

MARATHWADA GRAMIN VIKAS SANSTHA (MGVS)

2025 (JANUARY 2025 - DECEMBER 2025)

# REPORT ON THE STATUS OF MIGRANTS

CHATRAPATI SAMBAHJI NAGAR, BEED, AND JALNA



**ENSURING ACCESS TO SUFFICIENT FOOD AND HEALTH SERVICES FOR SUGARCANE MIGRANTS IN MAHARASHTRA, INDIA**

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Dear Readers,

It is both an honor and a profound responsibility to present the 2025 report on the health and socioeconomic status of sugarcane migrant workers in Jalna, Beed, and Chatrapati Sambhaji Nagar. This document stands as a testament to MGVS's enduring commitment to illuminate the struggles and resilience of these vital yet frequently marginalized communities.

Grounded in rigorous fieldwork, comprehensive surveys, and social audits—including the Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS)—this report offers a data-driven perspective on the progress achieved and the formidable challenges that persist. We extend our deepest gratitude to Terres Des Hommes and the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (Germany) for their unwavering partnership and support in this endeavor.

The findings herein highlight the critical need for sustained, targeted interventions, particularly for the most vulnerable among us: women and children. It is our sincere hope that this report serves not just as a record, but as a catalyst for policymakers and stakeholders to drive meaningful, systemic change. Together, we reaffirm our dedication to building a just society where the dignity and rights of every individual are upheld.

Sincerely,

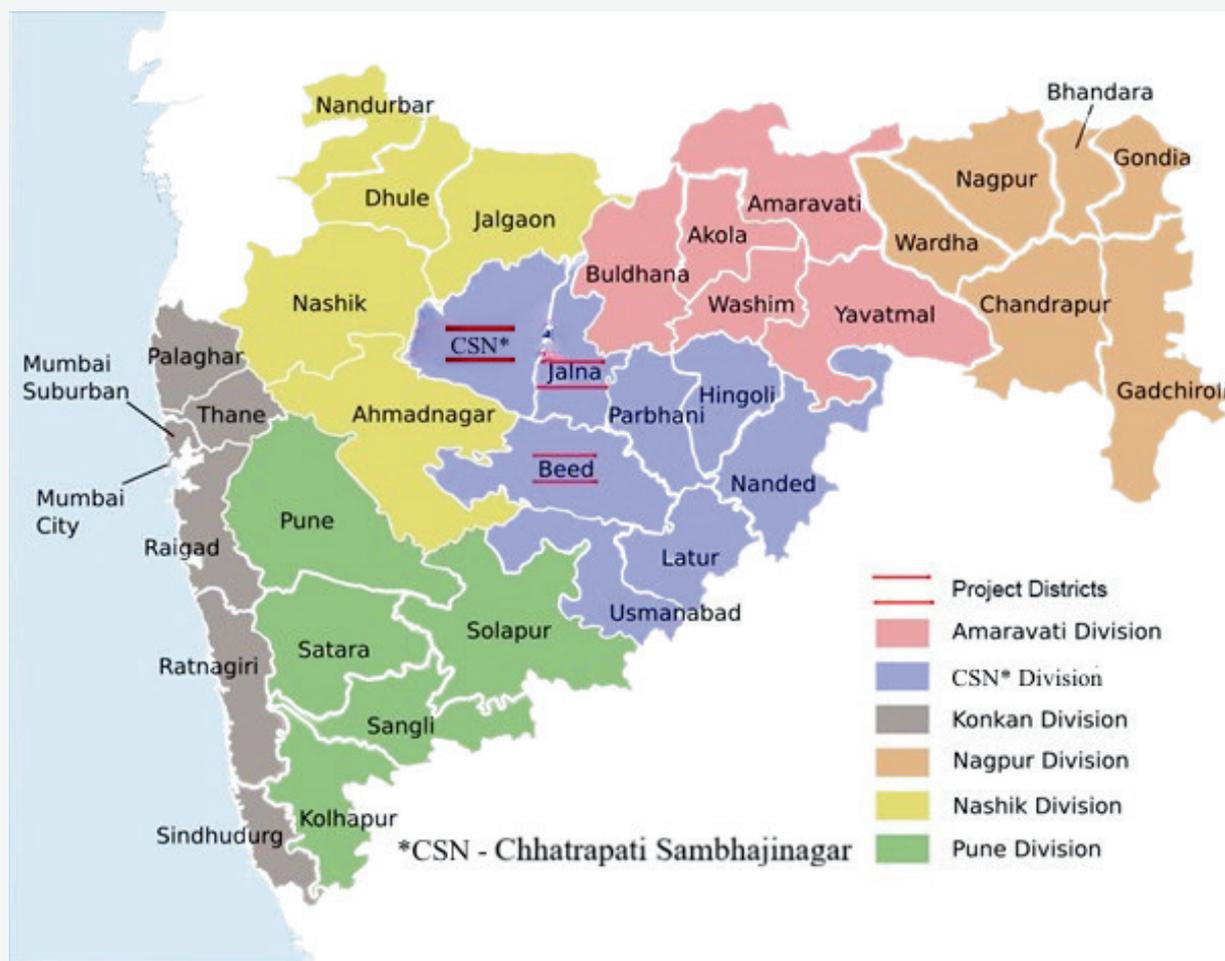
Appasaheb Ugale  
Secretary, MGVS

# 1. Background of the Districts

## 1.1 Geographical and Socioeconomic Context

Jalna, Beed, and Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar are located in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra, a zone historically defined by agrarian distress and climatic vulnerability. Unlike the industrially developed western belt of Maharashtra (Pune, Kolhapur, Sangli), these districts face systemic economic backwardness characterized by erratic rainfall, recurring droughts, and a severe lack of non-farm employment opportunities.

This disparity is stark. While Western Maharashtra thrives on a robust network of cooperative sugar factories and industrial MIDCs, Marathwada remains heavily dependent on rain-fed agriculture. The failure of cash crops like cotton and soyabean due to climate variability leaves the rural population with no viable local livelihood for nearly six months of the year. Consequently, these districts have become the primary "labor reservoirs" for the state's sugar industry.



## 1.2 The Development Deficit: Source vs. Developed Districts

To understand the compulsion for migration, one must analyze the "Push" factors inherent in the deep economic, educational, and health inequality between the Source Districts (Marathwada) and the Destination Districts (Western Maharashtra). The migration is not merely a search for work, but a flight from underdevelopment.

**Table 1: Comparative Development Indicators (Source vs. Destination)**

Indicator	Source Districts (Beed, Jalna)	Destination Districts (Pune, Kolhapur)	Disparity Impact	Data Source
<b>Per Capita Income</b>	₹ 1,45,000 (Approx)	₹ 3,15,000 (Approx)	<b>Economic:</b> 2x income gap drives labor supply.	<i>Economic Survey of Maharashtra 2023-24</i>
<b>Irrigation Coverage</b>	< 18% (Rain-fed)	> 40% (Canal fed)	<b>Agriculture:</b> Frequent crop failure in source.	<i>Water Resources Dept, GoM</i>
<b>Industrial Employment</b>	< 12% of workforce	> 35% of workforce	<b>Livelihood:</b> No local non-farm jobs in source.	<i>Annual Survey of Industries (ASI)</i>
<b>Literacy Rate</b>	~73%	~87%	<b>Education:</b> Lower skill base in source districts.	<i>NSO Survey / Census Projections</i>
<b>Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)</b>	~32 per 1000 births	~18 per 1000 births	<b>Health:</b> Higher child vulnerability in source.	<i>NFHS-5 District Fact Sheets</i>
<b>Doctor-Population Ratio</b>	1:2500	1:950	<b>Health Infra:</b> Severe lack of access in source.	<i>Rural Health Statistics, MoHFW</i>
<b>Human Development Index (HDI)</b>	0.64 (Low)	0.81 (High)	<b>Overall:</b> Structural inequality.	<i>Maharashtra Human Development Report</i>

### 1.3 Marginalization by Caste: SC/ST vs. General Population

The burden of economic backwardness in Marathwada is not distributed uniformly; it follows the fault lines of caste. Data from the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) and the MGVS Survey 2025 reveals a distinct "Double Deficit" for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and De-notified Tribes (VJNT) in the source districts - Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Jalna, and Beed. They reside in the most underdeveloped districts and, within those districts, occupy the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder.

#### A. Land Ownership & Asset Base (Source: Agricultural Census & MGVS Survey)

Land ownership remains the primary determinant of rural wealth and resilience against drought.

- **General Category:** According to the Agricultural Census, approximately 65% of General Category households in these districts possess operational landholdings, averaging 2-3 acres, often with access to private wells.
- **SC/ST Category:** In sharp contrast, the MGVS survey corroborates national trends where 72% of SC/ST families in these belts are Landless Laborers. Those who do possess land typically hold less than 1 acre of non-irrigated, low-yield land, making them entirely dependent on selling labor for survival.

#### B. The Literacy Gap (Source: District Census Handbooks & NSO)

Education is the theoretical exit route from poverty, but structural barriers persist.

- **General Population:** The literacy rate stands at approximately 82%, with higher retention rates in secondary education.
- **SC/ST Population:** The literacy rate drops to ~64% for SC/ST communities in the source districts. The District Information System for Education (UDISE) data indicates that dropout rates are highest among migrant children from these communities, perpetuated by the seasonal migration cycle which disproportionately affects landless families.

#### C. Economic Dependence (Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey - PLFS)

- **General Population:** Households often have diversified income streams, including trade, service jobs, or cash-crop farming.
- **SC/ST Population:** Over 90% of the workforce in the "Doki Center" (Head Loaders) category—the most grueling form of cane cutting—belongs to SC, ST, or VJNT communities. Their primary asset is physical labor, which is depreciating and prone to health shocks.

**Table 2: The Vulnerability Index (Comparative Analysis)**

Indicator	General Population	SC / ST / VJNT Population	Source of Data
<b>Land Holding</b>	Avg 2.5 Acres (Often Irrigated)	< 0.8 Acres (Dry) or Landless	<i>Agricultural Census / MGVS</i>
<b>Annual Household</b>	₹ 1,20,000 - ₹ 1,80,000	₹ 65,000 - ₹ 85,000	<i>MGVS Baseline Survey 2025</i>
<b>Education (Literacy)</b>	~82%	~64%	<i>Census 2011 / NSO Projections</i>
<b>Health (Women's Anemia)</b>	~45% (Moderate Risk)	~68% (High Risk)	<i>NFHS-5 District Factsheets</i>
<b>Housing Status</b>	Pucca (Concrete/Brick)	Kutcha / Tanda (Makeshift)	<i>SECC 2011 Data</i>

This stratification confirms that for the general population, migration might be a calculated choice for better opportunity, but for SC and ST families in these districts, it is a distress-driven compulsion essential for survival.

### 1.4 Sugarcane Industry and Labor Dynamics

The sugarcane industry is a cornerstone of Maharashtra's agricultural economy, but it is built upon the back of a vast, transient workforce. The Marathwada region serves as the primary "labor catchment area" for the sugar belts of Western Maharashtra (Kolhapur, Sangli, Satara) and neighboring states like Karnataka and Gujarat.

- **Scale of Operations:** Maharashtra is home to approximately 200 operating sugar factories (comprising roughly equal numbers of cooperative and private units). To sustain this massive scale of production during the crushing season, the industry requires an estimated workforce of 8 to 10 lakh (800,000 to 1 million) laborers annually. This colossal demand creates a systemic and non-negotiable reliance on migrant labor, as local workforce availability in the destination districts is insufficient to meet the labor-intensive requirements of manual harvesting. (Source: Maharashtra Sugar Commissionerate Annual Reports & Vasantdada Sugar Institute).
- **Seasonal Migration Cycle:** The industry relies heavily on migrant labor for harvesting, a season that typically spans from October to April. During these six months, entire families lock their homes in Marathwada and migrate to the sugar factory sites. There, they live in temporary, makeshift settlements known as Kopyas—structures often made of bamboo, plastic sheets, and sugarcane trash—lacking even the most basic amenities like electricity, toilets, or running water. (Source: MGVS Baseline Survey 2025).

- The Mukkadam System: Recruitment is intricately managed by intermediaries known as Mukkadams (Labor Contractors). They provide substantial advance payments (uchal) to workers during the monsoon season when local work is scarce. This system effectively secures labor for the harvest but often traps families in a cycle of debt bondage. The uchal becomes a financial anchor, reducing the bargaining power of workers regarding wages or working conditions, as they are contractually bound to work until the advance is repaid. (Source: ILO Studies on Bonded Labor & State Labor Department).
- Vulnerability: Once at the destination, migrant workers face grueling physical labor, often working 14-16 hours a day cutting, bundling, and loading cane. They lack formal employment contracts and are frequently excluded from social security benefits, legal protections, and basic amenities at their destination worksites. The informal nature of this work leaves them invisible to the state machinery of the destination districts. (Source: Human Rights Watch & MGVS Field Audits).

### **1.5 Historical Context of Marginalization**

The roots of this migration are deeply embedded in historical marginalization. Nomadic Tribes (NTs) and Scheduled Castes (SCs) have traditionally been denied land ownership and access to quality education. This systemic exclusion has resulted in a severe lack of alternative livelihood assets. Without land to till or skills for the formal service sector, sugarcane cutting—a labor-intensive and low-paying job requiring no formal qualification—becomes the default survival strategy for thousands of families in these districts. The cycle continues across generations, as children migrate with parents, missing out on the education that could offer an exit route, thereby inheriting both the debt and the occupation of their parents.

# 2. Methodology of the Survey

## 2.1 Focus and Objectives:

The primary objective of the 2025 survey was to assess the longitudinal progress in the health, nutrition, education, and socioeconomic conditions of sugarcane migrant workers since the 2024 baseline. Beyond merely collecting data, the focus was to identify specific gaps in service delivery—both at the source and destination—and measure the impact of recent interventions by MGVS and state agencies. The study aimed to provide actionable evidence to policymakers to close the loop between scheme announcement and actual beneficiary access.

## 2.2 Survey Design and Tools

The study utilized a robust, mixed-methods approach to capture both quantitative metrics and qualitative lived experiences:

- **Quantitative Surveys:** Digital questionnaires via Kobo Toolbox were used to collect granular data on demographics, scheme access, and migration patterns. This digital approach ensured data accuracy and real-time monitoring of the survey progress, minimizing errors associated with paper-based surveys.
- **Social Audit:** A specialized audit framework was deployed to evaluate the implementation of specific government schemes, particularly the Gopinath Munde Ustod Kamgar Mahamandal and public health services. This involved direct verification of benefits received versus benefits entitled, creating a transparency mechanism rarely seen in informal labor sectors.
- **Dietary Assessment:** The Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) tool was employed to evaluate nutritional intake based on a 24-hour recall period. This standardized tool helps quantify the quality of diet, moving beyond simple calorie intake to assess micronutrient adequacy, which is critical for a workforce engaged in heavy physical labor.

## 2.3 Community Participation and Engagement

The survey process was designed to be participatory and community-led, ensuring that the workers were not just subjects of study but active participants. Active engagement was sought from:

- Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committees (VHSNC): To validate health-related findings and discuss local health infrastructure gaps.
- School Management Committees (SMCs): To understand the nuances of student dropouts and the administrative hurdles in transfer certificates.
- Gram Panchayat Members: To verify data regarding local scheme implementation like the Jal Jeevan Mission and coordinate on MGNREGA data.
- Migrant Worker Representatives: Both men and women were consulted to ensure the findings reflected the gendered realities of migration, particularly issues related to safety and hygiene that are often underreported.

## 2.4 Sampling

The 2025 survey covered a substantial and representative sample across the three districts, ensuring high statistical confidence and comprehensive coverage:

- General Survey: 8,026 migrant families were surveyed regarding demographics, basic amenities, and asset ownership.
- Social Audit: This component ranged from 771 families (providing detailed qualitative feedback on worksite conditions and health access) to 1,416 families (specifically for registration status verification with the Welfare Board).
- HDDS Assessment: 811 migrant families provided detailed dietary recall data, allowing for a nuanced analysis of nutritional trends across the three districts.

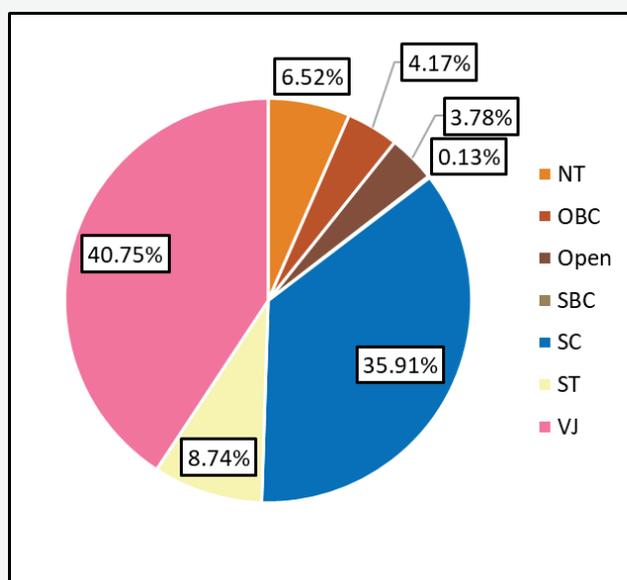
Survey Component	Sample Size	Target Group	Geographical Coverage
<b>General Survey</b>	8,026 Families	Migrant sugarcane worker households	Jalna, Beed, Chatrapati Sambhaji Nagar
<b>Social Audit (Detailed)</b>	771 Families	Households providing detailed feedback on worksite conditions & health access	15 villages across the 3 districts
<b>HDDS Assessment</b>	811 Families	Households participating in 24-hour dietary recall	Selected villages across the 3 districts

# 3. Results of the Survey

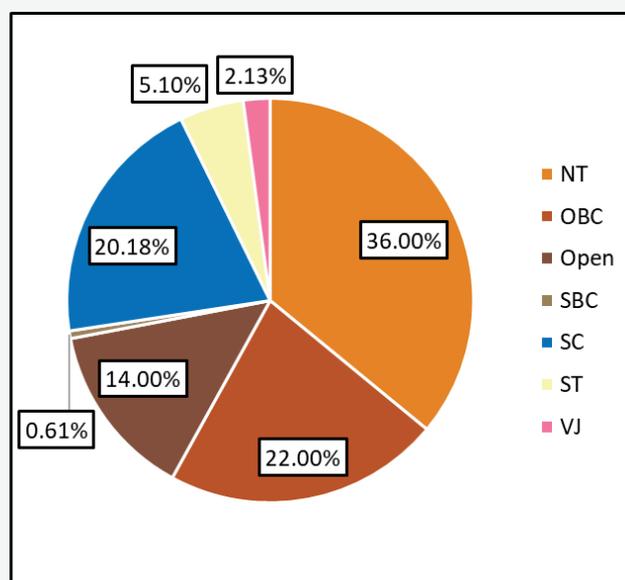
## 3.1 Demographics

The demographic profile remains consistent with previous years, highlighting that migration is not a generalized phenomenon but one specific to socially disadvantaged groups.

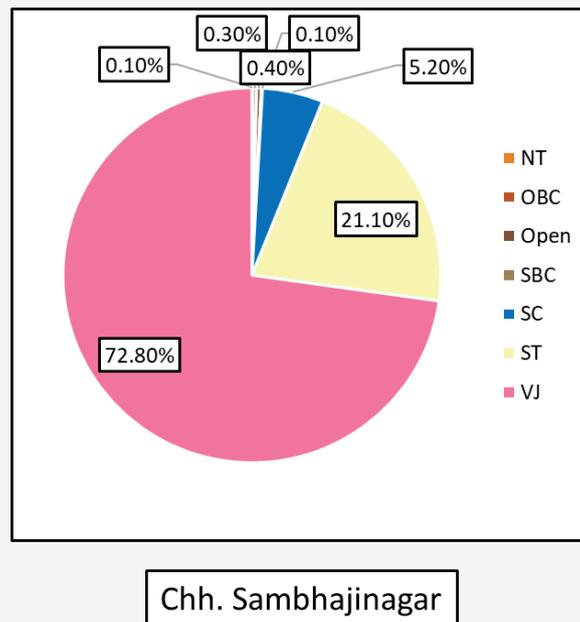
- Caste Composition:** The workforce is predominantly composed of VJ/NT (Vimukta Jati/Nomadic Tribes), SC (Scheduled Castes), and OBC (Other Backward Classes) communities. These groups constitute the vast majority of the labor supply, reinforcing the link between caste marginalization, landlessness, and hazardous labor.
- Family Structure:** Migration is typically family-based. Unlike urban migration where often only the male member migrates, sugarcane harvesting involves the entire family unit. Children and elderly dependents accompany the working couple to the fields, often to assist with ancillary tasks like cleaning cane, cooking, or childcare. This "whole-family" migration disrupts the education of children and the healthcare continuity of the elderly.



Jalna



Beed



### 3.2 Socioeconomic Factors

The 2025 data indicates a significant and measurable improvement in documentation and access to basic services at the source villages, reflecting successful advocacy and administrative focus:

- **Ration Cards:** 95.6% of surveyed households now possess a Ration Card, up from 84% surveyed last year. This is a critical safety net, ensuring that families have access to subsidized food grains (Public Distribution System) during the non-migration season, acting as a vital buffer against hunger.
- **Aadhaar Cards:** 96.5% saturation in Aadhaar card coverage ensures that identity proof—a prerequisite for almost all government benefits—is no longer a barrier. This high coverage facilitates direct benefit transfers (DBT) and scheme linkages.
- **Water Access:** In a region defined by historical water scarcity, a remarkable 83.5% of families reported having access to tap water under the Jal Jeevan Mission or Gram Panchayat schemes at their source villages. This reduction in the drudgery of water collection represents a transformative improvement in the quality of life for women, who previously spent hours fetching water.
- **MGNREGA:** 78.9% of families are registered under the employment guarantee scheme. While registration is high, the challenge remains in ensuring that 100 days of work are actually provided during the off-season to prevent distress migration.

### **CASE STORY: Advancing Self-Reliance Through Poultry Farming**

Sundarwadi Tanda, Paithan Taluka, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar

Vijendrasingh Premising Rathod used to rely heavily on seasonal migration for sugarcane cutting, facing income instability and financial uncertainty. Under the Project by MGVS, he received a poultry farming support package.

#### **Impact:**

- Economic: Established a steady daily income source, reducing dependency on migration.
- Social: Gained respect as a role model in his community.
- Sustainability: The enterprise is self-sustaining and expanding.

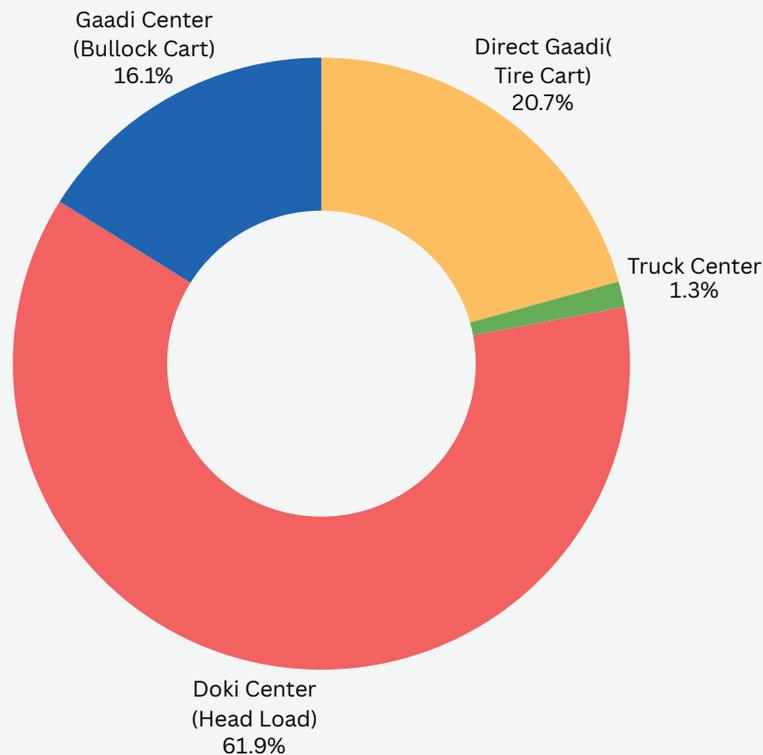
This case demonstrates how small-scale livelihood support can provide stable local income, effectively reducing unsafe migration pressures.

### **3.3 Migration Patterns**

The survey categorized the workforce based on their mode of operation, which serves as a proxy for their economic asset base and physical burden:

- Doki Center (Head Loaders): 3,719 workers. This is the largest and most vulnerable category. These workers own no transport assets (bullocks or tractors) and must manually cut and carry heavy sugarcane bundles on their heads to the trucks. They face the highest physical toll and have the least economic buffer.
- Gaadi Center (Bullock Carts): 1,243 workers. These workers own bullock carts, allowing them to transport cane from the field to the factory. They earn slightly higher margins than head loaders but bear the cost of maintaining livestock.
- Direct Gaadi (Tire Carts): 969 workers. A modernized version of the bullock cart using rubber tires for better efficiency, representing a slight step up in asset ownership.
- Truck Center: 81 workers. A small minority involved in mechanized transport or driving, usually representing the upper tier of this workforce.

## Distribution of Migrant Workforce by Mode of Work



### 3.4 Education

Education continues to be the most severe casualty of the migration cycle, creating an intergenerational trap of poverty that is difficult to escape.

- Enrollment at Destination: A staggering 76.5% of respondents stated that their children do not attend school at the sugarcane cutting site. Only 13.5% reported regular attendance. This indicates that despite the Right to Education Act, the education system effectively collapses for these children for six months every year.
- Education Guarantee Card: The "Education Guarantee Card" is a policy tool meant to facilitate seamless transfer between source and destination schools. However, implementation is poor: only 13% of families had received this card from their source school, while 71% had not. Without this card, enrolling children in schools near sugar factories becomes a bureaucratic nightmare.
- Hostel Awareness: The state's primary intervention to prevent migration-induced dropouts is the Sant Bhagwan Baba Government Hostel Scheme, which allows children to stay back in their home villages. Shockingly, 62% of families were unaware of this scheme, and consequently, usage remains low. This information gap is a critical failure in service delivery.

### **CASE STORY: A New Beginning Through Education**

Guj Ta Ghansawangi, District Jalna

Pratiksha Waghmare, an orphaned girl living with her cousin (a migrant worker), faced the risk of dropping out and entering child labor. The local Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) initially refused admission due to full capacity. Intervention: MGVS field staff coordinated with the Block Education Officer and Child Development Project Officer to advocate for her admission.

Outcome: Pratiksha was successfully admitted to Class 8 at KGBV, Tirthapuri.

She now receives:

- Safe residential education
- Protection from child labor
- Emotional support and counseling

This story highlights how timely intervention and coordination with government departments can break the cycle of generational migration for vulnerable children.

### **3.5 Healthcare**

- **Pre-Migration Checks:** A positive trend is visible in preventive care, with 61% of workers reporting they underwent a free health check-up by the government before migration. This suggests improved responsiveness from the local health administration in the home districts.
- **Destination Health Access:** However, the situation at the destination remains grim. 81% of workers reported that no health check-ups were conducted at the sugarcane fields. Once they cross the district border, they effectively lose access to public healthcare. Workers are largely left to fend for themselves, often relying on private practitioners or unqualified doctors (quacks) for expensive and sometimes unsafe treatment.
- **Ambulance Services:** 68% of families confirmed the availability of reliable ambulance services (108/102) in their home villages, indicating a strengthening of rural health infrastructure that needs to be replicated at the worksites.

### **CASE STORY: From Illness to Empowerment**

Lahuri Village, Taluka Kaij, District Beed

Mrs. Manisha Gaikwad suffered from severe anemia (HB 7.2 g/dL), weakness, and fatigue due to the grueling nature of sugarcane work. Through MGVS health camps, she received a diagnosis and counseling.

Transformation: She adopted a nutrient-rich diet, took iron supplements, and improved her haemoglobin to 10.8 g/dL. Inspired by her own recovery, she became a community leader, motivating over 40 women to undergo health check-ups.

Impact:

- Increased health seeking behavior among women.
- Regular monitoring of health vitals in the village.
- Strengthened linkage with PHC/ASHA workers.

### **3.6 Gender Specific Issues**

Women bear a disproportionate burden during migration, facing risks to their health, safety, and dignity that are distinct from their male counterparts.

- **Maternal Health:** There is a growing trust in public institutions for childbirth. Among pregnant migrant women, 69% reported delivering in Government Hospitals, and 22% in Private Hospitals. Only a small fraction delivered at the sugarcane fields, a significant reduction in unsafe, high-risk home deliveries compared to a decade ago.
- **Sanitation Crisis:** In a glaring violation of basic human rights, 93.3% of respondents reported that NO mobile toilets or sanitation facilities were provided at the sugarcane fields. Women are forced to seek privacy in the cane fields before dawn or after dusk. This practice exposes them to severe health risks like Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) due to holding urine for long periods, as well as safety threats including sexual harassment and snake bites.
- **Menstrual Hygiene and Privacy:** 78% of women reported lacking adequate facilities and resources for menstrual hygiene management at worksites. 82% expressed concerns about privacy and safety while attending to sanitation needs.

- **Workplace Harassment and Safety:** Women and adolescent girls face higher risks of workplace harassment, sexual violence, and theft at destination sites. The lack of secure housing and lighting in temporary settlements exacerbates these vulnerabilities.
- **Comparison with Previous Year:** While there has been some improvement in maternal health indicators like institutional deliveries, the situation regarding sanitation and safety remains critical and largely unchanged. In 2024, 63% of women reported lacking toilet access; in 2025, this figure for the overall workforce (including women) stands at a staggering 93.3%, indicating a persistent and potentially worsening gap in basic infrastructure at sugar factories.

### 3.7 Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS)

The Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) among sugarcane workers improved significantly following a series of comprehensive nutrition-focused awareness and support activities.

- Community knowledge was enhanced through meetings using pictorial IEC materials, expert-led sessions, and a food fair designed to educate families on the value of a balanced diet.
- Dietary intake was further supported by distributing poultry chicks to beneficiaries for protein and providing kitchen garden seeds to 3,500 families to encourage vegetable cultivation.

Together, these educational and material interventions increased access to diverse foods, directly contributing to the positive shift in the dietary diversity of these households. The average HDDS score across the three districts for 2025 is 5.12, up from the 2024 baseline of 4.08.

- Jalna: 5.10 (2024: 4.02)
- Beed: 5.03 (2024: 4.05)
- Chatrapati Sambhaji Nagar: 5.24 (2024: 4.17)

Analysis: While the score has crossed the threshold of 5, indicating a shift away from severe monotony, a closer look at the consumption pattern reveals a "Hidden Hunger." The diet remains heavily cereal-dominant, with 97% of households consuming cereals and 61% consuming sugar daily. In contrast, the consumption of nutrient-dense foods is lower: Dairy is at 17% and Fruits at 18%. This indicates a diet that provides sufficient calories for energy but lacks the proteins and micronutrients essential for long-term health and immunity.

**CASE STORY: Journey Toward Better Health Through Nutritious Diet**

Jivachiwadi, Tal. Kaij, Dist. Beed

Mr. Balu Chaure and his family faced frequent illnesses, tiredness, and low energy due to a poor diet of bhakri and simple vegetables.

Intervention: MGVS introduced him to the concept of Kitchen Gardening and the 12 food groups. He utilized his small plot of land to grow organic vegetables (spinach, fenugreek, tomatoes, etc.) using wastewater management.

Outcome:

- Health: Reduced medical expenses and illness frequency; children are healthier.
- Diet: Daily consumption of fresh, chemical-free vegetables.
- Community: His garden became a model, inspiring neighbors to start their own.

"Understanding the 12 food groups has opened our eyes." - Balu Chaure

# 4. District-wise Challenges

## 4.1 Jalna District

- Status: Moderate HDDS (5.10).
- Key Challenge: Jalna has the highest concentration of Doki Center (head-load) workers (41% VJ community). This group faces the most grueling physical toll and has the least economic buffer to withstand shocks.
- Education Gap: The district faces high seasonal dropout rates for children. Survey data indicates irregular attendance is most acute here (65% attendance rate vs 80% in other districts), partly due to longer migration distances to Western Maharashtra.
- Health Access: While pre-migration health checks have improved, access to government hospitals remains lower than other districts (50%).

## 4.2 Beed District

- Status: Lowest HDDS (5.03).
- Key Challenge: Beed remains the most challenged district, particularly in terms of nutritional diversity. The district's economy is heavily over-reliant on sugarcane cutting as a primary income source, necessitating longer migration durations (often 7-8 months).
- Infrastructure Deficit: Only 40% of households in Beed reported having access to a government hospital within a reasonable distance, the lowest among the three districts. This remoteness exacerbates health vulnerabilities.
- Financial Vulnerability: High indebtedness and lack of alternative livelihood options force families into repeated cycles of migration, limiting their ability to invest in assets or education.

### **4.3 Chatrapati Sambhaji Nagar District**

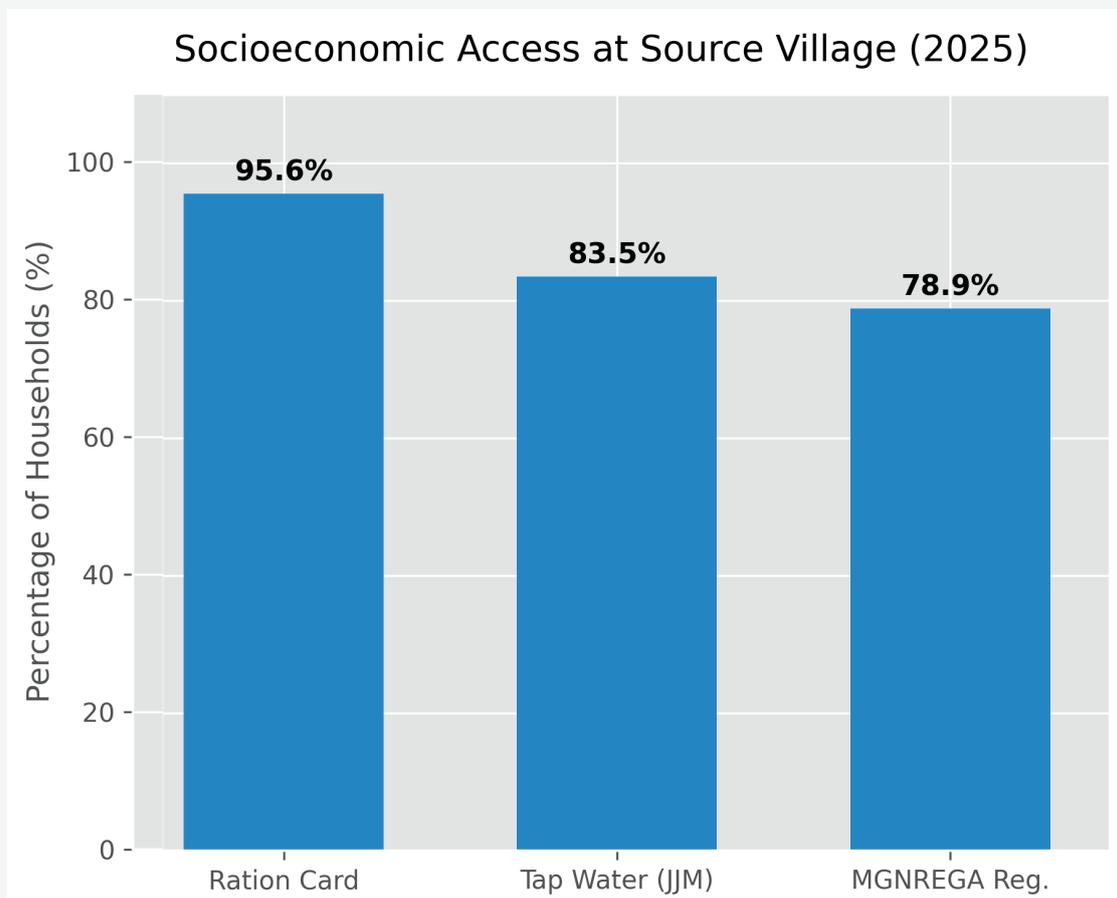
- Status: Highest HDDS (5.24).
- Key Challenge: While performing better on socioeconomic indicators (highest literacy and per capita income) and scheme saturation, the district still faces the universal challenge of destination-site neglect.
- The "Destination Gap": Even families with better home conditions in Chatrapati Sambhaji Nagar face the same lack of sanitation and water once they arrive at the sugar factories.
- Marginalized Communities: Despite overall better indicators, specific marginalized communities (STs and VJs) within the district still lag significantly in access to services compared to the general population.

# 5. Comparative Analysis: 2024 vs. 2025

This section analyzes the shift from inputs and pilot activities recorded in 2024 to the systemic outcomes measured in the 2025 survey.

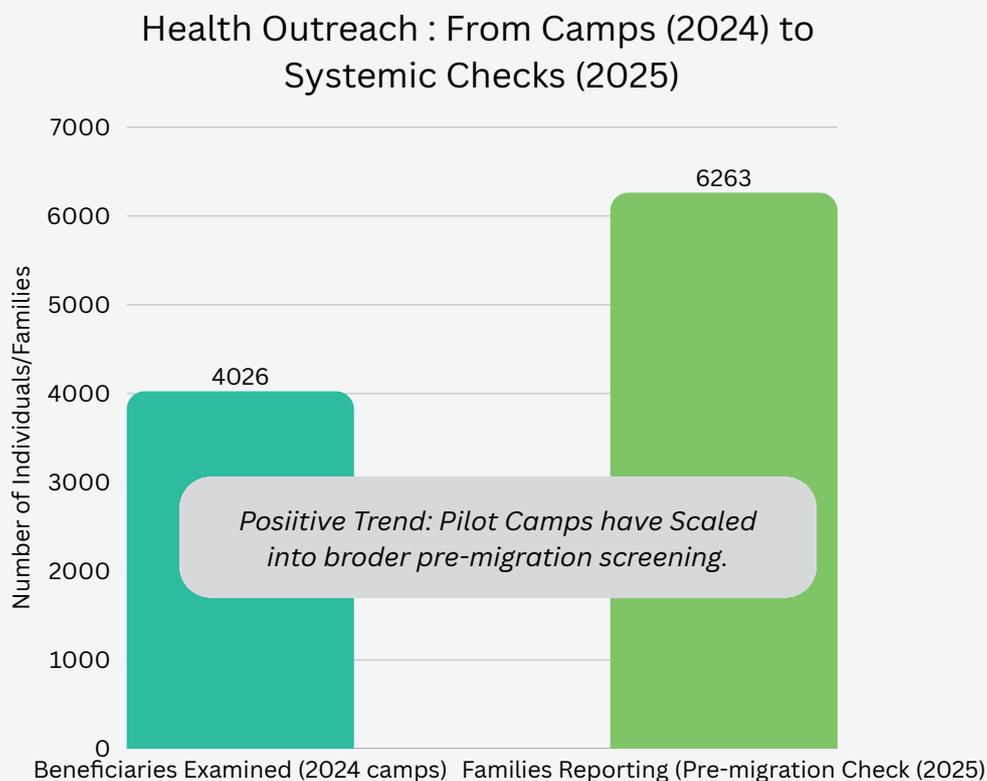
## 5.1 Socioeconomic & Livelihood Factors

- 2024 Baseline: Previous reports highlighted fragmented access to identity documents and severe water scarcity in Marathwada, which acted as a major "push factor" for migration.
- 2025 Progress: There is a definitive improvement in social security coverage. Ration card ownership has hit near-saturation (95.6%), and the Jal Jeevan Mission has successfully brought tap water to 83.5% of migrant homes in source villages. This structural improvement in the source villages provides a stronger safety net for families - for instance registration with Loknete Gopinath Munde Ustod Kamgar Mahamandal, potentially reducing the desperation component of migration.



## 5.2 Health Status: From Camps to Systemic Checks

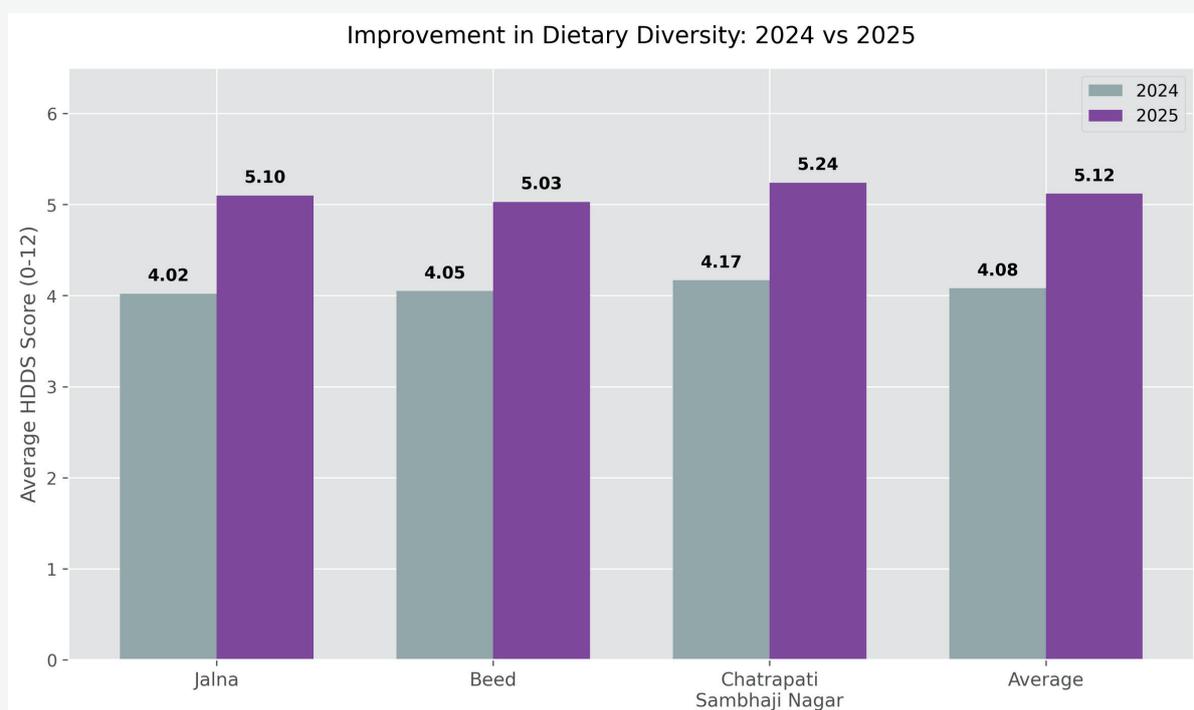
- 2024 Activity: 75 health camps were conducted, examining 4,026 family members.
- 2025 Outcome: This groundwork appears to have institutionalized health seeking behavior. In 2025, 78% of surveyed families (approx. 6,263+ families) reported undergoing pre-migration health checks. The data suggests that pilot health camps have successfully transitioned into broader government-supported screenings. However, the destination status remains stagnant; with 93% of worksites still lacking toilets, the living conditions at the factories mirror the dire findings of 2024. The disconnect between "Source Improvement" and "Destination Neglect" is widening.



## 5.3 Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS)

- 2024 Intervention: 1,500 families were trained on kitchen gardens and provided with 12 types of seeds to improve nutrition.

- **2025 Outcome:** The average HDDS score rose from 4.08 to 5.12. This measurable improvement validates the "Kitchen Garden" approach, suggesting that families who received seeds likely diversified their intake, contributing to the overall district-level improvements.
- **Analysis:** While the score has improved, the qualitative breakdown reveals that the diet is still dominated by cereals (97%) and sugar (61%). Protein intake (pulses/dairy) remains a secondary component. The increase in score likely reflects better access to vegetables (44%) and oils, but the protein gap persists, which is a concern for a workforce engaged in heavy labor.



#### 5.4 Education of Migrant Children: The Scale Challenge

- **2024 Activity:** 206 children participated in a two-day training program on child rights, safety, and education.
- **2025 Reality:** While the training was impactful for participants, the 2025 survey reveals the sheer scale of the crisis. With 76.5% of migrant children out of school at destination sites (estimated to be over 8,000 children based on the sample), the pilot efforts—while positive—are a "drop in the bucket." Awareness of the state's seasonal hostel scheme remains low (37%), preventing the effective utilization of the government's primary retention strategy. The lack of coordination between Education Departments of source and destination districts remains a bottleneck.

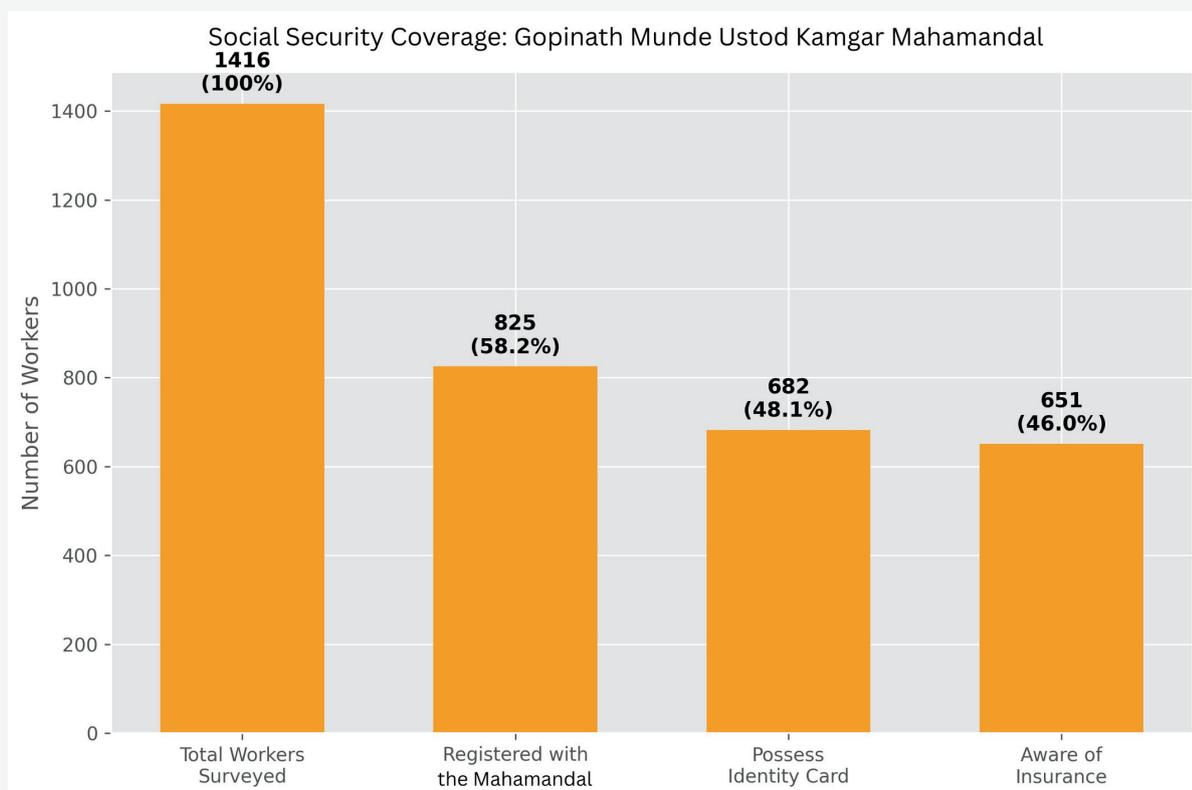
- Analysis: The gap between the 206 trained children and the thousands out of school underscores the need for systemic solutions (like the Hostel Scheme) rather than just sporadic trainings.

## 5.5 Social Security: Gopinath Munde Ustod Kamgar Kalyan Mahamandal

### 2025 Progress:

- 58.2% of workers are now registered with the Gopinath Munde Ustod Kamgar Mahamandal via Gram Panchayats.
- 48% of registered workers have received physical Identity Cards.
- 46% are aware of the accidental insurance scheme.

Trend: This represents a significant administrative push compared to the nascent stages of these schemes in previous years. The infrastructure for social security is being built, but the "last mile" connectivity (actual card distribution and benefit claims) is still in progress and needs acceleration



# 6. Policy Impact: MGVS Advocacy and Government Response

After the submission of the Status Report for the year 2024, and based on its key recommendations, field observations, and feedback received from concerned departments, the Government of Maharashtra has initiated the implementation of policy-level and operational changes related to the Safe Migration of Sugarcane Workers. This section documents the specific policy wins where MGVS's sustained advocacy and formal communications have guided government actions in favor of migrant workers.

## 6.1 Strategic Shift in Education Policy

Following a formal submission and high-level meetings between MGVS and the Education Secretary, the Department of Education has introduced two critical changes to address the educational exclusion of migrant children:

- Realignment of Survey Period: Previously, data collection for migrant children was conducted between July and September, missing the bulk of migration which begins in October. Acting on MGVS's feedback, the Directorate of Primary Education issued a directive (Ref: Letter dated 19/11/2025) shifting the survey period to October–November. This ensures that the data captures the actual number of children migrating during the sugarcane harvest season.
- Increased Nutritional Allowance: The daily food allowance for children in seasonal non-residential schools was previously fixed at ₹33, which was insufficient for providing two nutritious meals, leading to the closure of many such schools. Following continuous follow-up by MGVS, the Education Department has increased this allowance to ₹55 per child per day (allocating ₹10,000 per child for six months). This fiscal adjustment is crucial for keeping seasonal hostels functional and ensuring children receive adequate nutrition.

## 6.2 Strengthening Health Access via Legislative Intervention

To address the chronic lack of healthcare at destination sites, MGVS's advocacy findings were presented to the state leadership.

- Committee Formation: A high-level committee was established under the leadership of Dr. Neelam Tai Gorhe, Deputy Chairperson of the Maharashtra Legislative Council.

- Universal Health Coverage: The committee has directed that all sugarcane workers be registered under the Mahatma Phule Jan Arogya Yojana (MJPAY) and Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), ensuring cashless access to critical care.
- Mandatory Specialist Care: The Health Department has been instructed to conduct regular OPD health camps at sugar factories. Crucially, addressing the specific needs of women workers highlighted in our report, these camps must now include the services of a Gynecologist, alongside general practitioners.

### **6.3 Universal Registration and Identity Cards**

A major gap identified in previous years was the lack of accurate data on the total number of sugarcane workers.

- Appointment of Nodal Agency: Following persistent follow-up with the Principal Secretary of the Social Justice & Special Assistance Department, the state government issued a Government Resolution (GR) on 06 June 2025.
- Survey and Registration: An agency (Smart Services Pvt Ltd) has been appointed to conduct a comprehensive survey, registration, and distribution of Identity Cards to an estimated 12.5 lakh sugarcane workers under the Loknete Gopinath Munde Ustod Kamgar Kalyan Mahamandal. This systemic registration is the foundational step for delivering all future social security benefits.

# 7. Recommendations

## 7.1 Suggestions to Governments (State and Central)

- Mandatory Mobile Toilets & Housing: The State must strictly enforce the provision of mobile toilets at all sugarcane harvest sites. Additionally, factories must provide suitable housing with reliable electricity and water supply near the factories. Expenses for temporary shelter materials (tarpaulins, bamboo) must be borne by the factory and not deducted from workers' advances.
- Labor Rights & Wages: Payment to sugarcane workers should be revised according to the inflation index and provided in accordance with the Minimum Wages Act. Furthermore, the working hours of sugarcane workers should be properly regulated to prevent exploitation.
- Social Security & Insurance: Workers should receive proper insurance slips, and travel insurance must be duly covered under the scheme to protect them during transit. Workers should be provided with receipts if the sugar factory deducts insurance premiums from their wages.
- Mukkadam Registration: Enforce compulsory registration of all Mukkadam (Labor Contractors), requiring them to provide complete information on sugarcane workers and their families to the factory authorities.
- Modify Survey Timelines: Shift out-of-school children surveys to October/November to accurately capture migration numbers, as the current July/August timeline misses the migration window.
- Universal Education Guarantee Cards: Make issuance of Education Guarantee Cards unconditional and mandatory for every migrating child.
- Safety Kit: Registered sugarcane workers should be provided with a safety kit containing a sickle (koyta), boots, gloves, a box, a tent for accommodation, and a first aid kit.
- Ration Portability: Migrant workers should be provided with food grains at the destination (village, district, taluka) through ration shops under the 'One Nation One Ration Card' scheme.
- Marathi Language Teachers: Provide Marathi language teachers for children of sugarcane workers migrating to other states.

## 7.2 Recommendations for District/ Local Administration

- Hostel Expansion & Facilities: Launch awareness drives for the Sant Bhagwan Baba Hostel Scheme. Seasonal hostels should be started for every cluster of 20 children in source villages without conditions. Crucially, clean drinking water must be made available at all hostels and schools to prevent illness.
- Permanent Hostels: Since Bhagwan Baba Girls' Hostels are not functional in Vaijapur, Kannad, and Paithan talukas of Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar district, Partur taluka in Jalna district, and Dharur taluka in Beed district, the Gopinath Munde Sugarcane Workers Corporation should start permanent residential hostels for children of sugarcane workers in source talukas.
- Caretakers for Hostels: Appoint community caretakers in seasonal hostels to address parents' safety concerns, ensuring children (especially girls) are safe and well-cared for.
- Civil Documentation: Birth certificates must be issued timely with the help of local Gram Panchayats or sugar factories.
- UID Cards: Issue UID identity cards to sugarcane workers.
- Livelihood Security: Create alternative livelihood options in source villages and ensure 100 days of guaranteed work under MGNREGA to reduce dependency on distress migration.
- Police Patrols: The police department should conduct regular visits to residential areas at destination sites to prevent workplace harassment, sexual violence, and theft, particularly protecting women and adolescent girls who face higher risks.
- Regular Maternal Health Checks: Conduct monthly ANC (Antenatal Care) and PNC (Postnatal Care) health checkups through mobile health centers to ensure the well-being of pregnant women and new mothers among the migrant worker population. Mobile toilets and health centers should be made available in the factory premises or via the Gopinath Munde Corporation at destination villages.
- Seasonal Hostels & Schools: With the help of sugar factories and the education department, seasonal hostels and schools for children of sugarcane workers should be started during the period from October to April.

- Nutrition for Women & Children: Ensure that migrant women, children, and ANC/PNC mothers in other states and districts receive nutritious food through Anganwadis.

### **7.3 Role of NGOs and Civil Society Organizations**

- **Facilitate ID Distribution**: Bridge the gap between registration (58%) and card possession (48%) by facilitating distribution camps.
- **Nutritional Advocacy**: Capitalizing on the improved HDDS trend, NGOs should conduct awareness programs to encourage the consumption of pulses and green vegetables. Demonstrations on low-cost, high-protein recipes using locally available ingredients can help further diversify diets and combat hidden hunger.
- **Emergency Helpline**: Establish a local-language emergency helpline for sugarcane workers to use during emergencies (accidents, disputes, harassment).
- **Awareness Campaigns**: Conduct awareness programs in villages to inform people about the schemes of the Gopinath Munde Sugarcane Workers Corporation and ensure their effective implementation.
- **Insurance Coverage**: Provide insurance security schemes for sugarcane workers, livestock, and individuals in case of accidents.

# 8. Conclusion

The 2025 Report on the Status of Migrants reveals a distinct and widening duality in the lives of sugarcane workers: tangible, structural progress at the source contrasted with systemic stagnation and neglect at the destination. This report serves not just as a repository of data, but as a testament to the resilience of a workforce that powers Maharashtra's sugar economy while remaining on its periphery.

**Source Village Improvements: Building Resilience.** The concerted efforts of MGVS, coupled with the effective implementation of state schemes like the Jal Jeevan Mission and the Gopinath Munde Ustod Kamgar Mahamandal, have yielded measurable successes in the home districts of Jalna, Beed, and Chatrapati Sambhaji Nagar.

- **Infrastructure & Identity:** Migrant families now have near-universal access to Ration Cards and Aadhaar, and 83.5% have access to tap water. This is not merely a logistical win; it represents a reduction in the daily drudgery for women and a restoration of basic citizenship rights.
- **Targeted Interventions:** The positive shift in health and nutrition indicators is directly attributable to specific interventions initiated in 2024. The distribution of seeds for Kitchen Gardens has diversified diets, raising HDDS scores from 4.08 to 5.12, thereby combating hidden hunger. Similarly, the institutionalization of pre-migration health checks (61%) marks a shift from reactive to preventive healthcare.
- **Community Leadership:** Success stories, such as Vijendrasingh Rathod establishing a poultry business or Mrs. Manisha Gaikwad leading health awareness drives, stand as powerful proofs of concept. They demonstrate that when provided with the right tools—be it livestock support or health education—these communities can break the cycles of poverty and illness.

**Destination Worksite Neglect: The Persistent Gap.** However, these gains are frequently nullified the moment the migration season begins. The destination worksites continue to function as a "black hole" for basic human rights and services.

- **Sanitation Crisis:** The data is stark and alarming: 93.3% of workers still lack access to mobile toilets. This forces women and girls into the indignity of open defecation, exposing them to health risks like UTIs and safety threats including sexual harassment and snake bites.

- Educational Blackout: With 76.5% of migrant children out of school during the harvest season, we are witnessing the systemic exclusion of an entire generation. The disconnect between source and destination education systems ensures that the child of a cane cutter is conditioned to become a cane cutter, perpetuating intergenerational poverty.

**The Way Forward: Bridging the Gap.** The path ahead requires a paradigm shift from viewing migration as a temporary inconvenience to managing it as a structural reality. Bridging the "Destination Gap" requires accountability and coordination.

- For the State & Industry: The mandate for mobile toilets and seasonal hostels must be non-negotiable. Non-compliance by sugar factories should attract penalties. The Sant Bhagwan Baba Hostel Scheme must be scaled from a pilot to a universal entitlement to keep children in schools at the source.
- For Administration: The bureaucratic hurdles—such as the timeline mismatch in school surveys—must be corrected. A child's right to education cannot be held hostage to a survey calendar.
- For Civil Society: The focus must shift to closing the loop on social security. Registration is only the first step; ensuring that every worker holds a physical identity card and understands how to use it is the critical next mile.

**Final Call to Action.** Ultimately, the dignity of the sugarcane worker cannot be seasonal. It must travel with them from their village to the cane field. Ensuring this continuity of rights, safety, and services is not just a welfare imperative but the collective moral responsibility of the government, the sugar industry, and civil society. The year 2025 has shown us what works; the challenge for 2026 is to scale these solutions so that no worker is left to choose between their livelihood and their human rights.

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