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Design for the taste-makers: System oriented social innovation for improving the living condition of salt pan labourers

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DESIGN FOR THE TASTE MAKERS:

*Systems oriented social
innovation for improving the
living condition of salt pan
labourers.*

By
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The Indian social construct is a **complex structure** comprising of various social, cultural, societal, regional and political elements that are interconnected to each other.

The social construct which was primarily **occupation based** is still effective in certain areas and occupations of India.



One of these occupations is of salt pan labourer. Food being one of the most important basic necessities for survival, there needs no second thought to understand the importance of Salt.

The target of this project is to not only make the profession of salt pan labour a respectful one but also to make this profession recognizable.



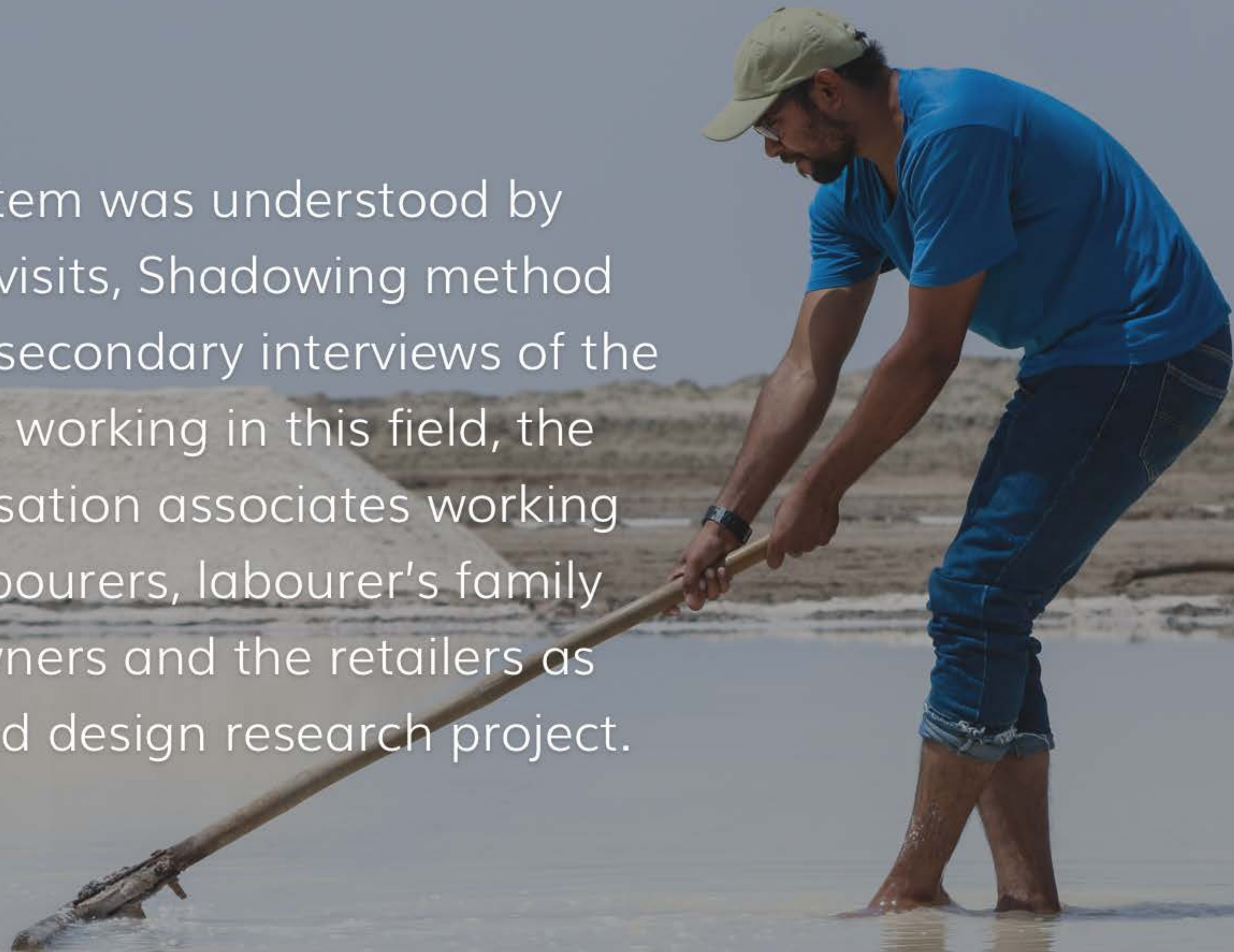
The idea was:


- To **expose** the family of the labourers to the **multidimensional** possibilities to identify and solve a problem
- To **associate with them**, to improve their work and living conditions
- To **motivate** the children of salt pan labourers to explore diverse professions for their means of livelihood
- To build a **co-operative self-sustainable system** that would bring the community together and work towards their social inclusion in and around the community.



Methodology

The entire ecosystem was understood by doing many field visits, Shadowing method and primary and secondary interviews of the academic experts working in this field, the Non-profit organisation associates working in these areas, labourers, labourer's family members, landowners and the retailers as part of this applied design research project.





Co-Design and *participatory design* workshops were done with the available members of the community and NGO workers working for them to **understand the hierarchy** of the problems and the social outlook of the residents.



Exchange tools and methodologies with the NGO workers helping them to build a **social to Interactive workshops** were done with the kids trying to understand their **mental development** and **interest areas**.

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Design tools like **Affinity Mapping**, **Break the Paradigm**, **Method Cards** were used to synthesize the findings to get *insights* to bring about **design interventions**.

Observations and Understandings

Repeated visiting of the salt pan areas, **shadowing** their daily routine activities and living a few days of their life at their home, gave a clear understanding of the different layers of the **conditions prevailing** in the area.

The **caste** and **religious system** coupled with the age-old stereotypes contributed a major role in the present condition of the labourers.

The downtrodden living condition was due to a combination of **socio economic and political reasons.**

Intense interview sessions with experts from social science background, socialites, faculties from labour institutes, social innovators, designers, social reformers, policy makers were done.

This helped in building the topic case study as viewed by different **perspectives** and **understanding** the interlinks between the different factors that caused the **prevailing condition**.

During the **Co-Design workshops** the participants facilitated by the designers could themselves bring out **creative solutions** to the problems faced by them, thereby bringing a **positive outlook** towards their life.

The **involvement of stakeholders and users** in the design process helps in in-time validation of designs and to understand the **satisfaction and influence** of the new design user.

The interactive workshop with the kids

One with formal
education and other
with ones who did not
receive formal
education



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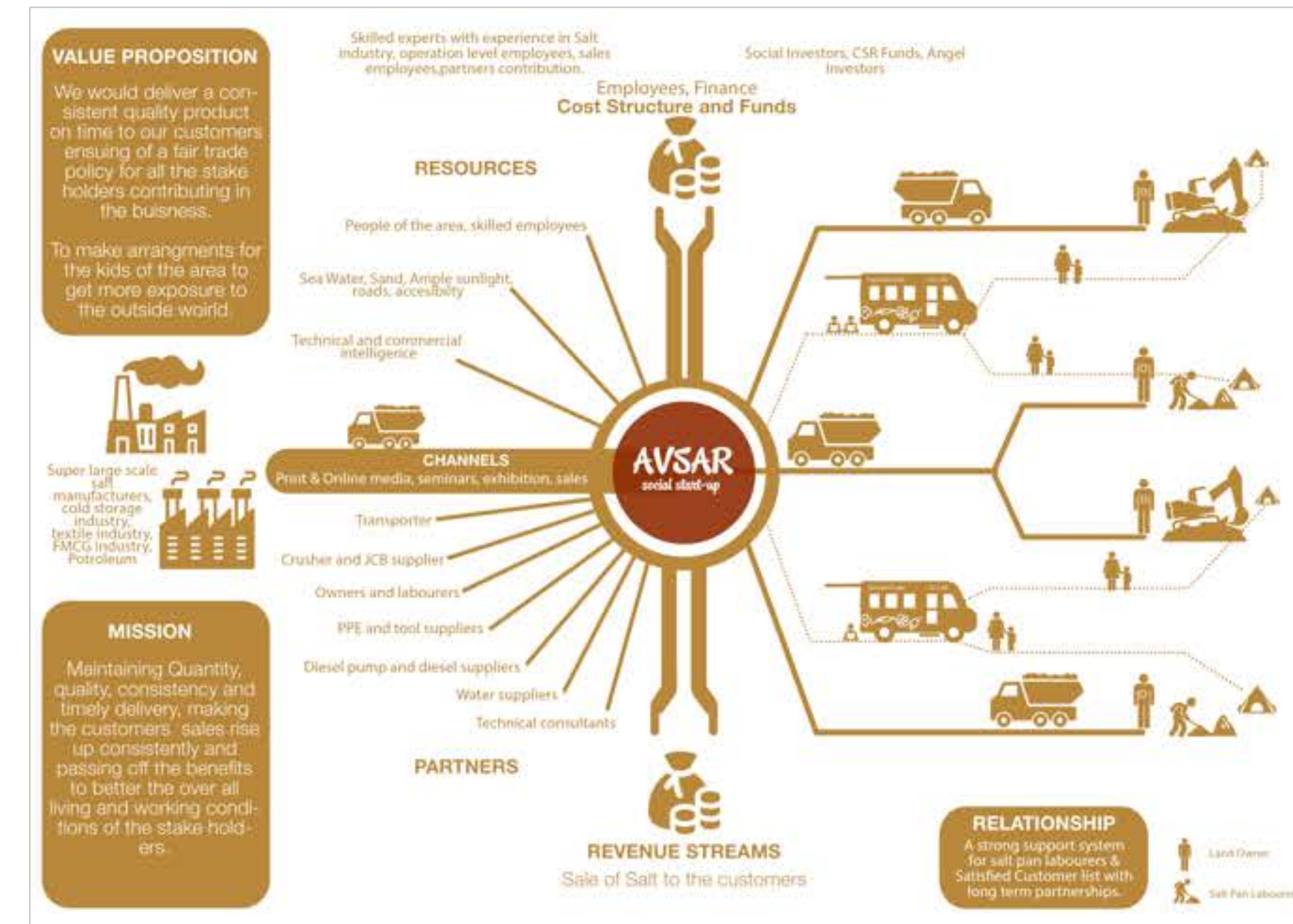
Design Interventions

It was understood that a **single solution** cannot bring a reformatory change in the condition of the salt pan labourer which was an outcome of **socio-political** and **economical aspects** with a historic background.

Different levels and kinds of intervention would be required to bring about an upliftment in the condition of the salt pan labourers

1. Create a new business model:

Avsar, a **sustainable collaborative** start-up between social reformers and the salt pan labour community. Looking at the contribution of small scale salt manufacturers against the large-scale manufacturers in the total quantity of salt production, it is necessary to look at the present scenario not from a **profit-making lens** but from a **sustainable livelihood opportunity lens**.



2. Redesigning the playgroup:

Gamification of the learning process created an **interactive learning** experience for the children helping them to learn healthy living habits and acquire basic knowledge.

A playgroup which would infuse **motivation** in children of different age group would help build an **active individual** with a **positive and responsible** outlook towards community and society.



3. Designing co-creation workshop models for organisations working independently in the social sectors:

Co-design and **participatory workshops** give rich and meaningful insights into the condition and problems faced by the end-users. Methodising the process of organising a workshop and its activities would help the organisations **working at grassroots** levels to improve the efficiency of their efforts.

Scenario Breakdown 4

Activity 1 : Scenario Investigation

Why to Do ?	What to Do ?
<p><i>The observations experienced by the researcher needs to be presented to the participants. It is possible that the participants may consider certain points not of any concerns to them. Where as certain problems might be ignored by the researcher but may be of great concern for the participants. These vital insights needs to be brought out. Also certain problems become part of daily habits and get ignored, which over longer run might lead to a negative effect on body or society. These habits when seen as a third person from outside the frame work are easy to point out. This method is aimed at getting these hidden behavior problems to be self-pointed.</i></p>	<p>An effective method to present the scenario is an illustrated story board. The story board has a complete descriptive story with illustrations of few important scenes that would help in visualizing the flow. The observations grouped after affinity matrix are taken as the base points for making a story. Care needs to be taken to ensure that all the points are included in the story. The story should be easy to read and understand. The participants would investigate for problems in the characters lifestyle and make a note on the post-its.</p>

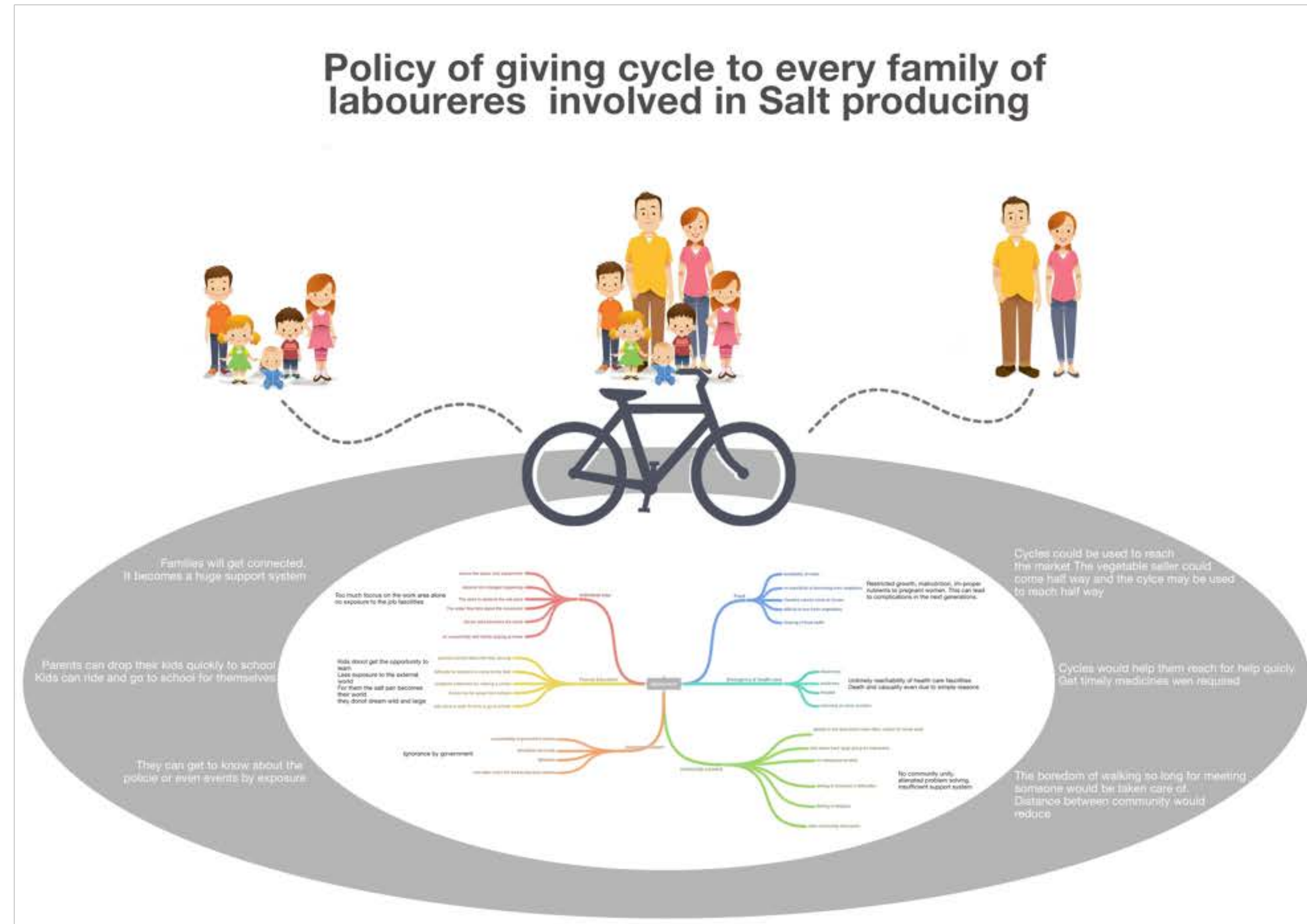
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4. Policy design for the governing authorities:

Suggesting policies that would cater to different needs of the salt pan labour community and which would align to their economic condition to sustain for a longer run.



These would contribute in the complex system to improve the living condition of the labourers working in the salt pan industry, the tastemakers,

“Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all”

- Nelson Mandela



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