A study on seasonal labour migration altering children's lives
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Abstract

Landless farmers from rural areas of India, migrate seasonally with a deadline and a fixed completion target given by their agents back home. This gives rise to an all-hands-on-deck phenomenon for households fearing monetary losses. Children deemed too young or unsafe to be left behind often migrate with their parents who are seasonal migrants resulting in months of absence from schools. Often, girls as young as fourteen would be married off so that their lives would not hinder the generational practice of seasonal migration. This study seeks to answer the following research questions: Did the lack of movements during the lockdowns affect the seasonal nature and migratory patterns, and if so, how? What is the intergenerational educational achievement level and tendency to dropout? Is history repeating itself in every generation?

A combination of primary and secondary data will be used to answer these questions. A strategy of purposive sampling method will be implemented to select only full-family seasonal migrants. Centers like brick-kilns, sugarcane harvesting cites and stone quarrying sites at Thane, Mumbai are to be chosen with the help of previously published literature. After proper consent formalities are completed, three separate focus group discussions with women, men and children would be conducted to gather the background information, current situations and opinions of the seasonal migrants. Secondary data from the National Sample Survey from the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation of the Government of India will be used to give an idea of labour migration at the national and state levels. Data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (July 2019-June2020, July 2020-June 2021, July 2021-June 2022, Calendar year 2021 and 2022) and the Multiple Indicator Survey (NSSO 78th round) will provide clear and continuous data of labour force migration and compliment the primary data collected from the field. The study is expected to find that lockdowns induced by the pandemic have led agricultural labourers in rural areas to incur serious debt. This debt will force full-family migration of landless labourers for more than a season. Full-family migrations and resulting school dropouts have been observed previously during droughts. Moreover, it is expected that the increased, wide-spread use of online learning platforms and the government's Digital India campaign will not be enough to prevent this section of the population from falling through the cracks. Policy suggestions will be derived from the study, such as to follow the example of states that started schools for children of seasonal migrant labourers at the destinations.

Biography
Shalini Sen is a PhD candidate at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai. Her primary focus lies in migration studies, with a particular interest in investigating the impact of seasonal

migration on child drop-out rates. To address this issue, Shalini has chosen a combined approach of post-positivism and constructivism for her thesis. By employing a mixed-method methodology in data collection and analysis, she aims to bridge naturalistic inquiry with critical realism. For the last three years, Shalini has worked on two government funded research projects on migration. She previously completed her M.Phil and Masters in Population Studies at the International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai, where she specialized in migration and urbanization. Her fascination with the dynamic concept of migration began when she conducted a socio-anthropological study for her dissertation in geography. She is currently also a research assistant for a project investigating disability in India.