



Need for an Internal migration policy

What is the issue?

\n\n

Internal migration in India is rising in recent times and there is a demand for framing a policy in this regard.

\n\n

What are the factors driving internal migration?

\n\n

\n

- Internal migration can be driven by push and/or pull factors.

\n

- In India, over the recent decades, agrarian distress (a push factor) and an increase in better-paying jobs in urban areas (a pull factor) have been drivers of internal migration.

\n

- Also, distress due to unemployment or underemployment in agriculture, natural calamities, and input/output market imperfections serves as the contributing factors.

\n

- Data show that **employment-seeking** is the principal reason for migration in regions without conflict.

\n

\n\n

What are the problems faced by internal migrants?

\n\n

\n

- **Informal growth** - A migrant's lack of skills presents a major hindrance in entering the labour market at the destination.

\n

- Further, the modern formal urban sector has often not been able to absorb the large number of rural workers entering the urban labour market.
\n
- This has led to the growth of the '**urban informal**' economy, which is marked by high poverty and vulnerabilities.
\n
- The 'urban informal' economy is wrongly understood in countries such as India as a transient phenomenon, even though it has expanded over the years and accounts for the bulk of urban employment.
\n
- **Jobs** - Most jobs in the urban informal sector pay poorly and involve self-employed workers who turn to petty production because of their inability to find wage labour.
\n
- There are also various forms of discrimination which do not allow migrants to graduate to better-paying jobs.
\n
- Migrant workers earn only two-thirds of what is earned by non-migrant workers.
\n
- **Cost of living** - Further, they have to incur a large cost of migration which includes the 'search cost' and the hazard of being cheated.
\n
- Often these costs escalate as they are outside the state-provided health care and education system.
\n
- This forces them to borrow from employers in order to meet these expenses.
\n
- However, frequent borrowing forces them to sell their assets towards repayment of loans.
\n
- **Source Factor** - Employment opportunities, the levels of income earned, and the working conditions in destination areas are determined by the migrant's household's social location in his or her village.
\n
- The division of the labour market by occupation, geography or industry (labour market segmentation), even within the urban informal labour market, confines migrants to the lower end.
\n
- Also, such segmentation reinforces differences in social identity, and new forms of discrimination emerge in these sites.
\n

What are the benefits associated with migration?

\n\n

- \n
- Internal migration has resulted in the increased well-being of households, especially for people with higher skills, social connections and assets.
- \n
- Migrants belonging to lower castes and tribes have also brought in enough income to improve the economic condition of their households in rural areas and lift them out of poverty.
- \n
- **Circular migration** or repeat migration is the temporary and usually repetitive movement of a migrant worker between home and host areas, typically for the purpose of employment.
- \n
- Data show that a circular migrant's earnings account for a higher proportion of household income among the lower castes and tribes.
- \n
- This has helped to improve the creditworthiness of the family members left behind where they can now obtain loans more easily.
- \n
- Thus, there exists a need to scale-up interventions aimed at enhancing these benefits from circular or temporary migration.
- \n
- Also, short-term migration to urban areas is a part of a long-term economic strategy of the rural households to improve their rural livelihoods.
- \n
- Hence, local interventions by NGOs and private entrepreneurs need to consider cultural dimensions reinforced by caste hierarchies and social consequences while targeting migrants.
- \n

\n\n

Why there is need for a national policy?

\n\n

- \n
- The need for a national policy towards internal migration is underscored by the fact that less than 20% of urban migrants had prearranged jobs.
- \n
- Nearly two-thirds managed to find jobs within a week of their entry into the city.
- \n
- The probability of moving to an urban area with a prearranged job increases

with an increase in education levels.

\n

- Access to information on employment availability before migrating along with social networks tend to reduce the period of unemployment significantly.

\n

- Social networks in the source region not only provide migrants with information on employment opportunities, but are also critical as social capital in that they provide a degree of trust.

\n

- While migrants interact with each other based on ethnic ties, such ties dissipate when they interact with urban elites to secure employment.

\n

- The bulk of policy interventions for the migrants are aimed at providing financial services and directed towards poverty reduction.

\n

- However, there is a dearth of direct interventions targeted and focussed on regions.

\n

- Hence, a national policy should aim at reducing distress-induced migration on one hand and address conditions of work, terms of employment and access to basic necessities on the other.

\n

\n\n

What should a national policy contain?

\n\n

\n

- It should facilitate the **integration** of migrants into the local urban fabric, and building city plans with a regular migration forecast assumed.

\n

- Lowering the cost of migration, along with eliminating discrimination against migrants, while protecting their rights will help raise development across the board.

\n

- Delhi is a classic example which has changed its focus from limiting urban migration to revitalising its nearby cities such as Meerut in building transport links and connectivity to accommodate migrants.

\n

- It should distinguish between the interventions aimed at 'migrants for survival' and 'migrants for employment'.

\n

- It should also distinguish between individual and household migrants,

because household migration necessitates access to infrastructure such as housing, sanitation and health care more than individual migration does.

\n

- It should provide continued dynamic interventions over long periods of time for seasonal migrants, instead of single-point static interventions.

\n

- It should provide more space to local bodies and NGOs which bring about structural changes in local regions.

\n

- It should focus on measures enhancing skill development would enable easier entry into the labour market.

\n

- Skill development can be supported by market-led interventions such as microfinance initiatives, which help in tackling seasonality of incomes.

\n

- It should consider the push factors, which vary across regions, and understand the heterogeneity of migrants.

\n

- Remittances from migrants are increasingly becoming the lifeline of rural households.

\n

- Hence, the policy should improve financial infrastructure to enable the smooth flow of remittances and their effective use require more attention from India's growing financial sector.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n



IAS PARLIAMENT

Information is Empowering

A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative