

## 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.
- 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.
- Also, distress due to unemployment or underemployment in agriculture, natural calamities, and input/output market imperfections serves as the contributing factors.
- 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.
- Further, the modern formal urban sector has often not been able to absorb the large number of rural workers entering the urban labour market.
- This has led to the growth of the '**urban informal**' economy, which is

\n

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

\n\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.
- While migrants interact with each other based on ethnic ties, such ties dissipate when they interact with urban elites to secure employment.
- The bulk of policy interventions for the migrants are aimed at providing financial services and directed towards poverty reduction.
- However, there is a dearth of direct interventions targeted and focussed on regions.
- 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.
- Lowering the cost of migration, along with eliminating discrimination against migrants, while protecting their rights will help raise development across the board.
- 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.
- It should distinguish between the interventions aimed at 'migrants for survival' and 'migrants for employment'.
- 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.
- It should provide continued dynamic interventions over long periods of time

\n

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

