

**THE MAKING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMERGENT
DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD OF
MIGRANT LABOUR: CONTESTED REALITY IN
SINGTAM, EAST SIKKIM**

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Abstract:

As a probable and valuable outcome of economic transformation, the issue of migration is considered to be a universal phenomenon in any country. No society can claim to be an isolated social hole that defies flows of individuals from outside. Structural transformation necessitated by globalization increased the spatial mobility of individuals in relation to the demand and supply for labour in any fledging economy. In case of Sikkim's unorganized sector, migration seems to have been of crucial importance. In all the eight major towns of the tiny state of Sikkim migration secures the unorganized sector workforce. India has been trying to maintain a rights-based approach through formulating various policies and flagship programmes to promote decent work and social security measures for the unorganized sector workforce. Sikkim's progress in this regard is plagued with several intricacies of its own. Maximum participation rates of the workforce in India are engaged in informal sectors (92.40% as per 61st NSS 61st round 2004-2005 data). Due to unawareness and poor educational background coupled with their fragmented nature of work participation and mobility, the unorganized sector labourers fail to secure the advantages of whatever little statutory measures are there. In the light of SDGs, migration is an important contributor for sustainable development and shown to have a synergistic effect upon economic growth. This seems to be an utmost necessity especially in case of Sikkim where the

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unorganized sector workforce is almost entirely based upon the migrant labourers coming from different corners of India.

The present paper proposes to examine the synergies between emerging development approaches, labour migration and driven vulnerabilities of the urban informal sector labourers in Singtam town of Sikkim.

Keywords: Migration, Informal Labour, Sustainable Livelihood.

1. Introduction:

Migration is a “survival instinct that drives humans to seek better prospects” (Sundari 2005: 2295), though the Census of India is defining migration in a different way. The prime purpose of migration, recorded by the NSSO and Census, is a significant indicator of how migration processes are influenced by the state of labour market of the nation. Scholars have identified various perspectives of labour migration. Most popular perceptions are the Marxist model (Mosse. et al, 2002: 59) and the dual economy model (Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan 2003: 350), both are considering the notion of migrant labourers mostly from rural areas to urban sectors. Structural changes, demographic changes act as a drive forces as well as cities lure, by proving job in the lower end labour market act as a new dimension of neoliberal economy. The major function of the labour migration is in fact as a ‘safety valve’, especially in poor areas (Srivastava and Sashikumar 2003: 1). Migration may initiate for a variety of reasons. Although the obvious truth holds that the economic and other opportunities normally play a key role in migration decisions, which individually can’t explain the root causes, patterned and regionally clustered morphology of migration. Structural forces – a natural and unavoidable catastrophe that interrupts the expected course of events – in the political economy such as colonialism conquest, occupation, labour recruitment, communal culture and geographical proximity frequently play a vital role in the labour migration processes (Castles and Miller 2009; Massey et al. 1998; Skeldon 1997).

Neoliberal scenario became a nationwide system in the last decade of the present century, which demonstrated in the fruition of urban informal economy. ‘Urban informality’ is a system of

norms that emerged through liberalization and was promoted by globalization as an organizing logic (Roy 2005: 148; Roy and Alsayyad 2004: 26). Urban informality is not only a part of poor societies and informal sectors, but rather, it has become a continuum 'way of life' (KudyaNeema 2009), that bridges duality between formal and informal sectors. The word 'informal' is used extensively in academic and policy texts but there is no consensus on its meaning. If 'informality' is considered to be attached with different kinds of arrangements, networks, activities and providers, the fuzziness of the term widens. When (irregular) economic activities (Hart, K 1973, 1992, 2001) are practiced by workers of any kind, not covered by formal arrangements are also considered to constitute informal economy (ILO 2002, 2011; Hussmanns 2004). These formulations make one thing clear that informality 'sits uneasily in law' since it traverses boundaries that underpin the analytical apparatus of labour regulation. Notwithstanding the cause and effect relationship, formality and informality are primarily intertwined. The application of informal economy is habitually encouraged by punctuated inconsistencies between widespread scholastic models and perceived actualities. Urban in-migrants in the informal labour market are by and large perceived as a remnant of the pre-modern mode of production that unwaveringly disappears into the modernisation of societies (Geertz, 1963). The ever-increasing growth of the informal labour market across the global South deserves a work out on re-theorisation (Chen, Venek and Carr 2004; Rakowski 1994). The international community has thus recognized "a shared responsibility to manage large movements of migrants in a humane, sensitive, compassionate and people-centered manner" (UN General Assembly, paragraph 11) from a long-term development perspective. Migration scenario in the global South is mostly lying within the nation-state borders and opens up scope for internal migration to have wider currency both at the policy level as also at the level of local politics. As a matter of fact, internal migrants are not only looking for social and economic opportunities within the nation-state but often raises the claim to attain inclusion and a sustainable livelihood in the destination areas (MOST 2015).

2. Study Area:

Sikkim, the 22nd state of India (1975, 26th April), is well known as an important centre for Himalayan trade and politics ever since the late nineteenth century. We know that the role of geographical features determines the economy of any country and in this sense Sikkim cannot be

considered as an exception. Land locked Sikkim is bounded in the north by the vast Tibetan plateau and in the east by Bhutan and Chumbi valley of Tibet. To its west Nepal and in the southern boundary stretches the Darjeeling district of West Bengal. Sikkim is situated with the 27° 5' North to 28°10' North and 88° 4' East to 88° 58' East with the area of 7096 sq.km. Sikkim has a steady growth rate of population over the last three decades. The population of Sikkim has grown from 316385 in 1981 to 607,688 persons in 2011. The demographic pattern of an area reflects the level of development in that particular area. The growth, distribution, density, and migration of population of a place indicate the economic status of the same. Sikkim has four districts- North, South, East and West. Out of these four, East district has the maximum population due to the presence of Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim.

2.1. Singtam:

Singtam, a small Nagar Panchayat town (Class V, area 0.18² kilometers), located in east district (Sikkim). It is located 30 km away from Gangtok city (capital), roughly within 27°15' North and 88°38' East with total population 5874 person (Census of India 2011). Singtam has five wards within its territory. Teesta River and Rani khola bounds this town in the west and south respectively. Elevation of this area is 1396 feet above the mean sea level; area of this town is 0.176 sq km. Decadal growth rate of population is very high, with 8.14% (2011 Census of India). I consider Singtam to be a vital place of research in Sikkim – as a rapidly urbanizing state in the eastern Himalayan region. Ze'rah and Denis argue, “understanding the nature and form of ‘small town urbanism’ is imperative to unpacking the role of small urban settlements as an interface functioning at different scales, without trapping them in a dominant and hierarchical view of the world ...” (2017: 5). Singtam (Nagar Panchayat Town, 2010) provides a case of small town urbanization with its own scale of development. Its geographical location has accelerated the rate of urbanization and also the economic significances, which help to act as a junction town - nicely communicated with different districts of the state itself. It is the second nearby boarder town, after Rangpo- sharing the border with West Bengal that connects the state with the rest of India. Singtam is an important transit point for legal and illegal goods crossing the border, and the other parts of the different districts. Thus, this town occupied an extraordinary space in Sikkim economy and polity as well as firmly controlled by state’s laws and regulation, but, also in a

grave situation in the production of a transgression zone at the southern edge of the ‘model development’ (Mona Chettri and DuncaunMcDuie-Ra. 2018: 1)

Fig no. 1.

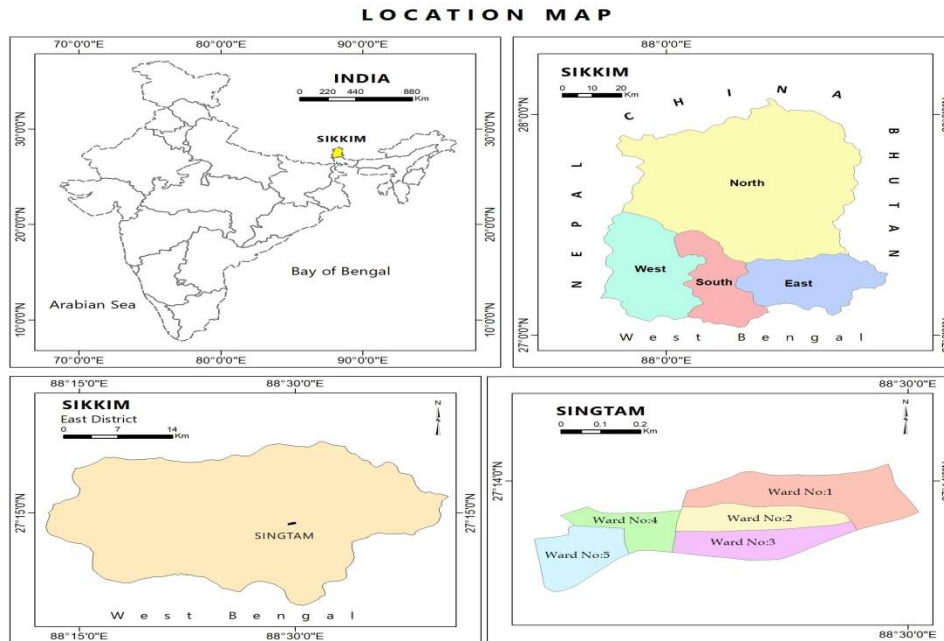


Fig 1: Showing the location of Singtam and its different wards.

3. Labour Migration in Sikkim:

Labour migration is an important livelihood strategy in India. There is a very significant migration flow, in some regions with considerable impacts primarily on individuals, followed by households and regions. Sikkim is constituted overwhelmingly of migrants from multi ethnic, multi-language speaking states. Of course, the main migratory movements were apparently rooted in its historical past and cultural links as well as economic associations, because according to the Article VII (1) of Indo-Sikkim Treaty, 1950, citizen of both countries were provided free movement on each other's territory and also the Article VII (2) (a) (b) allowed the citizen of both countries to carry trade, commerce and right to hold property on each other's territory. Post-merger scenario was completely different; Article 371-F was included in the Constitution of India through 36th Amendment Act in the year same. It was the condition and an agreement between the Sikkim and Indian Union for the purpose of merger (The Sikkim Darbar Gazette 1961). In a same way, Article 371- F (k) also protecting the old laws of Sikkim. It

segregates locals (Sikkimese) and non-Sikkimese in terms of Government jobs which falls under the state list of the seventh schedule of Constitution. Non-Sikkimese are not allowed to hold property and few more safeguards to protect their own identity separately, regardless of the fact that Sikkimese and non-Sikkimese both are allowed to pursue any Central Government jobs, carry out trade or business, run a company and the like. It is true that Indian Constitution part III “Fundamental Rights” provides equal rights to every citizen of India but at the same time part XXI of the Constitution also provide some special provision under Article 371-F, for Sikkim. Thus, Sikkim is maintaining its own layers of territorial control, and in some cases beyond the laws as promulgated in other states of India.

The implementation of different policies by the Sikkim Government to protect locals does not allow permanent settlement for those who migrated recently (during post-merger period). Migrant labourers hailing from the plains are found to be persons without any rights and security and at best be treated as the marginalized lots in contemporary Singtam (East Sikkim). These migrant lots have been absorbed mostly in the informal sectors – working as construction labourer, porters, hotel boys, and tailors – and also considered as a seasonal folk in the town to do work as casual wage labourers. Another reason for the high consumption of migrant labourer is that the Sikkim COI (Certificate of Identification) or Sikkim Subject¹ holders are mostly engaged in the State Government official posts or other secondary or tertiary sectors and the remaining other poor locals are reluctant to engage themselves in labour intensive, degrading, precariously informal works in view of dignity, pride and social status (Piore, and Sabel. 1984).

4. Who are Urban Informal Workers in Singtam?

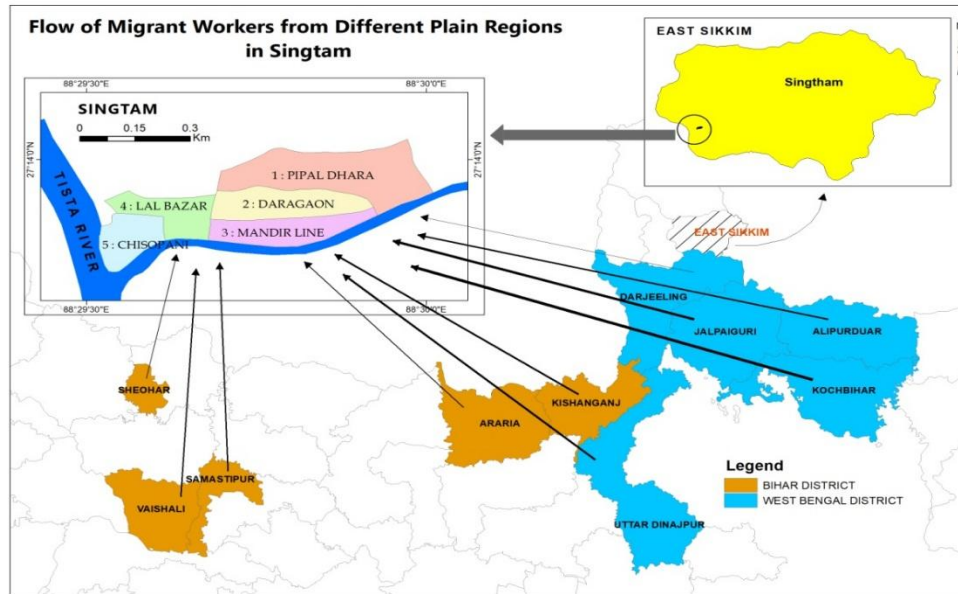
The textbook theories on economic development always envisage the transformation of labour from feudalistic to modern economy. At present, developing countries are experiencing the presence of huge pool of informal sectors outside agriculture. This transition is a long term process. There is a continuous debate in India on the participation rate of informal workers on the benefit of economy’s total growth. Informal workers are consisting near about 92% of the total workforce in India [National Commission for Enterprises in The Unorganised Sector, Govt.

¹ Sikkim Subject or COI: Sikkim Subject Regulation Act 1961 has been enforced at the time of Chogyal of Sikkim. Certain persons domiciled in Sikkim Territory at the commencement of the Regulation to be Sikkim Subject/COI, and the persons, though not domiciled in Sikkim but if he is a person whose ancestors were deemed to be Sikkim Subject prior to the year 1850. Home Department. Notification no 156/S-61. Gangtok, The 3m July, 1961. Published in the Sikkim Darbar Gazette, Extraordinary, dated the 3m July 1961.

of India (2004-05)]. Mostly, they are living with utterly awful working conditions and with very limited livelihood options. These squalid pictures are coexisting with a 'shining India'-perspective, where it has successfully confronted the issues of globalization and perpetual increasing of economic competition locally and globally. Buoyancy in the economy has created a sense of euphoria but most of the India's informal economy is far away from this euphoria (*ibid*: 1). In developing south, work is the key component of social recognition, participation in society and self-identity. It is the core platform which helps to locate individuals within the system of social structure. But, the standard employment model and work process already being changed due to the processes of intensified global competition, globalization, cooperative reform and technological revolution. Employers are continuing with 'flexibilize' employment strategies which in turn create an adverse effect on the workers by eroding the standard of employment. As a matter of fact, the total risk factor has been shifted away from firms to workers. States, by using various policies, tried to increase deregulation of the labour markets through the transmutation of employment relationship. These processes resulted in the significant growth of precarious work in the last few decades. There are different drivers of precarious work, especially; 'low-road'² (Evans and Gibb 2009) approaches lead to achieve the cost cutting perceptions at the cost of job quality, working environment and wages. The increase in precarious work indicates the heterogeneity of labour market. It is significant to note that all these are symptomatic of Singtam as well. Migrant labourers seem to be engaged reasonably in a prolific range of different earning categories. Migrants from Bihar and West Bengal adapt themselves as pro-urban poor in Singtam. Their incomes are irregular and uncertain but in quantitative terms they are earning much higher than their native place but at the cost of high exploitation rate. In this paper, I have attempted to examine these issues by considering the workers of different expenditure classes (like construction labourers, porters, tailors and hotel boys) to portray the reality of informal economy of the town.

Fig. No. 2.

²Low-road 'is a term used throughout the employment literature. Low road as represents as ' low-skill, low-pay job which are unsafe , insecure and unsatisfying in marginally profitable industries' –“ used in the conference '21st century work: High road or Low road?"



Source: Field work (2017), Fig 2: Flow diagram showing different rate of migration.

5. Sustainable Livelihood at Singtam - Reality Check:

My research ventures in Singtam were composed of a set of qualitative and quantitative research methods – using interviews, schedules (175 respondents), secondary documents and visual documentation and analyzing data through statistical measures. I approached Singtam and its neighbourhoods, unorganised sectors, peri-urban fringes, market areas, public sectors, besides government offices and trade unions. Carried out field work for several months and made multiple visits during 2017-18 to document the flow of migrant labourers' life in different occupational fields. As we know that there are different sets of regulations and rules to control migration in case of Sikkim and this makes Sikkim a unique case – unparalleled to other states of Indian Union barring a few exceptions of some North East Indian states – for reviewing the concerns of migrant informal labourers.³ Indian citizens are free to move towards Sikkim for work, except in all public sector jobs, but citizens of Nepal and Bhutan require registration before entering into the state. Much like other urban centers of Singtam welcomes migrants from other parts of the nation – mostly from West Bengal and Bihar – to flock in, frequently station in slums, build network with people of the same faith and seek out employment in the informal economy. Singtam's boom and seemingly negligent enforcement of migration control

³ Generalizations are difficult. Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland have restrictions on entry and settlement under various constitutional provisions, while particular districts and autonomous territories in Assam, Manipur, and Tripura have restrictions, though enforcement is uneven and is a constant source of tension and—in some cases—violence.

also attracted people from outside Sikkim. Here, migrants are not ‘of’ Sikkimese space rather being ‘in’ Sikkimese space. There are multiple rationales to make use of migrant labour in the host areas. While, shortage of local labour (Sing and Lyer 1985) in ‘low road’ economy is very much predominant in Sikkim, other available evidences show that the recruitment of migrant labour is motivated by the existing strategies of labour control and wage cost reduction. Migrant labourers are always preferred because their workforce is easier to control, as well as to extract labour from them in any arduous conditions. On the other hand, flexibility of the migrant labour is reinforced due to the role of middlemen and contractors. The labour market outcomes have been generated by the labour migration strategy facilitating some kind of growth and accumulation in the host areas, though this can be described as a ‘low road’ to capitalism. Breman (1996) has also stated that the basic rationale for the growth of informalisation depends on two-way mobility of labour and segmentation is also being observed by him in the mercantilist capitalist development. This process is nothing but a microscopic view of the international migration, which is strongly depended upon the structure of international capitalism. It is well known that neoliberalism changed resolutely the balance among labour, capital and policy practices and also the global South is believing in the ‘development friendly’ regime, it has become very essential to promote and execute the ‘decent work’ approach in India. In February 2010 the Indian Government and the Indian employers and workers’ organization have agreed to a decent work program with the ILO. The Decent Work Programme (DWP) was given reasonable space in the Indian Five Year Plan (2007-2012), which focuses on various skill development programmes, extension of social protection policies in the informal economy and also provisioning the elimination of ‘unacceptable forms of work’. It is very essential, in this context, to know migrant’s (labour) livelihood in the host area to understand the entire policy regime and the perception of decent work in any particular state.

6. General Profile and Livelihood Approach -Field View.

This study covered 175 (male) subjects (composed of construction labour, porters, tailors and hotel boys) from different dominant informal sectors of Singtam town. Selection of the sectors was made on the basis of the presumption that all migrant labourers are not experiencing the same set of vulnerabilities as are the cases with the four sectors. Semi-permanent or long term circular labour migrants and short-term or seasonal labour migrants require more attention as

most of these types of labourers are engaged as casual or semi-permanent basis and maintaining their livelihood without any security of employment (Srivastava, 2011). Sikkim's informal economy is not only experiencing short term, seasonal and circular migrant labourers but also several forms of long term labourers and their exchangeability. There are also plenty of temporary labourers, working as a group without knowing each other or sometimes coming from the same place and thereby knowing each other while sharing the common destiny. Following table is showing the relationship among different socio-cultural parameters with the occupation types.

Table no 1. **General profile of the migrant labourers in Singtam, East Sikkim.**

Types of occupation	Mean age	Religion maximum participation	Caste maximum participation	Education level in %				Types of migration in %			
				Ill	P	S	H	Long term	Seasonal	Short term	Temporary
Porter	27.29 ±6.05	Hindu 69.23%	OBC 37%	6	69	25	0	0	97	3	0
Tailor	27.24 ±6.18	Muslim 88.24%	OBC 53%	6	12	82	0	18	6	76	0
Hotel boy	18.40 ±3.59	Hindu 80%	OBC 36%	7	27	56	10	0	30	70	0
Construction labour	24.67 ±7.25	Hindu 76.19%	SC 38%	2	55	27	16	5	0	0	95

Source: field survey, 2017. Ill-illiterate, P- primary, Sc-secondary, Hs- higher secondary.

It is claimed that the sustainable work approach is to be viewed as an important means of achieving inclusive, equitable and sustainable development (ILO 2013). Open Working Group's (OWG) proposed SDG8 target has heavily stresses on promoting decent work for the migrant labourers. It includes various aspects and emphasizes on "the need to respect and promote

international labour standards as appropriate, and respect the rights of the migrants in their workplace” (International Migration and Development, 2013). Following table (no.2) is showing important (10) parameters of the decent work and there ranking, which helped to determine overall aspect of the decent work situation of the town.

Table no. 2. **Parameters of Decent Work**

Factors	Total	Average Score(total/total respondents	Rank
Wage	13632	77.9	1
Compensation for over time	9729	55.59	5
Working hrs.	7022	40.13	7
Employment security	6622	37.84	8
Hygienic working place	10927	62.44	3
Bullying by superior	11516	65.8	2
Retention strategies	10328	59.02	4
Protection facilities at working place	7543	43.1	6
Social security	5502	31.44	9
Union rights	3216	18.38	10

Source: field survey, 2017 (computed after Henry Garrett ranking conversion).

According to the table 2 migrant labourers are giving rank one to the wage structure, considering the facts that they are getting at least minimum wage from the town. One of the significant issues, which have been focused on the context of work condition of labour, is the issue of minimum wage.

Table 3: **Pre and post migration income structure of the migrant labourers.**

Particulars	Previous individual income				Present individual income			
	Tailor	Porter	Hotel boy	Construction workers	Tailor	Porter	Hotel boy	Construction workers
Observation	17	65	30	63	17	65	30	63
Mean \pm SD (range)	3333.3 3 \pm 7985.2 3 (0.00- 33333.3 33)	2692.3 1 \pm 911.55 (1333.33 – 4666.67)	1816.6 7 \pm 2765.1 9 (0.00- 8000)	5243.39 \pm 4727.03 (0.00- 16666.67)	12431.3 7 \pm 9228.40 (0.00- 33333.3 3)	11005.1 3 \pm 911.91 (9333.33 – 13333.33)	7350.0 0 \pm 3426.9 5 (4000- 22000)	10925.93 \pm 2972.66 (6666.67 – 20000.00)

Source: field survey, 2017

There are large numbers of countries in the world; along with the developed economies have minimum wages. Unfortunately, there are still strong conformations/advocates of the position that wages in the labour market should not be regulated, mostly in the informal economy. Individual states trades can set up higher minimum wages carefully - bearing in mind their feasibility. Sikkim government proposed to revise the existing Minimum wage rate as per their policy decision adopted in the year 2014. According to revised Minimum wage unskilled labourers are getting Rs.300/day, semi-skilled are able to get Rs320/day, skilled labourer are allowed to received Rs335/day and highly skilled labourer are entitled to get Rs365/day. Legislative protection for labourers to be given a minimum wage can be considered as the hall mark of any progressive state, as well as it is one of the primary premises of securing decent work conditions. My field experience highlights the fact that migrant informal labourers are enjoying the benefit of the minimum wage; they have a certain gap between the previous income and post migration income (table 2); whereas, apart from the wage factor other decent work parameters were poorly met in the field situation.

The labour and industry regulation offer some occasional overtime work – stipulating the facts that the labour should earn at twice the rate of normal wage received, but there is very less provision to obtain compensation for overtime. Only few (57 respondents) construction labourers are receiving overtime compensation as because most of them are appointed in a contract basis. Different labour and industry regulations in India (Factories Act 1948, Minimum Wages Act 1948, Shops and Establishment Act 1948) put down rules that no adult labour work more than 9 hours a day and 48 hours per week. On an average, the established working hours is 8 hours per day for six days' week. The reality in this town is too adverse since an average working day for all my respondents was 10 hours a day and it increases with no fixed limit when they come to work as project driven 'contract labour' (*thika*) on short term basis.

Table no. 4 **Average working hours of respondents.**

Occupations	Working hours/ day
Tailor	8.41±1.33
Porter	7.09±0.63
Hotel worker	9.23±1.04
Construction worker	8.22±1.41

Source: field survey, 2017.

Normally the vast majority of migrant labourers fall in the informal sector and employment is obtained in this sector mostly through three ways, though the ways did vary on case to case basis. First, is by the labour contractors, second is through a family, friends, caste, community and region based network and third, is the standing at the gate of the job structure. A migrant network is always a location-specific form of social capital (Massey et al. 1998). Bourdieu (1985) also stated that the volume of these resource network depends on the dimension of the network connections and also on (economic and cultural) or symbolic value attained by the person to whom the migrant is connected. My field experiences also revealed that maximum number of workers (108 cases) were recruited through various network systems. Second

maximum way of recruitment was through contractors (57 cases), especially in construction sector. Contract labourers are not same as direct labourers in terms of employment relationship and wage receipt. Normally contract labour in India is regulated by the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act 1970, but the Act is not applicable to those contractors who are employing less than twenty workers. Hence, the condition opens up scope for all types of manipulations to be made by the contractors and employers (SNCL 2002). Though this Act is meant for informal labour but its scope is very limited both in words and spirit. In Sikkim, there is a demand to abolish the labour contract system within one month because these workers are not entitled to get any benefit which are due to them (Rajeev R Das, The Telegraph, 2018). Third way is very insignificant in terms of the migrant labour recruitment because they would be in a disadvantaged situation if they are getting their jobs through third way and in Singtam (10 cases) such cases were noticed. Most of the time there were no fixed working hours and they are bound to work all the days in a week and sometimes in intolerable working conditions. The provision of different labour laws are not observed and migrant labourers are always subjected to different malpractices. Though, the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979 was already enacted to control the work conditions of the migrant labourers, but all my respondents were not at all aware of such legal entitlements.

Employment security is another important target of decent work approach. We have many labour laws in our Statute books but they are not covering workers engaged in informal economy. In spite of the existence of few beneficial laws (The Factory Act, 1948, The Minimum Wages Act, 1948, The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, The Payment Gratuity Act, 1972, etc.) in informal sectors, but none of them are able to form the bottom line of the income as well as social security system that covers entire informal sectors. There is no provision of written appointment letter or employment contract in the informal economy. In Sikkim, this practice is also followed by the occupations of tailoring, hotel jobs, casual daily wage construction labourers and porters, but, 2010 onwards, local administration and Singtam police implemented one regulation for the porters that they need to register themselves at police station before joining their job and also have to buy one green coloured jacket for their identification as 'Namley'⁴. One of the most

⁴Namley: local name (in Nepali language) of the porters.

active exploitation which takes place most of the times with these porters is – the police or administrative officials are charging different amount of money to provide the jacket. This registration system is not a part of the state’s labour department and it is not even providing any security to the migrant labourers. These are the reasons why the employment security parameter was ranked 8th by my respondents.

The social security needed in the informal sectors is extensive but the reality is limited within the small funds as well as lack of readiness. Preclusion of different schemes create constrain to apply the social security measures for informal labourers, on the other hand, numerous schemes have been evolved in India with the help of legislations and policies to provide social security to the informal labourers – some of them are integrated with Rural Development Programme. In Sikkim, there are various policies to protect local (Sikkimese) labourers under different acts, but in terms of migrant labourers, they do not have access to even the most basic security norms. Field data suggests that the respondents have ranked the social security measures as the lowest possible working condition available in Singtam. Above all, migrant labourers are not allowed to form any union in the state of Sikkim. They cannot even get consent from their employers to take part or even register their names in any existing local labour unions even though 90% of the state’s informal economy is based on migrant labourers. In reality workers’ collective rights were totally ignored in the state of Sikkim for the migrant informal labourers. The Indian Constitution clearly recognized the relation between decent work conditions and the promotion of informal sector. Article 39 and 42 of the Directive Principles give importance on the goals and humane conditions of work, but, Article 43 emphasized towards not only for the provision of minimum wage – also for the “conditions of work ensuring a decent life”. Under the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector, the government of India has provided various suggestive measures to transform the informal economy. Though, none of these suggestions can be interpreted as a suitable format for the development of a foundational framework when viewed in the light of migrant informal labourers’ standpoint working at Singtam.

7. Conclusion:

In reality, there is an ongoing, constant cross state competition to attract investors, and it has become a lead concern in the role of government. If states want to retain or attract these

investments, then, they will have incentives to weaken their existing labour laws (Mostey and David 2015). This propensity may lead states to fail in offering labour rights, individual working conditions as well as to enforce domestic labour legislations (Przeworski A and Wallerstein M. 1988). Sikkim is not beyond these possibilities. Moreover, there is a provision of exclusive privilege to Sikkimese only, in the economic, social and political arena on the basis of the Act 371 F. The Sikkim government tabled a bill – to reserve 95% of jobs for the Sikkimese in all private sector businesses operating (registered under Sikkim’s Registration of Companies Act, 1961 or the Companies Act, 1956) within the state. The bill’s target was to promote benefits to only those who possess COI or Sikkim Subject status. In this regard, BikashRanjan Bhattacharya, a Constitutional expert stated “The bill will be considered as ultra vires to the Constitution and will be struck down by the judiciary” (The Telegraph. 08.03.2008: 1). Sikkim’s state policies are always ready to promote and protect her local labourers. There is no room for the livelihood security of the migrant labourers except the minimum wage protocol.

Through a close observation of the spatiotemporal lattice of informal sectors in Sikkim, I reveal the fact that how these economies are fragile, with its maximum migrant human resource value chains by the state’s policies and also through market forces. While the entire informality is based on labour intensity relative opacity and embodied knowledge, certainly, able to create a ‘bodily’ experience for space and gives the power to informal economy to resist external forces and to subsume or transform them in formal sectors. Lack of job security and social protection in Sikkim also portrait that wage workers and micro employers live on a thin line between failure and survival. This render them as vulnerable and precariat. The upshot is that the informal labourers are in critical situation to maintain the quality of life. These workers are regularly stigmatized, exploited and made frequently invisible in policy decisions of the host as well as in the source states. It shows an enduring inequality that demands proper policy adjudication. Cities and towns are often considered as brooding places of imagination, creativity, innovation, and the ever new and different. However, cities and towns also hide in their underbelly perverse and pervasive processes of social exclusion and marginalization and are rife with all manners of struggle, conflict, and often outright despair in the midst of the greatest affluence, abundance, and pleasure. This seems to be the case when one is to assess Sikkim’s prosperity in the light of the concerns of migrant informal sector labour.

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