sources in their search for treatment. The most prevalent combination seems to have been municipal/government hospitals and private doctors, followed by private doctors and indigenous healers. Home remedies, indigenous practitioners and other sources of treatment were all, on their own, insignificant with less than 2% of households having used them.

Having looked at the sources of treatment and costs, we can return to our original point about isolation of this group even in the midst of the bustling metropolis of Bombay. Clearly, the nature of the construction workers' occupation and residential location greatly contributes to their isolation. Since the vast majority live and work in the same restricted and often remote areas - a few thousand square metres at the most - they do not have any knowledge of the resources and facilities available to them in their environment, as distinct from other equally deprived but less isolated sections of the urban poor in slums.

Thus there is a paradox here - while the majority of these migrants are demonstrating some kind of awareness by actively seeking modern medical treatment, they are hesitant to step out of their immediate environment to seek the services of free public hospitals.

**Expenditure pattern :** The expenditure pattern of construction workers on medical aid, presents an alarming picture, around 45% of households reporting having spent between Rs.11/- - 20/- on their last visit to the doctor. Rs.15/- seems to be the prevailing rate charged by the doctor which is the rate per visit including two days' medication. Injections though, are extra and perhaps account for the 35% or more who spent Rs.20/- or above on their visit. An unbelievably high 5.3% of the people spent over Rs.100/- per visit.

Government and municipal hospitals and dispensaries are a poor second to private practitioners as a source of treatment for these people - a mere 10% of households had used these services. Of those who did, only 4% had received free treatment, while 60% had spent around Rs.10/- per visit, and a further 21% had spent upto Rs.20/-.

There are many reasons that can be attributed to this practice. Firstly, the extensive use of private practitioners indicates that the resources nearest to their place of residence - the construction site - is the one most likely to be used. This is because they cannot avail of public transport services which they cannot understand or cope with. There is a private doctor on every street corner, while public health facilities are more scarce, with fixed locations, and more importantly, set timings.

The time consuming exercises needed for attention in any public hospitals or dispensaries is another important reason for their seeking treatment from local doctors. And it is also shameful that if and when they finally get there, the hospital staff are totally indifferent and unsympathetic and are not even willing to communicate in a manner that they can understand and follow. So they obviously return to their familiar surroundings if only temporarily.

And above all, there is also the superstitious belief that hospitals are one-way institutions. They are firmly convinced that people go to hospitals only to die. This is further reinforced by their own behaviour pattern which is that, they go to hospital only as the last resort, and by then it is too late for any effective treatment for the patient who is in an advanced stage of illness. At this point, there is mutual contempt between the hospital staff who curse them for delaying treatment, leading to fatality while the ignorant and hounded relatives are now sure that the patient died only because he was brought to hospital !

So their only resort is the private practitioner who impresses them with his latest array of machines and equipment, and doles out interestingly coloured tablets and capsules. And, while he has not made them wait for very long in his clinic, he has even obliged by giving injections when demanded by the patient, without a thought to the exploitative aspect. The usual argument given is that by giving what the patient wants, the doctor increases the chances of patient compliance.

Obviously this pattern of 'user friendly' treatment, even in cases where it is not exploitative definitely does not allow for the penetration of preventive health measures like immunisation and oral rehydration therapy, let alone promotive health care and education. As a result, their health status never improves, and they end up contributing enormous sums to the private medical services in the city.

We now move to specific problems related to maternal and child health.

**Maternal Health :** Here we look at details of childbirth and breast feeding practices including special diets after delivery. Table VI:4 gives us an important view of delivery practices in this community. The question asked was 'In your family, where are children born?'. So the responses could have been less specific and with reference to their children, siblings or families within the community. The respondents could have been male members who were not aware of traditional practices, or were uncertain of the impact of urban living on their families.

Notwithstanding this, it is clear that home deliveries predominate, with nearly three fourths of all households reporting this.

TABLE VI : 4

	PLACE OF CHILD BIRTH					Total
	At Home		In Hospital		Don't Know	
	Bombay	Village	Bombay	Village		
Number	1292	209	467	48	60	2076
Percent	62.3%	10.1%	22.5%	2.3%	2.8%	100%

This raises a major area for further study and action by Mobile Creches. Why are women continuing to deliver their babies at home even in the city? Is it merely due to tradition or cultural taboo, or does it arise from their perception of safety? Or is there an apprehension of hospitals? What are the health costs of this practice to both mother and child?

Mobile Creches' staff report that these home births are usually attended and assisted by the older women in the community, and conducted under very primitive conditions. The outcome of this is reflected in a later finding on child mortality as recorded by the investigators. They have also registered an alarmingly high number of still births.

**Post-natal practices :** Following the question of deliveries, we took up the issue of breast feeding practices and the period of the mothers' confinement. Table VI:5 shows that most of the respondents subscribe to the taboo against colostrum, the breast secretions in the first 48 hours after childbirth, which is Nature's own massive immunisation dose for infants. Strangely, and contrary to belief that modern sophistication had altered the practice, the majority of traditional cultures have rejected this beautiful gift and new borns are given sugar-water or diluted cow/buffalo milk until the 3rd or 4th day after delivery. In fact, a not insignificant number seem to delay breast feeding until the 5th day after delivery and even beyond. This practice seems to cut across all the different regions languages/religions of the respondents.

TABLE VI : 5

COMMENCEMENT OF BREAST FEEDING		
Day after delivery	Number	Percent
Second Day	92	4.4 %
Third Day	360	17.3 %
Fourth Day	1393	67.1 %
Fift Day and After	132	6.4 %
Don't Know	99	4.8 %
Total	2076	100.0 %

The next question was designed to find out the duration of breast feeding, and its effect on maternal health. In response to the question 'Upto what age are the children breast fed?' the pattern that emerged conformed to that found in most rural areas. Table VI:6 shows that most children are breast fed at least upto 2 years and 22.1% of the study, even upto 3 years. Many answered that they would feed their babies until the next child is born, and many of these responses of '2 or 3 years' could well be overlapped by this practice. While the contraceptive effects of this practice could be beneficial and warrant careful empirical study, the effect on maternal and child nutrition has to be studied.

TABLE VI : 6

DURATION OF BREAST FEEDING							
	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years	4 Years	Until next Child	Don't Know.	Total
Number	171	1105	459	91	143	107	2076
Percent	8.2%	53.2%	22.1%	4.4%	6.9%	5.2%	100%

The nutritional role of breast milk after the age of one, and weaning practices with introduction of semisolids will have to be studied more carefully before drawing definite conclusions.

But the data available with Mobile Creches (outside of this study) indicates strongly that lack of supplementary semisolids and weaning affects the nutritional status of the children around the ages of 2-3 years, as seen from the weight charts.

But it is clear that urbanisation per se has had little or no impact on the breast feeding and weaning practices of this community.

The period of rest allowed a mother after childbirth is a sensitive index of many factors - cultural beliefs and their erosion in the face of economic pressures; the demand of the construction industry vis-a-vis women workers; the penetration of the money economy and its attendant values among the urban poor and above all, the working conditions and the degree of exploitation of women in their triple role of production, reproduction and nurturance.

Table VI:7 therefore, has many stories to tell. The specific question asked was 'In your family, how many days after childbirth is the woman allowed to go out or go back to work?' Therefore the answers will include both resuming normal household duties, and going back to hard labour. It should be remembered

that normal household duties include collecting and carrying water, washing clothes at the common tank, etc. This was meant to find out how long a period of relative rest and recuperation mothers are allowed, or allow themselves after delivery.

TABLE VI : 7

RESUMPTION OF WORK AFTER CHILD BIRTH							
	Within 15 Days	30 Days	40 Days	Upto 60 Days	60 Days	Don't Know	Total
Number	115	377	210	512	750	82	2076
Percent	5.5%	18.2%	10.1%	26.1%	36.1%	4.0%	100%

An alarming and unacceptable number of women - 33.8% return to work within 40 days, with nearly one-fourth of those, or 115 women getting back to work within 15 days. The luxurious lying-in period is not for these women, many of whom return to the construction work of carrying mud. This is supported by the Mobile Creches observation whose staff are given the care of the new born. However, it is heartening to know that 66.2% of the women would get the customary 40 days of rest, of which 36.1% claim that they rest for more than 2 months.

**Child Health :** One index for measuring the health status of the children is to find out about child mortality.

Table VI:8 presents a grim picture in the response to the questions 'How many children were born in your family' and 'how many are alive?' While the child survival rate seem to be quite high in case of families where one or two, or upto three children have been born, the ratio of children born : children surviving drops alarmingly and progressively declines as the birth rate goes up. This is obviously a direct reflection on the state of maternal health. The statistics here are tragic and especially so in the metropolis of Bombay which claims the latest medical facilities.



TABLE VI : 8

CHILD SURVIVAL													
Number Born	Number Living									All Dead	No children	Total	Per cent
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9				
One	313									15	-	328	15.8%
Two	33	302								10	-	345	16.6%
Three	24	51	233							-	-	308	14.9%
Four	4	11	50	115						-	-	180	8.7%
Five	4	6	16	32	63					-	-	121	5.8%
Six	1	4	9	16	16	20				-	-	66	3.2%
Seven	-	-	5	7	9	10	7			-	-	38	1.8%
Eight	-	-	2	4	6	3	-	4		-	-	19	0.9%
Nine	-	-	3	7	6	5	5	-	5	-	-	31	1.5%
None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	638	638	30.7%
Blank	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>2076</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The causes of these deaths are even more tragic, since most appear to have been conditions preventable or curable with today's medical arsenal. Table VI:9 lists the major causes responsible for child deaths in these families.

'Fever' carries off even more children (25.9% of all child deaths) than that unspecified 'other causes'. It could well include such feared killers as meningitis, pneumonia, polio as well as upper respiratory infections which could be fatal to undernourished children. 'Fever' therefore tells many a tale, from malnutrition to lack of immunisation to absence of proper medical care.

Scores of still births and abortions provide the second major cause of death. In conventional medical statistics still births are never classified as a cause of death, but occupy a separate place of their own. For the purpose of our study, however, we have included them here to emphasize the inadequacy of the health care facilities available. The vital services of maternal nutrition, pre-natal care and medical intervention required in delivery complications all seem to be out of reach to these women.

Next on the list of killers is diarrhoea, the notorious cause of death in poor countries. It accounts for 61 deaths. The common but preventable infectious diseases of childhood have claimed 8.3% of lives. The 20 child deaths reported due to accidents were not all connected directly to living conditions on construction sites.

TABLE VI : 9

CAUSE OF DEATH IN CHILDREN		
Illness	Number	Percent
Fever	171	25.9%
Still Births/Abortions	155	23.5%
Infectious Diseases	54	8.2%
Malnutrition Weakness	43	6.5%
Diarrhoea	61	9.3%
Accidents	20	3.0%
Other Causes	143	21.7%
Don't Know	13	1.9%
Total	660	100.0%

To summarise, what all these figures really show is that the health status of the construction workers is dismal. A high morbidity rate, high accident rate, an unacceptable number of child deaths, home deliveries with untrained attendants and bleak conditions resulting in still births are aspects of the situation. Other undetected problems like leprosy, drug addiction and alcoholism further erode the health of the community.

Since the morbidity reported for the one month prior to the survey showed that one out of every eight individuals suffered an illness and had a mean expenditure of Rs.17/- per visit to the doctor, illness alone costs this marginalised group of workers Rs.15,000/- per month !

Considering that the astronomical real-estate prices in Bombay do not/even remotely reflect the toil and wages of the construction labour (considering that two-thirds of the workers surveyed do not even receive the minimum wage of Rs.20/- per day) it should be observed that this exploited group is not only subsidising building costs, but is contributing enormously to the well-lined pockets of the private medical practitioner.

In the next section, we discover that this is only one facet of their benighted situation.

## VII. -- QUALITY OF LIFE

Many past studies on construction workers have looked into their working conditions as a telling commentary on the socio-economic situation of this group and the extent of their exploitation. We had an exhaustive questionnaire to assess their life-style.

Many of our findings were not new but they must continue to be documented. Our aim is to raise general awareness, and to reinforce efforts to move policy makers and administrators to think of this labour force, which is contributing in large measure to the economy.

**Living conditions :** All the families in the survey were living on the construction sites. While the photograph alongside shows the reality **Table VII:1** lists the basic facilities where available.

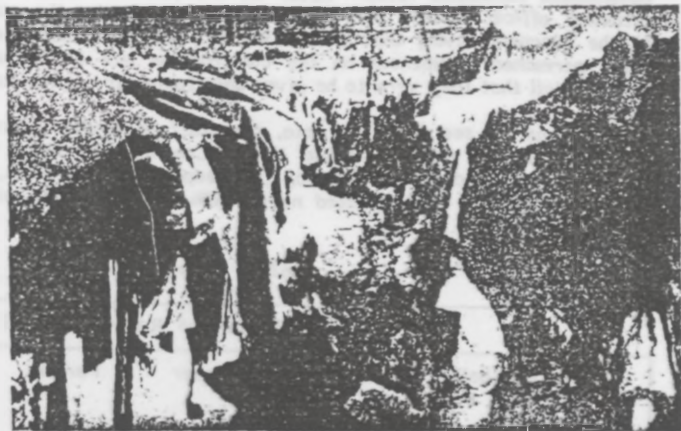
TABLE VII : 1

FACILITIES PROVIDED ON SITE		
Provision	Number	percent
Place for Hut	1862	89.6%
Building Materials	1540	74.1%
Water	1719	82.8%
Lavatories	375	18.0%
Electricity	409	19.7%
Cooking Fuel	737	35.5%

This is not a cumulative total, as there were multiple responses.

From this data it is evident that the majority of the workers (89.6%) are provided space for putting up their shacks and 74.1% materials to build their homes. 82.8% said that they were provided water for drinking, cooking and washing, though these are facilities that are already available on construction sites. These basic amenities already exist on the site, and their provision does not necessarily reflect a concern for labour welfare.

Since the survey did not cover the square area per family or density of households per square area, we have provided a self-explanatory photograph of a typical labour colony on the construction site.



1972.08 1000  
1972.08 1000  
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1972.08 1000



On the other hand, basic sanitation measures like latrines or provision for disposal of waste water or garbage is not provided in most cases. Electricity for lighting is a luxury that the workers hardly ever enjoy. Only 18.0% and 19.7% of households respectively enjoy these amenities. The provision for firewood for domestic cooking needs is a requisite given by some contractors and covers about 35.5% of surveyed households.

**Working conditions :** In Table VII:2 we have a series of questions and probes with an expected response of 'Yes' or 'No'. From these figure a number of conclusions can be drawn.

TABLE VII : 2

## FACTORS AFFECTING QUALITY OF LIFE

Facility	Yes	No	Don't Know	Total
Permanent Job	384 18.5%	1674 80.7%	18 0.8%	2076
Bonus Given	464 22.4%	1559 75.1%	53 2.5%	2076
Paid Sick Leave	161 7.8%	1891 91.0%	24 1.2%	2076
Participated in Strikes	337 16.3%	1717 82.7%	22 1.0%	2076

1. Only 18.5% of the surveyed households included the permanently employed. All the rest were temporary daily wage earners paid once a week.
2. Only 22.4% get a bonus (possibly most of these are the permanent employees mentioned above).
3. Only a paltry 7.8% get sick leave with pay ! (This includes permanent employees).
4. Only 16.3% of households report ever having participated in strikes to demand better wages or bonus or better working conditions.

In the seventeen sites surveyed, Mobile Creches is aware of only one site where some of the workers are permanent, and consequently have been unionised.

The majority of workers are living and working in isolated pockets with no connection or communication with even other regional or language groups on the same construction site. Uniting themselves to demand better facilities or wages is difficult.

**Accidents :** (Table VII:3) The next obvious concern was regarding accidents on site - the chief occupational hazard for construction workers. An incredibly high 14.4% or 297 of all surveyed households had at least one member injured in an accident on site either from a fall, electrocution or from falling debris. This means, that on an average, one out of every seven households had suffered accident injuries - a very grave and horrifying picture of the lack of safety measures and protection to workers on most construction sites. Care of children in unprotected building areas becomes important.

TABLE VII : 3

ACCIDENTS			COMPENSATION	
	Nos.	Percent	Nos.	Percent
Yes	297	14.4%	686	33.1%
No	1753	84.7%	1345	65.0%
Blank	26	0.9%	45	1.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2076</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2076</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

While asking about accidents, we tried to find out if they were given any compensation in case of accidents. It is revealing that 65% of workers replied in the negative.

**Rights :** Apart from those queries specifically related to working conditions, a few more were asked, to determine general awareness of rights. 1) 'Do you have a ration card and if so who made it for you?' and 2) 'Have you ever voted in elections and if so where?' The resulting responses are presented in Tables VII:4 and VII:5.

**Ration Card :** We were pleasantly surprised that 387 or 18.6% of households possessed ration cards. Of these, nearly 54% have acquired it themselves, which is quite an achievement considering that they have to locate the nearest rationing office, prove their credibility, submit a correct application, etc.

Only a few have obtained the card since the biggest hurdle would be the lack of a permanent address.

A short digression from this study to illustrate this point. A few years ago, after a survey of the families of one site, we approached the local rationing officer and convinced him of the need to issue ration cards to these poor wage earners who were paying open market rates for their essential food items like

rice and sugar, while their more affluent employers were getting the same at government subsidised rates. After all the formalities were finalised, and the rationing officer visited the site to issue the cards, the contractor objected to the outcome saying that if the workers are given ration cards, they would claim permanent residences on the construction site ! He was not interested in the detail that they were to be given only temporary ration cards !

However, as we see from the data, the staff at Mobile Creches have gone on undaunted in this pursuit. While Mobile Creches and others were instrumental in getting ration cards for 22% of the people who had them, relatives, friends and the Mukkadam have assisted nearly 20% of ration card holders (Table VII:4).

TABLE VII : 4

MODE OF ACQUISITION OF RATION CARDS			
Person who helped	Number	Percent	Percent of total households
Self acquired	208	53.7%	10.0%
Relative/Friend	46	11.9%	2.2%
Mukkadam	29	7.5%	1.4%
Mobile Creches	41	10.6%	2.0%
Others	44	11.4%	2.1%
Don't Know	19	4.9%	0.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>18.6%</b>

It has to be noted that ration cards provide a legal status and security and helps break the isolation of these people. Many organisations working among the urban poor have found mass ration card making a powerful tool of intervention. And it is precisely for this reason that the building contractors resist all efforts to help these people acquire a ration card, which has now become an identity document in India, and provides eligibility for a variety of government schemes like low-cost housing and other areas such as admission into educational institutions, application for passport, etc.

**Voting :** Political participation through voting is the exception rather than the rule. The fact that two-third of the households have never exercised their franchise is a good indication of their isolation and poor mobilisation. Even political parties seeking votes do not bother about these groups as they are constantly on the move and are not permanent long enough in any one place. This is a massive group of young adults whose names are probably not registered anywhere !

TABLE VII : 5

VOTING PATTERNS					
	Have Voted			Not Voted	Total
	In the Village	In Bombay	Elsewhere		
Number	482	167	49	1378	2076
Percent	23.2%	8.0%	2.4%	66.4%	100%

Of those who have voted, most have done so in their village, but not in Bombay. This is strongly linked to their migration history, which has shown that over 60% of the workers have come to Bombay in the last five years. Apart from all the deterrents to registering their names, they would hardly have any motivation to vote as it would make little difference to their immediate problems or the larger issues in their lives.



## VIII. ATTITUDES AND ASPIRATIONS

The questions in this section were designed to get at the workers' own perception of their isolation. One question was 'Who helps you in a crisis?' (Table VIII:1). It is significant that a thousand responses were that no one helped, or that they relied on 'themselves', underlining the fact that they felt totally isolated. On the other hand, 3049 responses were received citing many sources of help, since some of them gave more than one source. However, the majority of them relied on their own family or relatives, or neighbours and friends. Predictably only a small percentage have thought of turning to their employers for help.

TABLE VIII : 1

SOURCE OF HELP IN CRISIS		
Source	Number	Percent
Family	463	22.3%
Relatives	680	32.8%
Village Acquaintances	644	31.0%
Mukadam	194	9.3%
No One	1068	51.4%

Multiple Responses.

**Aspirations :** Having identified this group as an isolated and ignored group who literally live in rural clusters in the heart of the great metropolis, we now turn to take a look at their hopes and aspirations.

In spite of the bleak living conditions with no access to any facilities available in the urban set-up, an amazing 1157 families or 55.7% preferred to settle in Bombay, while only 815 or 39.3% said that they would go back to their villages. This underscores the fact that, with all the constraints, life in Bombay is preferable because it provides them some means of livelihood, as opposed to nothing in the village (Table VIII:2).

TABLE VIII : 2

WISH TO SETTLE IN BOMBAY		
	Number	Percent
Yes	1157	55.7%
No	815	39.3%
Don't Know	104	5.0%
Total	2076	100.0%

This should also be linked up with the responses to the other two questions - 'Can you do any other job?' and 'do you wish to do anything else?'. Predictably, 1511 or 72.8% of the respondents answered in the negative, which means that they are doomed by their very existence - they can only remain as unskilled labourers. It is equally significant that 1394 or 67.1% of them did not even wish to do any other job. This only signifies their apprehension of the unknown. While 27.2% said that they had no other skills, 32.9% wished to venture into other occupations. This means that a mere 5.7% of the respondents dared to think of bettering their prospects even though lacking in special skills (Table VIII:3).

TABLE VIII : 3

	KNOW ANY OTHER WORK		WISH FOR OTHER WORK	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	565	27.2%	682	32.9%
No	1511	72.8%	1394	67.1%
Total	2076	100.0%	2076	100.0%

Then again, there is this urban-pull that they experience after a period of exposure. All said and done, in a way a worker who has to toil for every bucket of water and for everyday's cooking fuel, finds it less of a physical strain to provide the basic necessities for his family in the city, even if they have to live in congested and crowded houses. Some of the women even say that the glamour of city lights with its movies, television, video, alcohol and drugs provide excitement to the young who want to live 'more sophisticated' lives.

When asked what they would like their children to do when they grew up, many gave interesting responses. While the major response - 23.6% said the children would do whatever they were fated to do, a few had hopes of seeing their children become doctors, engineers, police inspectors, mukkadams and supervisors, etc. (Table VIII:4) 244 of 11.8% felt that their children should become teachers. Perhaps after seeing the Mobile Creches staff in action, they felt that the profession was attractive and within their reach.

TABLE VIII : 4

ASPIRATIONS FOR CHILDREN			
Expectation	Number	Percent	
Whatever is their fate	489	23.6%	
Doctor	171	8.2%	
Teacher	244	11.8%	
Engineer	91	4.4%	
Permanent in Company	133	6.4%	
Police Inspector	54	2.6%	
Mukadam/Supervisor	73	3.5%	
Don't Know	169	8.1%	
Not Responded	347	16.7%	
Others	305	14.7%	
Total	2076	100.0%	

## HIGHLIGHTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The study undertaken was primarily to generate socio-economic data about Migrant Labour in Bombay. Aspects other than economics have also been studied and apart from work-related ones, valuable facts have been garnered. Policy makers, planners, administrators, social workers and professionals would find the data relevant.

In the seventeen sites covered, a large majority are constructions undertaken by the Central Government, Municipal Corpn., HUDCO and CIDCO. In the government's own construction projects there is non-compliance with the Contract Labour Act (1970).

Progressive legislation such as Migrant Workmen's Act, Contract Labour Act and Child Labour Bill are promulgated by the government to safeguard the poor and the weak. Yet contractors employing labour on construction sites flout the provisions of the Acts.

All the construction sites covered in the study had more than twenty women working in them. Yet there would have been no creche facilities for their children had not Mobile Creches started functioning.

The study reveals that migrant labour from other language areas make up more than 50% of the group. Single individuals and small families form a large proportion of the workers. Workers seem to migrate from the same ten districts, reflecting the living conditions there and the word-of-mouth communication regarding employment in Bombay. Unemployment, often related to drought was the main reason for their migration. The income, saving and spending priorities of several groups of skilled and unskilled labour has come to light. Two-thirds earn less than Rs.20/- per day.

Though the education and literacy levels are low, the aspiration for education was almost universal. The growing interest of children in school, the literacy level amongst the children and the equal number of boys and girls in Mobile Creches are all positive aspects of the programme.

The health status of the construction worker shows a high morbidity rate, high accident rate and preventable child deaths. In a month one out of eight individuals suffered an illness and had an average expenditure of Rs.17/- per visit to his private practitioner. Child survival seems to be directly proportional to number of children born and state of maternal health.

Less than a third of them have exercised franchise anywhere. Bonus, sick leave and permanence of jobs are enjoyed by only 15-20% of the workers. Accident insurance is not known. Ration cards have been obtained by a fifth of the workers despite the strong resistance from contractors and city officials. It is felt that ration cards might help them to claim right of permanent residence in the city. It is an exploitative view that expects labour to build theatres and markets,

flats and offices for the affluent and then quietly vanish. For the construction workers Bombay spells survival. For the city these workers are indispensable, to construct the essential units of the megalopolis. Temporarily banished out of sight, or seeking pavement dwellings, the labour force will eventually need proper settlements.

Construction labour, like other migrant occupation groups cannot avail of public services and facilities which are (sometimes only nominally) available to other sections of the poor. Their constant movement precludes them from getting the benefit of any welfare programme in health, nutrition, education, women's welfare, vocational training or housing. Permanent housing would enable them to benefit from services which are the right of every citizen.

Equally important is our concern for the children of migrant workers. Inadequate nutrition, shelter, health care and education, isolation from the mainstream and vocational immobility might cause them to be trapped in poverty all their lives. It is for us to confront the reality before us with a sense of social justice.



This whole study took more than a year of planning and involved 7 planning groups, 2 supervisors, 21 centre in-charges, 34 Teachers and 50 Creche workers. With every one of these groups, atleast 12 workshops were held. These meetings include both formal and informal discussions at the centres. It should be remembered that these meetings were not allowed to disrupt our daily work with children and therefore took a long period of time. The planning supervisors were responsible for the coding, analysis and presentation of the findings. The report was released at a Seminar held on 12th December 1987 by Smt. Ela R. General Secretary, SEWA.

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