

A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF MIGRANT LABOURERS IN KERALA

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Abstract

Kerala is witnessing large inflow of migrant labour from different parts of the country in recent years. Though labourers from states as far as Maharashtra, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa now flock to Kerala, those from the neighbouring state of Tamilnadu outnumber others by a big margin. Higher wages for unskilled labour in the state, large opportunities for employment and shortage of local labour, paradoxically despite the high unemployment rate in the state, led to the massive influx of migrant labour to the state. Poor economic conditions in the native place and high wage rate and better employment opportunities been identified as the main reasons of migration to Kerala. Notwithstanding the improved income level the living condition for most migrant workers is deplorable, most of them live together in either poor rented houses or work sites with one room shared by many, without proper provision of hygienic sanitation. This paper explores the socio-economic conditions of migrants using the secondary sources from various research papers and Census of India report 2001 and 2011 data.

KEYWORDS: Internal migration, employment and unemployment.

Introduction

India has been characterized by (Davis 1951) relatively immobile society. Yet, even by conservative estimates, three out of every ten Indians are internal migrants. And, as we discuss in this paper, there are many more that are uncounted and invisible. Structurally, in the last two decades or so, capital has become hugely more mobile than earlier. The verdict on whether labour too has become more mobile is still not out, although many would argue that population and workers have also become somewhat more mobile than before, both nationally and internationally.

Migration is a form of mobility in which people change their residential location across defined administrative boundaries for a variety of reasons, which may be involuntary or voluntary, or a mixture of both. The decisions on whether to move, how, and where are complex and could involve a variety of actors in different ways.

In recent years, several changes in India are likely to have impacted on the pattern and pace of migration. The pattern of growth in the last two decades has steadily widened the gap between agriculture and non-agriculture and between rural and urban areas, and it has steadily concentrated in a few areas and a few states. The growing spatial inequalities in

economic opportunities must have necessarily also impacted on the pace and pattern of migration. Uneven growth and a growing differential between agriculture and industry is a necessary concomitant of the pattern of development. Migration has historically played a role in reducing the gap in living standards between sectors and areas and in fuelling growth in the more dynamic sectors. The crucial question is whether, and to what extent, migration has been able to play this role in the Indian context.

Since migration is diverse, attention has generally been focused on different groups of internal migrants, and a great deal of analysis has focused on the poorest segments, for whom both the costs and benefits could potentially be the highest. Changes in several factors in recent decades have impacted on migrant labour markets and on migration, but many of these have not been yet studied in detail. There has been a significant improvement in road infrastructure and telecommunications, which has also been accompanied by declining real costs of transport and communication. This has led to improved information flows, potentially reducing information asymmetries and isolation for the migrant, and a reduction both in the costs of migration and in the speed at which migrants can move from origin to destination. Improved infrastructure and reduced transport costs have also made daily commuting to work (sometimes over several hundred kilometres) a viable option to migration.

The pattern of growth under globalization has led to changes in the pattern of demand for workers and consequent changes in labour market structure. First, there has been an overall growth in certain sectors, and this has generated a certain type of demand for workers. Second, the premium which employers place on flexible labour and reducing labour costs appears to them to be higher than the gains that could accrue to them from a dedicated and long-term labour force.

There is, as a result, a ‘race to the bottom’ and an increase in informal employment. Correspondingly, there are also supply-side changes owing to changing social structure and a slow accretion of literacy and education in the workforce.

Further, the impetus to make cities attractive for global finance has also exacerbated the exclusionary nature of urban policies, deterring migration by the poor and increasing its costs.

Finally, social prejudices and political mobilization based on theories of ‘sons of the soil’ not only persist, but may have grown stronger in recent decades, at least in some states, outweighing the advantages which migrants could potentially reap from higher density of social networks.

Internal Migration in India: Conceptual and Data Issues

Data on internal migration in India is principally drawn from two main sources – the decennial population Census and the quennial migration surveys carried out by the National Sample Survey Office. Both these sources provide a wealth of data on migration. The Census defines a migrant as a person residing in a place other than his/her place of birth (Place of Birth definition) or one who has changed his/her usual place of residence to another place (change in usual place of residence or UPR definition). The NSS confines itself to the UPR definition.

In both the surveys, a resident is defined as one who has been staying in a location for six months or more (except newly born infants). The Census collects data on the age and sex of the migrant, reason for migration, its duration, place of origin, and the industry and occupation of the migrant; the results are available up to the district level. The NSS also collects additional data on items such as the consumption expenditure of the migrant's household, educational attainment, activity, industry and occupation of the household at the place of origin, as well as remittances. Since NSS data are available at household and individual levels, it can also be cross-classified and analyzed in detail. But the NSS underestimates population and may not be as reliable a source for aggregate migration as the Census. However, at present, Census results for migration are available only till 2001, whereas NSS results are available till 2007–2008, hence much of our comparison is based on NSS results.

Migration can result in the permanent relocation of an individual or household, which we may term permanent migration. But if individuals migrate leaving their families and land and property in the area of origin, they may do so with the intention of reverting back to the area of origin. This is more likely to happen if the individuals have precarious jobs in the destination areas or if the cost of permanent relocation is high relative to its benefits. In such a case, although individuals may find a toehold in the destination areas, we may term such migration as semi-permanent or long-term circular. If individuals, or groups of individuals, migrate for temporary periods, either moving from place to place or to a fixed destination, such migrants are seasonal or circular migrants. Usually, these three types of migrants have different modal characteristics.

One of the main lacunae of both the Census and NSS surveys is their failure to adequately capture seasonal and/or short-term circular migration, and their coverage is best for permanent migrants and reasonably adequate for semi-permanent migrants. However, while the Census confines itself to only one definition of a migrant, the NSS has tried to collect information on migration flows from different perspectives. The 64th Round of the NSS, which is the recent and most comprehensive round on migration, collects data on,

- (i) migrants using the UPR (usual place of residence) approach;
- (ii) migrant households;
- (iii) out-migrating individuals;
- (iv) seasonal or short-duration migrants, that is, those who have migrated out for a period of more than one month but not exceeding six months, for development; and
- (v) return migrants. However, except in the case of UPR migrants, strictly comparable estimates are not available from the earlier rounds.

Despite improvement in coverage of seasonal/circular migrants, NSS estimates are still inadequate for such migrants for two major reasons. First, in many cases, the seasonal/circular migration cycle is longer than six months. Second, quite often, entire households and not individuals participate in seasonal migration. In order to cover this lacuna, the author relies on field studies, which also bring out many other important dimensions of migration that are not captured by the macro data.

In section 3, which follows, the analysis is confined to the first two types of migrants, and it is principally based on the Census and NSS.

3. Migration: Trends and Pattern

3.1 Magnitude of migration

In 2001, the Census reported 309 million internal migrants. Of these migrants, 70.7 per cent were women. Two thirds of the migrants (67.2 per cent) were rural and only 32.8 per cent urban. Male migrants were relatively more numerous in the urban stream (53.1 per cent of male migrants were urban compared with only 24.4 per cent of female migrants) and in more distant streams. The percentage of male migrants in intra-district, inter-district and inter-state migration was 52.2 per cent, 26.7 per cent and 21.1 per cent, respectively, compared with 66.9 per cent, 23 per cent and 10.1 per cent, respectively, for female migrants in these three streams.

The NSS estimates 326 million migrants in 2007–2008 (28.5 per cent of the population). It gives a picture similar to the Census in terms of female predominance, and the relatively higher proportion of male migrants in the urban stream and with increasing distance. However, the trends in migration emerging from these two sources give a slightly different picture.

According to the Census (Table 1), the migration rate for all segments peaked in 1981 to 30.3 per cent, declined in 1991 to 27 per cent, and increased to 30.1 per cent in 2001. Between 1981 and 1991, the total number of migrants grew by only 12 per cent, but between 1991 and 2001, the migrant stock increased by 37 per cent.

Table:1 Migrant Rate

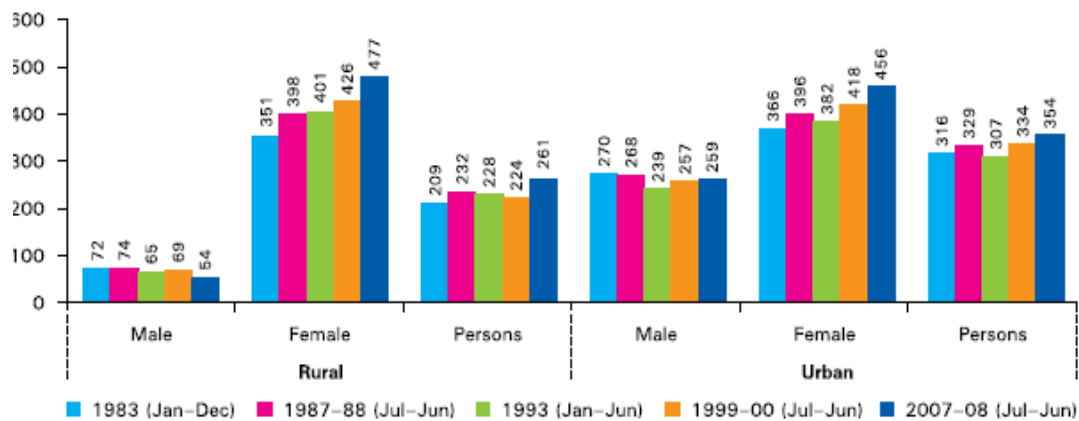
Census Year	Place of Resident	No. of Migrants			Migrant Rate		
		Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female
1981	Total	201607061	59235306	142371755	30.3	17.2	44.3
	Rural	143583222	31354273	112228949	28.3	12.1	45.3
	Urban	58023839	27881033	30142806	36.8	33.2	40.8
1991	Total	225887846	61134303	164753543	27.0	14.1	40.9
	Rural	159190095	31196064	127994031	25.6	9.8	42.5
	Urban	66697751	29938239	36759512	31.0	26.3	36.2

2001	Total	309385525	90677712	218707813	30.1	17.0	44.1
	Rural	207773661	42528896	165244765	28.0	11.1	45.8
	Urban	101611864	48148816	53463048	35.5	32.0	39.4

Note: The Migration figures for 1981 exclude Assam and the 1991 figures exclude J&K

However, the successive rounds of the NSS (except the 49th Round, which was also less representative and a half year round) show increasing total migration rates since 1983. But, as shown in Figure 1, the NSS findings are that these trends are mainly due to rising female migration rates both in rural and urban areas.

Table 1: Number of migrants and migration rate, 1981–2001



Both the Census and NSS confirm an increase in long-distance (inter-state) migration in recent years. Census results show that inter-state migrants as a proportion of total migrants declined marginally from 12.02 per cent in 1981 to 11.82 per cent in 1991 and then increased to 13.31 per cent in 2001 (Table 3).

The NSSO specifically shows an increase in inter-state migration between 1999–2000 and 2007–2008 in the two urban streams; in the rural-urban stream, the percentage of inter-state migrants increased from 19.6 per cent to 25.2 per cent; in the urban-urban stream, inter-state migration increased from 19.9 per cent to 22.9 per cent (NSSO Report No-533, Statement 4.11).

Table 3: Percentage distribution of internal migrants in India by different distance categories, 1981–2001

Census Year	1981	1991	2001
Intra-District	64.96	62.14	62.57
Inter-District	23.02	26.05	24.12
Inter-State	12.02	11.82	13.31

Source: Census of India, 1981, 1991, and 2001, Table D-2.

3.3 Stated reason for Migration

As we have noted above, internal migration figures for India show that migration is dominated by female migration. This is mainly due to the widely prevalent social custom of exogamous marriages. Both the Census and the NSS record this as the first reason for migration given by respondents. Since the NSS gives an elaborate set of 18 reasons, which can further be clubbed into broader categories, we have discussed the NSS results below.

Table 4 compares the stated reasons for migration for 1993, 1999–2000 and 2007–2008. Marriage-related migration predominates in both rural and urban migrants. Among women, 91.3 per cent in rural areas and 60.8 per cent in urban areas (83.9 per cent totally) gave marriage as the reason for migration in 2007–2008.

Marriage-related migration has increased as a percentage of female migrants, over the successive surveys. Among all (male+female) migrants, marriage-related migration of women alone constitutes 68.5 per cent of all migration. For males, migration for economic reasons has been cited as the most important reason for migration. In 2007–2008, 28.5 per cent of rural male migrants and a majority – 55.7 per cent – of urban male migrants gave economic reasons for migration. Joining one's parents and/or the earning member of the family is the second most important reason for migration for both male and female migrants in both urban and rural areas. Eight per cent of rural male migrants also cite involuntary reasons for their (forced) migration.

Table 4 shows that among urban male migrants, economic reasons for migration have become more important in recent years. In 1992–1993, 41.5 per cent urban male migrants cited economic reasons for migration. But this figure increased to 51.9 per cent in 1999–2000 and further to 55.7 per cent in 2007–2008.

Both the census and the NSS show an increase in employment-related migration rates. The Census shows an increase in these rates over 1991–2001, although the figures are still less than the rates in 1981 (Figure 2). On the other hand, the NSS shows a steady increase in these rates but only for urban male migrants. In 1993, 12.73 per cent of the urban population consisted of people migrating to and within urban areas for economic reasons. This increased to 13.17 per cent in 1999–2000 and further to 14.36 per cent in 2007–2008.

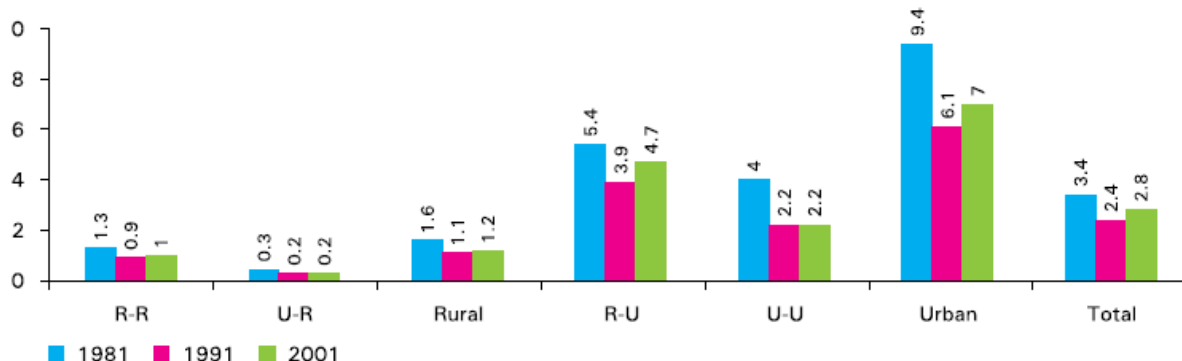
The overwhelming preponderance of marriage-related migration skews results on trends and patterns in certain directions. Excluding marriage-related migration, internal migration in India is comparatively more employment oriented, male oriented and long distance. A re-tabulation of the NSS 2007–2008 migration data without marriage-related migration shows that males form 59.1 per cent of migrants, while females formed 40.9 per cent of migrants. Of the male migrants, 49.55 per cent were employment oriented, while 5.1 per cent of the female migrants were employment oriented.

Table 4: Distribution (per 1000) of migrants by reason for migration during 1993, 1999–2000 and 2007–2008, all India

Reason for migration 1	Migrated in			
	Rural areas		Urban areas	
	Male 2	Female 3	Male 4	Female 5
49th round (1993)				
Employment related reason	477	83	415	49
Studies	41	11	180	70
Marriage	23	616	9	317
Movement of parents/earning member	208	237	283	495
Other reasons (incl.n.r)	251	53	113	69
All	1000	1000	1000	1000
55th round (1999–2000)				
Employment related reason	303	10	519	30
Studies	53	4	62	13
Marriage	94	888	16	585
Movement of parents/earning member	260	63	270	310
Other reasons (incl.n.r)	290	35	133	62
All	1000	1000	1000	1000
64th round (2007–2008)				
Employment related reason	286	7	557	27
Studies	107	5	68	22
Marriage	94	912	14	608
Movement of parents/earning member	221	44	252	294
Other reasons (incl.n.r)	292	32	109	49
All	1000	1000	1000	1000

Source: Statement-4.13, Report No. 533 (Migration in India), 2007–2008, NSSO.

Figure 2: Total Census based employment-related migration rates



3.4 Inter-state migration and its pattern

Inter-state migration trends, estimated from the NSS 2007–2008 survey show that, in general, gross in-migration rates are higher in high-income states (NSS Report 533, Statement 6.10.) such as Haryana (10.24 per cent), Punjab (7.79 per cent), Maharashtra (5.97 per cent), Gujarat (4.20 per cent), Karnataka (4.11 per cent), and West Bengal. States that have undergone reorganization (including Punjab and Haryana) and also Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand show high rates of inter-state in-migration.

Gross out-migration (both inter-state and international) are high for some high- and middle-income states (Kerala, 8.01 per cent; Punjab, 6.52 per cent; Haryana, 6.72 per cent) along with low-income states (Uttarakhand, 7.81 per cent; Bihar, 6.37 per cent; Uttar Pradesh, 4.99 per cent; Rajasthan, 3.96 per cent; Jharkhand, 3.37 per cent). As a result, the correlation between gross out-migration rates and per capita NSDP (Net State Domestic Product) is also low, although positive.

Further disaggregating between out-migration to other states and migration abroad, the findings show that international out-migration rates are highest in Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Inter-state out-migration rates are the highest for Uttarakhand and Rajasthan. The correlation between the state's per capita income and out-migration rates between the former is lower (0.27) than the latter (0.40), but both continue to be positive on account of high rates of out-migration in some high – and middle-income states (for example, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab).

Net inter-state in-migration rates are the highest for Maharashtra (4.1 per cent), followed by Uttarakhand, Haryana and Chhattisgarh. The correlation between these rates and per capita NSDP is high (0.77). The same holds for net in-migration rates. The correlation between the latter and per capita NSDP is also high (0.76).

Further analysis is needed to examine the education and skill levels, and nature of employment, of the inter-state migrants across different categories of states. But these results show that while the general trend is towards higher out-migration by low-income states and in-migration into developed states (after taking cognizance of the administrative division of three states in 2000), many of the middle- and high income states also have high out-migration rates and the net inter-state in-migration rates are quite low, with the percentage of inter-state migrants in the highest net in-migrating state also being less than five.

Migrants in Kerala:

Kerala is witnessing large inflow of migrant labour from different parts of the country in the recent years. Though labourers from states as far as West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa now flock to Kerala, those from Tamil Nadu outnumber others by a big margin. Within the state, Ernakulam accounts for the largest number of migrants. While a relatively small section of the migrants from other states are professionals and skilled workers, large majority of them are unskilled or semi skilled workers engaged in construction, road works and pipe laying etc. Of late the migrants have also entered agriculture, labour intensive sub sectors of industry and many services. The shortage of local labour, higher wages for unskilled labour in the state and opportunities for employment led to the massive influx of migrant labour to the state. It is interesting to note that while many Malayalees migrate to the ‘Gulf’ countries (MiddleEast) both for skilled and unskilled work, many of the unskilled labourers from other parts of the country consider Kerala as their ‘Gulf’. With signs of rapid growth of state’s economy and the increase in activities particularly in the infrastructure and construction sectors, the in-migration is expected to grow faster in the coming years.

Migrants and Vulnerability:

The additional focus of this paper is on the strengthening of social protection measures for internal migrants in India. The Population Census of India estimates that there were 309 million internal migrants in India in 2001. According to the NSS estimates of 2007–2008, the number of internal migrants was 326 million (census-adjusted figures). These included 118 million urban migrants and 208 million rural migrants.

These migrants changed their location (‘Usual Place of Residence’) at various times in the past and for various locations. However, the Census and the NSS undercount poorer migrants in the informal sector, and short-duration seasonal and circulatory migrants. Being among the most vulnerable sections of the working poor, the semi grants and their families require special focus. Migrants differ from non-migrants in that they have experienced mobility and change in location. It remains to be established whether this places them in a specially disadvantaged position. This is clearly not always the case.

In the overview paper to this conference, this author has tried to dispel the notion that all migrants are vulnerable and has shown (and this is also borne out by international experience) that internal migration is possibly increasingly selective towards those with high skills, education, or other resource endowments. These migrants face few difficulties, if at all any, and, that too, temporary difficulties as a result of migration. But this is not true for migrants who have meager means and networks and who are at the lower end of the labour market.

Among these migrants we further distinguish between semi-permanent migrants, or long-term circular migrants, and seasonal or short-term circular migrants. *Semi-permanent or long-term circular migrants* are usually rural-urban migrants, although in industries like quarrying, agriculture and rice mills, they could also be rural-rural migrants. These migrants enter the labour market through contractors, or on their own, or through networks. In the urban areas, they are principally employed in the informal sector as casual or ‘regular’ wage workers, but gradually they could be self-employed, using hired or owned assets, or take up informal employment in the organized sector. We estimate that nearly *half the rural-urban migrants are in the bottom six consumption deciles and work mainly as casual wage*

employed or as self-employed in the informal sector. The characteristics of these migrants, described by us in the Overview paper, include poor access to housing and basic amenities, poorer entitlements, poor working conditions and labour market discrimination.

Unemployment risks are also lower when recruitment happens through middlemen. In many cases, these middlemen are known to the job seekers and may belong to the source area. In many cases, migrants move to the destination areas on their own interest. This generally happens where ‘bridgeheads’ have been established. Among women migrants, outsourced petty manufacturing and domestic household services provide two large avenues of employment. Jobs in the urban informal sector are highly segmented based along lines of caste, religion and kinship (Gupta and Mitra 2002).

These migrants face special handicaps for the following reasons.ⁱ

- They are incorporated into the labour market in less favourable ways than non-migrants. This could be because of debt-interlocking, involvement in sub-contracting chains, greater isolation, fragmentation, and segmentation. This could lead to poorer working conditions, lower wages, exploitation, harassment, and other aspects of labour market discrimination.
- They have much weaker social networks than non-migrants, although these are usually the most important resource that they do have.
- Poor rural-urban migrants face formidable difficulties in establishing claims and entitlements and, in particular, in acquiring shelter.

Seasonal or short-duration migrants return to their place of origin after brief periods, at the most, after a few months. They resume migration, but not necessarily to same workplace or destination. As shown in the Overview paper, seasonal migrants are usually poorer, more likely to belong to the Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribes, and a large proportion work in seasonal industries such as agriculture, manufacture of bricks, quarrying, construction and so on. Construction, manufacturing and agriculture employ the largest percentage of seasonal migrants. But there are a large number of other industries which employ large numbers of seasonal migrants. The total number of such migrants is likely to be close to 40 million.

Seasonal migrants are much more likely to enter the migrant labour market through Contractor/middlemen from whom they have taken an advance and are therefore more likely to be involved in debt-interlocked migration cycles. These migrants participate in very diverse migration streams. Migration could take place for a few days or for a few months each time. They could participate in several short-migration cycles or just one in a year. Migrants could migrate to diverse locations, relatively distant or close, rural or urban. The migration streams could consist of men only, women only, or men and women with children and even the elderlyⁱⁱ. Each of the more vulnerable participants in migration (women, children and the elderly) requires special social protection measures, both when they migrate and when they are left behind. Several million children migrate alone or with their parents to harsh environments, are deprived of developmental opportunities, and get involved in child labour (Smita 2007, 2008, and the Overview paper). These children require focused social protection measures to protect their health, prevent exploitation, and to provide education.

The constraints faced by seasonal migrants in accessing social protection measures are more severe:

- Their conditions of work severely constrain their ability to access social protection.
- They find it much more difficult to establish their bonafide and identity in the destination areas. Apart from that, their entitlements and claims even in their areas of origin are much weaker.
- It is also much harder to provide agencies to tailor schemes and programmes to suit the requirements of the diverse streams of migrants and the individuals (women, children and elderly) within the migrant streams.

Emerging Pattern of Growth, Challenges for Migration and Migration Policy:

As discussed above, the recent period of rapid growth in India has increased the demand for both skilled and unskilled workers in the areas of concentrated growth and agglomeration. For over a decade and a half, elements of regional policy were abandoned, and the state deliberately encouraged and supported a strategy of growth concentration, which in turn encouraged migration. Simultaneously, there has been a shift in labour regimes towards greater formalization and flexibilization, captured in detail in the two reports of the NCEUS (2007, 2009). As shown in this paper, employment-related migration has definitely increased. Further, while documented migration flows show that migration propensity is higher among the better off and the more skilled, this trend is only part of the story; there has been an increase in the numbers of poor labour migrants in numerous sectors constituting the most flexible and poorly remunerated sections of labour.

In the coming years, despite policies that may result in some reduction in distress migration, we expect total migration to increase. This will call for policies and approaches to reduce regional and sectoral balances in development, appropriate policies for recipient areas, policies to support seasonal migrants and so on. The development policy discourse in India still has not grappled with the extent to which the nature of migration in India impacts on the key developmental goals adopted by the country as well as the international community in several areas including health, education, and poverty alleviation. This is reflected in the lack of any systematic policy framework for internal labour migrants.

The National Commission for Rural Labour had first focused on a policy agenda for migration. Recently, the NCEUS advocated a systematic approach to labour migration within the framework of policies and programmes for informal workers. First, the NCEUS proposed a comprehensive legislation for informal workers, covering minimum labour standards and issues specific to migrant labour. Second, the NCEUS proposed a universal minimum social security package for informal workers that incorporated all three elements crucial for extending the coverage to migrant workers, viz., complete portability in terms of registration, payment of premium (where applicable), and receipt of benefits. The NCEUS recommended that grass roots organizations be involved in the registration of workers and that the workers be issued a family smart security ID card, which could be simultaneously utilized by the migrant and her/his family members. Other recommendations of the NCEUS included livelihood promotion, addressing the regulatory framework in urban areas, and an approach to agricultural and rural development.

The Eleventh Five Year Plan did consider issues related to migration mainly in the rural-urban context and proposed some strategies. It proposed a two-pronged approach to deal with the expected rapid migration of rural population towards urban centres. First, up gradation in the quality of infrastructure in existing cities to provide improved municipal services to larger numbers of people and, second is development of new suburban townships as satellites/counter-magnets to reduce/redistribute the influx of population. JNNURM is a key mission to achieve these two goals through the integrated development of the cities in which long-term vision for the development of the cities has been proposed. The development of small and medium Industries such as village and cottage industries, handlooms, handicrafts and food processing and agro-industries were also considered important in reducing rural-urban migration. PURA (Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas) is the other programme which has been promoted by the government to check the rural urban migrationⁱⁱⁱ.

Civil society organizations have been involved in various states in working with urban and rural migrants. We have reviewed elsewhere the role and strategy of some of these organizations (Srivastava and Sasikumar 2005; Srivastava and Dasgupta 2010). Some of the organizations are involved with general migrants' support and protection, while others are involved with migrants' entitlement in specific sectors. Their experiences provide a very useful context in which broader policies and programmes can be considered.

UNESCO - UNICEF National Workshop on Internal Migration and Human Development in India | Internal Migration in India In recent years, they have been collectively advocating an approach towards migration by the government. Recently, a network of such organizations under the banner of *Wada Na Todo* Campaign (Don't Break Your Promises Campaign) presented an analysis and approach towards migration to the Planning Commission for the formulation of the Twelfth Five Year Plan. The main focus of the campaign has been on registration and identity cards.

The National Coalition of Organizations for Security of Migrant Workers is a coalition which unites all the NGOs that are working for the social and economic issues of migrants. The coalition has raised several issues in relation to migration and has advocated the building of a national-level policy on migrants that addresses the concerns of migrant workers in a comprehensive fashion. It has emphasized the coverage and effective implementation of social security provisions for the migrants, creation of a data base of migrant workers at panchayat level/urban local bodies, and changes in laws covering migrant workers.

Given the importance of the issues involved we have been advocating the formulation of a migration policy for India which could focus on the following issues:

- **Inclusive urban development:** The Constitution of India (under Article 19, which is a fundamental right of citizens) gives the right to citizens to travel, reside and carry out any trade, profession or business in any part of the country.
- **A regional development policy and pro-poor development in backward areas:** In order to mitigate migration under very adverse circumstances, a major set of policy initiatives has to aim for a more vigorous pro-poor development strategy in the backward areas that can strengthen the livelihood base in these areas.

- **Employment and food security, and credit support for vulnerable groups:** Providing a livelihood floor will also obviate the need for the poor to undertake distress migration. The MGNREGA has presently emerged as a major entitlement-based initiative in this regard. It not only provides employment in lean periods, but also has several important labour market impacts.
- **Ensuring basic entitlements and social security:** A major policy focus has to be on ensuring that migrant households have citizenship rights in the destination areas and are able to access basic facilities, benefits of public programmes, and social security schemes meant for poor households.
- **Implementing the Right to Education (RTE) for migrant(s') children:** A special focus under the Act has to be to ensure access of migrant labourers' children to schooling (and that they are not pushed into labour).
- **Improving the information base and bargaining strength of migrant workers:** Being economically extremely vulnerable, poor migrant workers lack of bargaining strength.
- **Role of Panchayats:** Panchayats should emerge as the focus of the resource pool for migrant workers residing in their area.
- **Enforcement of labour laws and enactment of a comprehensive law:** At the work places, stricter enforcement of existing labour laws, including the Interstate migrant act. The comprehensive Unorganized Sector Workers Act proposed by the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector sets a floor in terms of working condition and wages for all unorganized workers and covers many issues that are potentially beneficial to migrant workers. There should be a vigorous debate on the proposed Act and how it can meet the requirements of migrant workers.

Challenges of Up-Scaling Creative Practices on Migration:

A good amount of work has also been built up, demonstrating the possible solutions to various risks that the community faces, solutions that are also. There are, however, some serious impediments to scaling up of the solutions on migration. These bottlenecks need be cleared for framing an effective response to the phenomenon.

- *Establishing Numbers*
- *Ensuring Portability of Entitlements*
- *Lack of suitable social security mechanisms*
- *Absence of quick-response legal redressal mechanisms*
- *Urban development discourse heavily biased towards slum development*
- *Resource scarcity faced by labour departments*

Conclusion:

Internal migration in India is large and diverse. In a historical sense, migration goes hand in hand with growth and development. But, it can have both costs and benefits for households and individuals as well as economies and societies. Migration needs to be facilitated through a proper development strategy and a coherent policy, so that its benefits can be maximized at

all levels. A growth strategy which transfers large costs of subsistence to the poorer migrants themselves will ultimately defeat the objectives of both growth and development. Our overview of internal migration in India indicates that this is presently the case.

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ⁱSabates-Wheeler and Waites (2003) have adopted a different framework for analysing migrant vulnerability. They distinguish vulnerabilities at three stages (origin, transit, and destination) and between three types (spatial-environmental, socio-political and socio-cultural). This paper does not deal with vulnerabilities during transit and adopts a different framework for analyzing migrant vulnerabilities, following its entitlement or rights-based approach.

ⁱⁱ A review of the diversity of seasonal migration and involvement of these migrants in the labour market, see Srivastava (1998), Srivastava and Sasikumar (2005), Deshingkar and Akter (2009) and the Overview paper to this conference by the author.

ⁱⁱⁱThe Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance, in its report, expressed the view that, 'It is also not clear as to whether possession of aadhaar number would be made mandatory in future for availing of benefits and services. Even if the aadhaar number links entitlements to targeted beneficiaries, it may not ensure that beneficiaries have been correctly identified. Thus, the present problem of proper identification would persist' (p. 32).

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