

**PRELIMINARY STUDY OF SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF
FAMILIES ON MMC CONSTRUCTION SITES**



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Study by Andrea McLeod, MMC volunteer 2007



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INTRODUCTION

The construction industry is the single largest employer of migrant labourers, the poorest of the poor, in Indian cities. Approximately 35 million men and women work in this sector and they are largely unorganized. Moving wherever they can earn an income, most migrant labourers are illiterate and only able to speak their native language. Their lives are characterized by insecurity of wages, dangerous working conditions, and lack of access to any kind of welfare.

The children including infants of these workers – estimated to be around 30 million – are even more vulnerable. Because of their families' extreme poverty and also since their parents are constantly working (sometimes mothers go back to work a few hours after delivery), they are left to fend for themselves. They suffer from malnutrition, under nourishment, accidents, and innumerable health problems. They are marginalized from formal schooling, day-care centres or any sort of support system. It is estimated the government services barely reach 5% of this population.

Mobile Crèches was founded in 1969 in Delhi on the belief that every child has the fundamental right to security, education, health care and protection. Running day care centres on construction sites for the past 37 years, Mobile Crèches has run over 500 centres in Mumbai, Delhi and Pune and reached out to over 6,50,000 children. It has developed a comprehensive day care service programme that meets children's emotional, physical, cognitive and social development needs. It has pioneered the first Early Child Care Education (ECCE) programme for migrant workers' children in this country.

In a country where the economic and political situations force millions of workers into extremely vulnerable positions, and leave their children even more helpless, Mobile Crèches is among the very few organisations in India which provides such comprehensive day care centres.

In Mumbai, Mobile Crèches has reached over 100,000 children and every year it reaches about 5000-6000 children through its day care centres. It is in an effort to better understand the situations of the families of these children that the data in this report has been collected and this report commissioned.

There is no current comprehensive set of statistics on the construction workers of Mumbai or their children. Collecting such data is made difficult by a lack of complete information of current building sites in Mumbai, the reluctance of builders to allow surveyors access to their sites, and the constant migration patterns of the workers themselves, who might move from site to site in a relatively short amount of time.

A lack of comprehensive statistics on the conditions of construction site workers is one impediment to successful advocacy on behalf of the workers. Pay and working conditions vary greatly between sites and construction companies.

In August 2007, Mumbai Mobile Crèches proposed to collate a database of all children enrolled at their centres in order to gain a clearer picture of conditions across sites, migration patterns, family composition and average monthly wages. The database included 1381 children from seven of Mobile Crèches' twenty-one sites. While it was intended to collect data from all of Mobile Crèches' centres, this was hampered by time constraints, language difficulties and conflicting schedules.



This report hopes to present a clearer picture of the living and working conditions of construction site workers in Mumbai through a presentation of the statistics collected. This is a preliminary report on the data currently collected, it is intended that as the database is added to, and a clearer more complete picture emerges, the report may be revised to include any new patterns emerging.

This current set of data is the first step towards developing a data and documentation cell within Mumbai Mobile Crèches. This information would thereby inform Mumbai Mobile Creches' advocacy work, as well as supporting it to make representations to various stakeholders and in various forums. One of the main constraints to improving the conditions for construction workers is that there is no large scale statistical representation of these conditions. Advocacy incorporating this data will help to increase awareness of the conditions faced by construction workers, as well as working out a benchmark for what conditions should be, and the areas which need the most improvement.

METHODOLOGY

Every Mumbai Mobile Creches centre keeps extensive records on the children in the centre. These records include a survey of the children's families, their attendance records, their changing weight and height, immunisation records and the vitamins they receive, and their education records. Case studies of individual children are also kept.

Over a course of four months from August until November 2007, the survey data on the children and their families was collected and compiled into a database. This survey is a register of all new arrivals at the centre with details of their names, ages, village of origin, parents occupations and pay rates and length of time that the family has lived in Mumbai.

Data was collected from seven Mumbai Mobile Crèches Centers at various locations around Mumbai, for all children who attended the centers from April 2007 until August, September or October, depending on the time period in which the researcher completed that particular center. The researcher traveled from center to center, working with the staff stationed there to enter this information into the database.

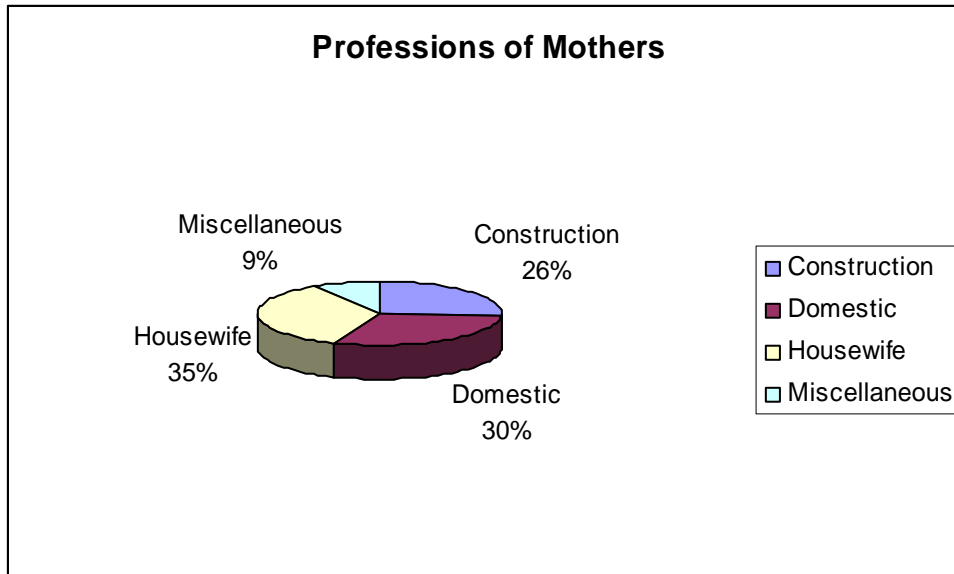
Once the information was collected, it was interpreted in order to find patterns in terms of occupation and rates of pay, village and state of origin, number of children per family, and amount of time that the family had spent in Mumbai.

In order to separate data so that individual families could be examined as well as individual children, a system was developed, whereas only one child from each family would be counted.

ANALYSIS

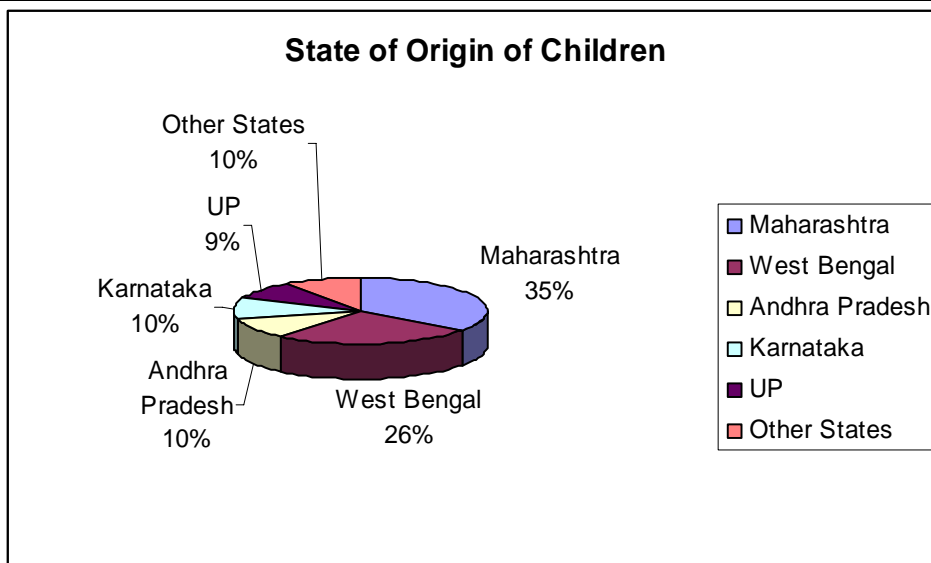
i. Top 3 Professions of Mothers

Housewife	Domestic Work	Construction Work	Miscellaneous
355	308	262	93



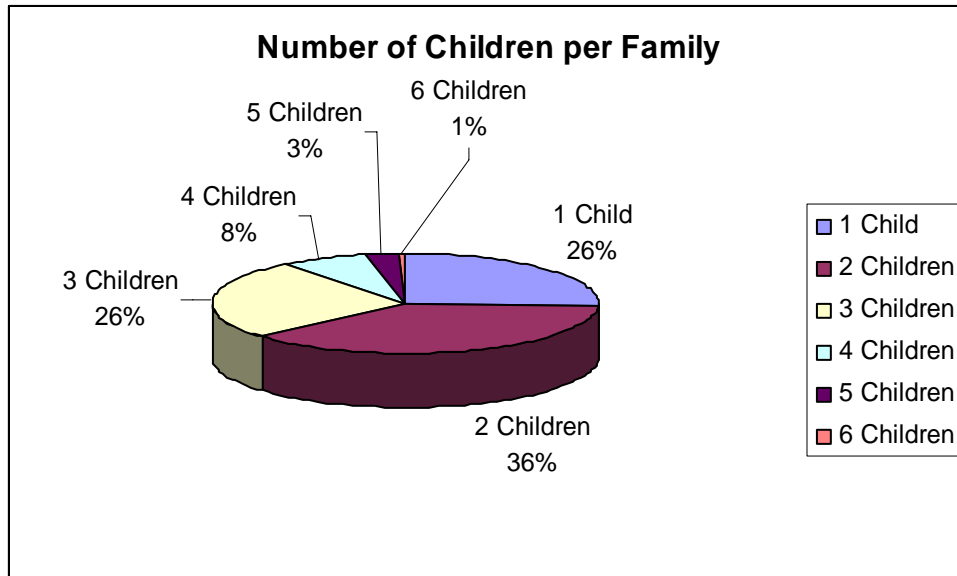
ii. Number of Children from State of Origin - Top 5

Maharashtra	West Bengal	Andhra Pradesh	Karnataka	UP	Others
482	358	142	137	122	138



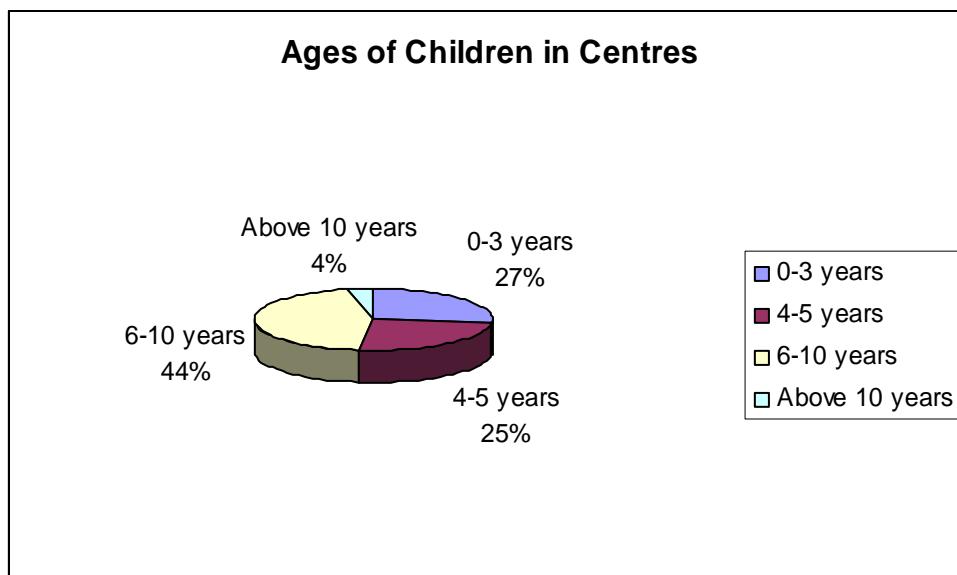
iii. Number of Children per family

1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	4 Children	5 Children	6 Children	7 Children
243	345	239	71	25	5	2



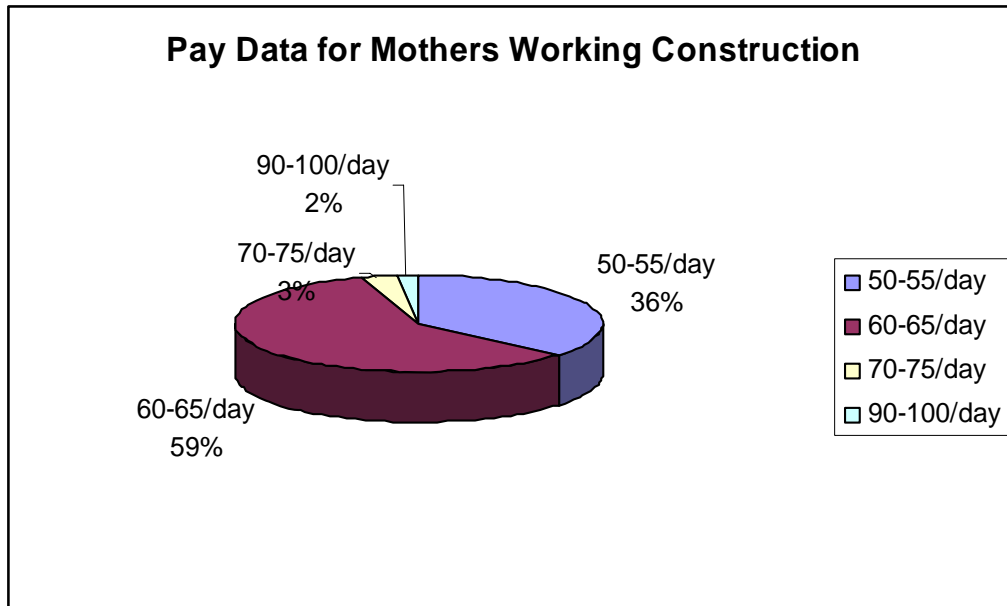
iv. Ages of Children in Centres

0-3 years	3-5 years	6-10 years	10+ years
371	346	615	49



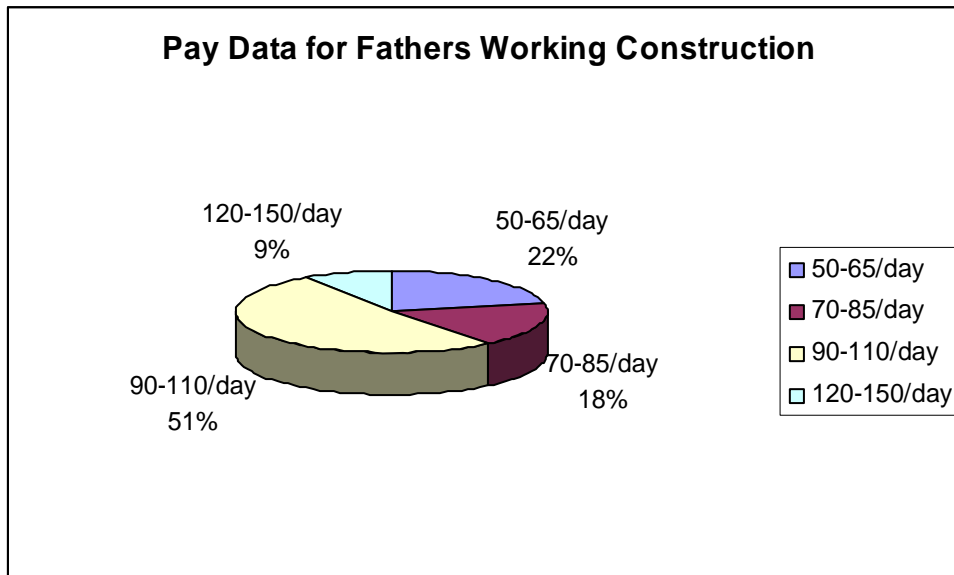
v. Pay Data for Female Construction Workers

50-55/day	60-65/day	70-75/day	90-100/day
74	121	6	4



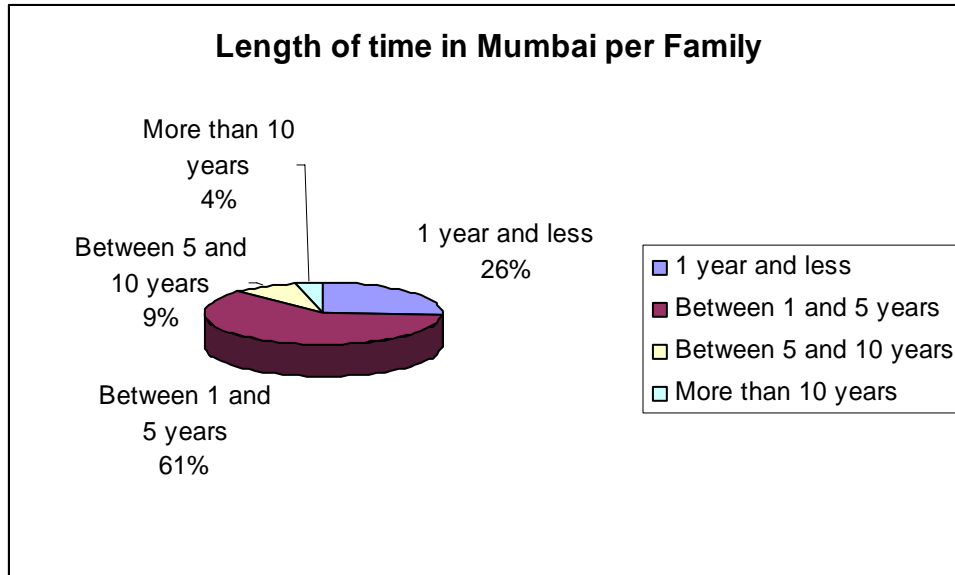
vi. Pay Data for Male Construction Workers

50-65/day	70-85/day	90-110/day	120-150/day
88	72	208	37



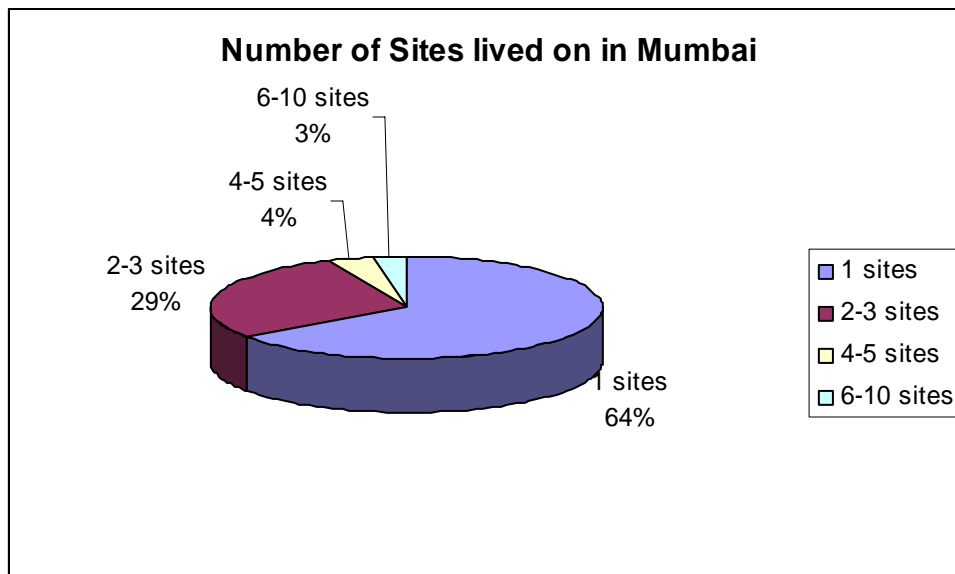
vii. Number of Years in Mumbai (per family)

Less than One Year	Between 1 and 5 years	Between 5 and 10 years	More than 10 years
250	581	87	36



viii. Number of Sites Lived On in Mumbai (per family)

1 site	2-3 sites	4-5 sites	6-10 sites
595	261	33	26



DISCUSSION

i. Mothers Work and Rates of Pay

While the majority of mothers included in the survey were at home, of those that do work, there were a higher number involved in Domestic Work than Construction Work. This could very well be a reflection of the low rates of pay for female construction workers as compared to the salaries that domestic workers receive. The number of women engaged in construction work also varies depending on the type of work currently being conducted at the construction site and whether it is suited for female labourers or not.

As at new sites many children are registered when their parents first arrive on the construction site, it may also be possible that the mother will find work later after their arrival and therefore statistics within families may change the longer that a family remains upon a certain construction site.

There is some variation on whether mothers did or did not undertake work when it is broken down on a state by state basis. Only 15% of women from Andhra Pradesh were housewives while less than 30% of women from Maharashtra, Karnataka and West Bengal were housewives while 70% worked. However 75% of women from Bihar and 81% of women from UP were housewives, which may show a cultural tendency from these two states for women to remain at home.

ii. Number of Children Per Family

The vast majority of families have between 1 and 3 children. There were some larger families recorded of up to 7 children, however there did not appear to be any pattern of family size as related to state of origin since larger size families were recorded for a number of states.

iii. Number of Years in Mumbai

The majority of families recorded had been in Mumbai between 1 and 5 years, with around one third having arrived in Mumbai less than a year ago. Of those who had been in Mumbai for the longest, ten years or more, not all had lived on many sites. With construction sites such as those of the Hiranandani Group, many workers will stay on the same site for 10 to 15 years, as there is continuous work available and a certain amount of stability. *Of qualitative data previously collected by Mumbai Mobile Creches, it can be suggested that some reasons for moving on from a construction site before work is finished can be due to an availability of better wages elsewhere, disagreements with the construction company and the will of the contractors.*

iv. Ages of Children

A majority of children within the Mumbai Mobile Crèches centres are between the ages of 6-10 years, however if the group is split up between 0-6 years and 7 years and above, then 816 are in the 0-6 category while 565 are in the 7 years and above category. This may be because as children become older many of them are sent back to their village of origin to study in school there. However it is also true that since many of the families on construction sites are young families, recently married, their children will tend to be younger rather than older.



RECOMMENDATIONS

While almost 1400 children's data has been compiled, this number is merely a drop in the ocean of the amount of children living on construction sites in Mumbai. It is recommended that further research be carried out. With a larger number of records compiled, patterns may develop which are not currently visible. From an advocacy perspective, it is particularly important to gather data on the pay rates of construction labourers in order to adequately represent their living conditions.