



IMPROVING SOCIAL PROTECTION PORTABILITY FOR MIGRATION-AFFECTED CHILDREN

Snapshot of recommendations

1. Broad thrusts

- Creating a data collection system at a micro level, involving local bodies to track and communicate with migrants.
- Institutionalizing data collection efforts by CSOs and making the data available for research and policymaking.
- Extending the RTE up to 18 years for the uninterrupted education of children, including migrant children.

2. Actionable recommendations

- Setting up new seasonal hostels in other migration-prone blocks in the state, with a focus on better infrastructure and fixed base emoluments for caretakers.
- As an interim measure, converging alternative resources (e.g., the district mineral fund) for the expansion of seasonal hostels up to class 10.
- Establishing awareness programmes for migrants on the portability of government

schemes and initiatives, importance of ID cards, and use of technology.

- Expanding empanelled hospitals under the Biju Swastha Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) beyond the state in major destination areas for Odia migrants.
- Training frontline workers under the MAMATA scheme to provide referrals for intrastate migrant beneficiaries, to facilitate access to Anganwadis at destination for continuity of benefits.

3. Future directions

- Examining the scope for community-based kinship models for left-behind children in source districts.
- Exploring the establishment of a separate migration unit as a nodal agency to coordinate between departments.
- Expanding and institutionalizing bilateral arrangements with destination states for the benefit of Odia migrants.
- Institutionalizing the government's engagement with Odia associations outside the state to help migrants.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 national lockdown in March 2020, India saw the mass movement of an estimated 11.4 million migrants back to their home states. Many more remained stranded at worksites and destination cities, and experienced hunger, indebtedness and sickness. The vulnerability of migrants was substantially exacerbated by their inadequate incorporation in social protection mechanisms, which have consistently failed to recognize circular and seasonal mobility patterns, despite being aimed at reducing the vulnerability of the poor. In particular, portability mechanisms that allow migrants to access entitlements across locations have remained inadequate.

The incorporation is more unequally skewed against women and children of migrant households. Pre-existing normative notions reinforce the already underrepresented migration of women and children through the silos of trafficking, marriage and associational migration, thereby underestimating them as beneficiaries in the social welfare infrastructure. Moreover, women have not been adequately enumerated as workers.

With reference to UNICEF's social protection framework, which aims to be shock responsive, the study investigates migrant incorporation and portability of benefits for social protection schemes that impact children directly, related to nutrition, maternal and antenatal care, immunization, primary healthcare and education. It also investigates food security, employment guarantee and worker welfare schemes that help migrant households cope with shocks, especially in the context of COVID-19. Based on qualitative data collected from five states (Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh), the study documents challenges and good practices, and explores avenues to improve portability and access to social protection and welfare services for migrants, especially women and children.

This policy note focuses on initiatives and measures to improve portability and access to social protection and welfare for women and children affected by migration in the state of Odisha. The study considered all children (up to the age of 18) affected by the migration process, including independent child migrants, those who accompany their parents and those left behind after their parents migrate for work.

Data and methodology

Of the 72 semi-structured key informant interviews conducted for the study – with state government officials, CSO representatives and experts on migration – 14 were focused on Odisha. The note also relies on secondary material, including data from the Census and National Sample Survey (NSS), policy documents, research reports, CSO studies and media articles. Authors acknowledge the limitations of purposive sampling as well as the degree of generalizability of official interviews, as respondents spoke about specific schemes within their domains.

Migration overview in Odisha

Secondary data

Despite a well-established statistical system, data on child migration in India is inadequate. Government data sources such as the population census and the NSS are useful to provide broad trends and patterns on child migration at the national level but offer little scope for analysis at the state level. As a result, various international agencies, including UNICEF, have reiterated the need for better data.¹

According to 2011 Census data, there were 2.7 million migrants in Odisha aged 0–19 years (48 per cent boys and 52 per cent girls). Approximately 27 per cent of the total child migrants live in urban areas as against the urbanization rate of 17 per cent in the state. In terms of reasons for migration, 31 per cent of the total child migrants 'moved after birth' or 'moved with household', and the share of employment-related migration was very low. Yet, more than half of the child migration is due to 'other' reasons, making it difficult to get a clear picture.

An analysis of migrants who have migrated during 2001–10 shows that 94 per cent of the total child migrants in Odisha are intrastate. Interstate child migrants (about 75,000) are concentrated in districts such as Khordha, Sundargarh, Ganjam, Jharsuguda and Kendujhar (**see Figure 1**). Similarly, there were 0.13 million interstate child out-migrants during the same period and the regional pattern (**see Figure 2**) was broadly the same as that of adult migrants.

According to the NSS, around 0.42 million people from Odisha migrate seasonally every year for employment, of which 80 per cent are male² and 71 per cent are from southern Odisha. A large proportion belongs to rural areas and households with lower economic status.

As with other states, the majority of migration in Odisha happens over very short distances, within the district or across adjacent district borders. Census 2011 data reveals that a large proportion of interstate migrants from Odisha move to adjacent states: Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Telangana and West Bengal. Districts such as Mahasamund, Bastar and Durg in Chhattisgarh; Visakhapatnam and Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh; Kolkata, North 24 Parganas, East and West Medinipur in West Bengal are major destinations for interstate Odia migrants. However, some interstate migration takes place over long distances, primarily to Gujarat and Maharashtra, with Surat, Mumbai and Thane being major destinations. Data from Census 2001 shows that the two major migration corridors during 1991–2001 for Odisha were Ganjam–Surat and Ganjam–Mumbai.

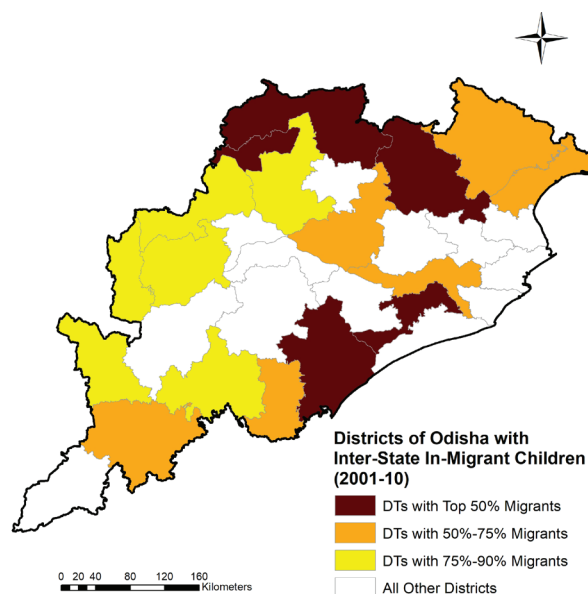


Figure 1. Districts in Odisha with interstate child migrants

Insights from primary data

Respondents in the study perceived two distinct regional patterns of migration in the state, from western Odisha and coastal Odisha. The migration from western Odisha is mostly seasonal in nature, involving family and single male migrants. Migrant families move to large cities in states such as Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu to work in the brick kiln and construction sector. The cycle of migration starts in October/November and continues till April/May. In the brick kiln industry, migrants who make bricks leave their villages earlier, and those who dry and burn the bricks leave a little later in the season. These labourers are usually hired through contractors (who connect brick kiln owners with local subcontractors) and subcontractors (from local areas with connection with these workers), and exploitation is common.

Single young men also migrate from western Odisha, mostly to work in the construction sector, but the profile of employment varies from daily-wage labour to semi-skilled work. The duration of stay at the destination is longer than family migration. In addition, seasonal migration happens within the state for a shorter period, during the harvesting season for crop cutting in districts such as Sambalpur and Bargarh.

The migration pattern of coastal Odisha is mostly single youth migration, but the destination varies across districts. Migrants from the southern part of coastal Odisha move to Gujarat and Maharashtra, while Kerala, Tamil Nadu (Chennai) and Karnataka (Bangalore) are popular destinations for migrants from other coastal districts.

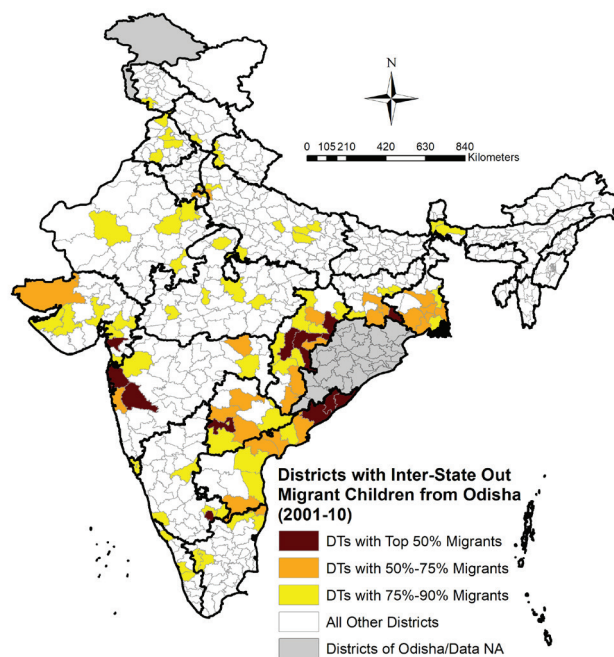


Figure 2. Districts with child migrants from Odisha

The need for better migration data in India was urgently felt during the 2020 lockdown, when states such as Odisha faced the daunting challenge of providing humanitarian support to a large number of returning migrants. Many state governments, including Odisha, made it compulsory for interstate migrants to register on an official portal before facilitating travel. According to official estimates, more than eight lakh migrants returned to Odisha after the lockdown, largely from Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.³

Findings on access to social protection and welfare services for children and women

India's social protection and welfare landscape is complex and continually evolving. Some aspects, in principle, provide universal coverage, such as education and health. Others, such as the public distribution system (PDS; for food rations), while broad-based, have eligibility criteria, in this case income levels and residential location. Social protection and welfare are operationalized through a gamut of central and state schemes, missions and programmes.

The share of Odisha's total budgeted expenditure to broad social welfare programmes stands at 39 per cent as of 2021–22 (100,720 crore), down from 42 per cent in the revised expenditure of 2020–21.⁴ The largest component of this is education, which constitutes one-third of the budgeted expenditure in social welfare in 2021–22. As a source state for interstate migrants, Odisha's social protection and welfare systems are focused on supporting households engaging in distress-driven seasonal migration. A broader focus on addressing rural and urban poverty benefits intrastate migrants, even without a specific focus on this group.

Education

The RTE Act provides free and compulsory education to all children aged 6–14 years. It creates a statutory entitlement that all children in the country, regardless of their location or other identities, can claim as a right from the state. Despite this, migrant children face several challenges in accessing education, with the seasonality of migration adding to the difficulty. In this regard, two initiatives of the Odisha government are noteworthy.

Seasonal hostels for left-behind children

In Western Odisha, families, including their children, migrate seasonally for six to eight months, and children help their parents in brick making and construction. Seasonal hostels started in the Balangir district as a pilot project in the early 2000s to prevent child migration and help address the problem of disrupted education and school dropouts.⁵ The pilot project was limited to a few villages and the hostels were managed by CSOs, with private grants and support from district officials. Later, the state government, through the Odisha Primary Education Programme Authority under the aegis of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) took over these hostels and opened new ones in other districts with high seasonal migration. In 2019–20, there were 164 operational hostels in the state where more than 5,000 students were enrolled.

Odisha's model is notable because it successfully converges financial assistance from separate sources: the SSA funds food and study materials, the Odisha Labour Department provides beds and mattresses, and services such as the mid-day meal are also dovetailed together. School management committees set up under the RTE Act play a vital role in running hostels, identify children from families likely to migrate and convince them to leave their children behind.

The Government of Odisha has also opened non-residential worksite schools at the destination districts (Cuttack, Khordha and Balasore) to reduce the school dropout rate among intrastate migrant children. This initiative needs further study and expansion.

Language facilitation at destination

For interstate child migrants from Odisha, a predominant barrier for accessing education has been language since schools in destination states do not have the capacity to teach migrant children in Odia. Noting the significant movement of Odia workers to Tamil Nadu, the Tamil Nadu State Education Department under SSA partnered with Aide Et Action (AEA), a CSO working in Odisha, in delivering Odia textbooks to migrant children in destination areas, with 4,062 children benefiting in 2019–20. Odia language teachers were also engaged with support from the Government of Odisha and AEA. The programme incorporated the issuance of bilingual transfer certificates to allow children to continue education even with circular migration.

A similar effort was undertaken by the Government of Odisha in partnership with the Government of Telangana and CSOs to support and supply local language textbooks to migrant Odia children in Telangana. This programme used government–CSO partnerships and convergence between the departments of education and labour to collate information on migrant worker flows and equip interstate dialogues on initiatives for resource sharing and teacher training, to bridge the education barrier in prominent migration corridors. A 2012 MoU between Odisha and erstwhile Andhra Pradesh continues to be a model for bilateral initiatives.⁶

Food security

Foodgrain entitlements at subsidized rates are guaranteed to 50 per cent of urban households and 75 per cent of rural households under the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA). The Act is implemented through the public distribution system (PDS), which is designed

to be household-specific and deliver entitlements in a place-specific manner. The need for portability of this infrastructure was highlighted during the COVID-19 lockdown, where stranded migrants were unable to access the PDS at their destinations. In response, the Government of India expedited the One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) scheme, which enables portability through an IT-driven system that includes the installation of electronic point of sale (ePoS) devices at PDS shops, seeding ration cards with Aadhaar numbers, and biometric transactions.

The Odisha government has piloted the ONORC at the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) for intra-ULB (urban local body) portability since September 2019 and interstate portability since early 2021. It plans to scale up this pilot project to all ULBs, and thereafter to the whole state.

The Odisha government also provides subsidized cooked food to poor and needy people in urban areas, through its Aahar scheme, operational in 73 towns of the state with around 67,000 daily beneficiaries. While not specifically targeted, the scheme benefits informal intrastate migrants who form a proportion of the urban poor.

Health

The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is an umbrella scheme comprising early childhood nutrition and health, and antenatal and postnatal care of pregnant and lactating mothers. While the ICDS is universal and can be accessed by migrants at their place of destination, significant outreach issues are reported for seasonal migrants who are multilocational and are usually engaged in activities in remote locations like brick kilns. The existing ICDS infrastructure and staff also support the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) for first-time pregnant and lactating mothers, which is an Aadhaar-based subsidy scheme, functioning through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) model.

In Odisha, the state government has been running its own scheme, a predecessor of the PMMVY called MAMATA. It provides cash benefits of 5,000 to pregnant and lactating mothers in two instalments, upon fulfilling certain conditionalities including registration of pregnancy, antenatal check-ups, registration of childbirth, and immunization. The scheme is administered using the ICDS infrastructure. While the use of a Mother and Child Protection Card (called the Mamta Card in Odisha) is potentially a feature of portability, the scheme requires registration in the area of original residence and makes no explicit provisions for intrastate migrants. The scheme has faced uptake issues

due to the lack of knowledge/awareness,⁷ and limited access to Anganwadis at destination locations.

Odisha has not implemented the Ayushman Bharat Jan Arogya Yojana in the state but runs its own health scheme, the BSKY, which aims to provide universal healthcare coverage within the state. There are two components: (i) free health coverage at all government facilities within the state, which is universal and not residence-dependent; (ii) health insurance at private facilities for eligible beneficiaries, available only for residents of the state.

Labour and livelihood

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (MGNREGA) provides at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in each financial year to all rural households whose adult members volunteer for unskilled manual work. It provides an important source of livelihood for many families in rural areas. In the wake of COVID-19, the Government of India increased allocations to the scheme for the benefit of migrant workers returning to villages.

Odisha also increased wage rates and approved 200 additional days of work in 20 migration prone blocks. A target of 20 crore additional labour days of work has been set for 2020–21. Under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), Odisha provided a working capital of 156.14 crore as part of a Special COVID-19 Assistance Package to revitalize the livelihoods of Self-Help Group (SHG) members and returned migrants. Converging the NRLM and the NREGA, the state facilitated the creation of 500,000 community gardens to promote dietary diversity, also helping rural families sustain themselves.

Odisha has also focused on providing support to the urban poor, in specific ways, with possible benefits to intrastate migrant households. Under the Deendayal Antodya Yojana of the National Urban Livelihood Mission (DAY-NULM), Odisha facilitated the creation of SHGs among vulnerable households, including migrant workers, which became vehicles to enable skilling, livelihood generation and financial inclusion. In the aftermath of the national lockdown and building on the success of the JAGA Mission, which focuses on land titling and infrastructure upgradation in urban informal settlements, the Odisha government introduced the Mukhyamantri Karma Tatpara Abhiyan (MUKTA) scheme for providing employment to the urban poor through the involvement of women SHGs federated under the DAY-NULM. The scheme is limited to residents of Odisha but benefits intrastate migrants in urban areas.

Odisha has also been proactive in supporting street vendors, through the provision of ID cards to prevent evictions and harassment, under the Odisha Urban Street Vendor Policy 2012. These ID cards proved useful for intrastate migrant vendors to claim benefits under the PM-Svanidhi relief scheme of the Central government after the COVID-19 national lockdown.⁸

Finally, the Odisha government's Labour Department has set up migration help desks in Andhra Pradesh, Delhi and Telangana, to solve problems faced by Odia migrants in coordination with the local administration. The Panchayati Raj Department also opened a migration resource centre in Tirupur (Tamil Nadu) to address the grievances of workers trained under DDU-GKY.

Analysis

Perceptions of migration varied substantially by the type of respondent. The lack of data impedes a fuller understanding of migration among government officials. CSOs understand migration predominantly as an outcome of rural economic distress but are less aware of its complexity.

While many schemes related to health and education are visualized from the lens of universality, ground narratives reveal prominent barriers in migrants' eligibility and access to these schemes. Some of the attempts made by the Odisha government in this regard, such as providing study materials and teachers in Odia, are commendable. However, scaling up these efforts to more destinations will face challenges and require greater collaboration with multiple local administrations and CSOs at destinations.

Some of the state schemes in Odisha are inclusionary by design, while others are not. While the Aahaar scheme does not make a distinction based on residency, the MUKTA scheme, to enhance wage employment for the urban poor, is restricted to the residents of Odisha. Considering the small numbers of interstate migrants into Odisha, it may be worthwhile extending the scheme to them as a gesture of inclusion.

The seasonal hostels in Odisha have helped many migrant children to continue their education. However, due to the age limit of RTE, they are unable to support migrant children over the age of 14, which results in children joining the workforce after this age. Also, the existing per-child financial incentives for caretakers is not enough to attract young volunteers and a base remuneration must be fixed. The expansion of the

seasonal hostels beyond the current five districts of operation, to include migration-prone blocks across the state, will benefit many more children.

Odisha has made a good beginning in implementing ONORC portability. Expanding the BMC portability experiment to the whole state will be beneficial for intrastate migrants. However, awareness among migrants as well as fair price shop (FPS) owners is crucial. Appropriate measures should be taken to deal with 'dark' FPS with poor internet connectivity.

In all our five study states, we find different levels of integration between states and CSOs functioning. Some CSOs from Odisha noted an increased acceptance of CSO-state relations in the aftermath of COVID-19: while CSOs have played an active role in consulting and knowledge sharing with the state in the past, during the pandemic, there was an enhanced acceptance of the contribution of CSOs in strengthening programme delivery and outreach. It is also notable that associations of Odia residents in cities outside Odisha played a big role during the lockdown by providing help to stranded migrants. These interactions would benefit from a regular and institutionalized relationship with the state government.

Beyond institutional barriers, respondents across states highlighted the issue of scheme uptake due to the lack of awareness within institutions and among beneficiaries, especially in the case of migrant women. A significant reason for this is fragmentation across departments. The Odisha government has taken steps for convergence across schemes by creating a planning and convergence department for inter-departmental coordination. Examples include utilizing the district mineral fund to increase MGNREGA minimum wage rates, the convergence of MUKTA and JAGA missions, and coordination between labour and education departments for migrant children's education. These measures can be extended to other schemes as well.

The absence of credible data has been a longstanding problem for policy response towards internal migration in India, particularly in incorporating marginalized migrants. The interviews from all five states, including Odisha, has highlighted that the COVID-19 experience has established a demand for more calibrated and functional data that reflects the complexities of migration. In this regard, CSOs may also be engaged on ground to augment government data collection initiatives and strengthen data systems on migration.

Policy recommendations

Education

- The Odisha government must consider extending enrolment in seasonal hostels (and RTE support) to children above the age of 14 years, to encourage children of migrants to complete their education. More seasonal hostels need to be opened in other districts, and blocks with higher seasonal migration need to be targeted. Base emoluments should be fixed for caretakers in seasonal hostels.
- The state government may explore the feasibility of community-embedded kinship care models, on the lines of Maharashtra, for supporting caregivers of left-behind children.
- The state government must collaborate with CSOs and employers to set up on-site schools for migrants who live on-site, especially in rural or peri-urban locations far from regular schools.
- The initiative of sending Odia language teachers and Odia books to Tamil Nadu and Telangana must be expanded to other major destination states.

Food security, health and nutrition

- Alternate mechanisms should be devised to cover PDS shops in remote areas with chronically poor internet connectivity (dark FPS), which are effectively excluded from the ONORC.
- Awareness programmes on the ONORC should be conducted for all stakeholders, including

beneficiaries and FPS owners at the gram panchayat/ward level in migrant-intensive districts at both source and destination.

- The state government must carry out training of frontline workers under the MAMATA scheme to provide referrals for intrastate migrant beneficiaries, which will facilitate access to Anganwadis at the destination to ensure continuity of benefits.
- Expansion of empanelled hospitals under BSKY beyond the state may be considered in major destination areas of Odia migrants, to facilitate portability.

Livelihood

- The state should consider including interstate migrants in the MUKTA scheme and simplify the documentation procedure.

Others

- The state should comprehensively review its data systems in migration and institutionalise the data collected by CSOs, e.g., village-level registers, by bringing them under gram panchayats. Additionally, migrants must be taken into confidence about the objectives of these data-collection mechanisms.
- The state government may consider establishing a dedicated migration unit, within the planning and convergence department as a nodal agency, to coordinate between departments on issues of migration.

Endnotes

1. UNICEF, *A Call to Action: Protecting children on the move starts with better data*, 2018.
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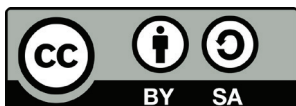
This report was prepared by the Centre for Policy Research, a non-profit, non-partisan independent institution based in New Delhi, India. Set up in 1973, CPR has been dedicated to conducting research that contributes to the production of high-quality scholarship, better policies, and a more robust public discourse about the structures and processes that shape life in India.

Acknowledgement

This report was drafted by Kanhu Charan Pradhan and Manish, CPR. The authors acknowledge the assistance of Monika Nielson and Soumen Ray, UNICEF India, and the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Odisha for facilitating appointments with state government officials.

Suggested Citation

Centre for Policy Research & UNICEF India (2021) Improving social protection portability for migration-affected children: Spotlight on Orisha. Social policy and inclusion. UNICEF, New Delhi.



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