



Internal Migration and Human Development

Key Message

Internal migration can expand people's freedoms and capabilities and make substantial contributions to human development in terms of improved incomes, education and health. Although migration can potentially benefit migrants and their families, there are also heavy costs and risks that compromise the potentially positive outcomes of migration.

Challenges

- Internal migrants play a major role in sustaining and building India's economy, but their contribution remains unrecognized because of lack of data. Short-term migrants, including seasonal/ circular migrants, are inadequately captured in macro datasets such as the Census and National Sample Survey Organisation.
- Both government and employers have failed to facilitate migration through appropriate labour and social policies or investment in infrastructure and basic needs for migrants.
- Migration imposes heavy costs on human development through poor labour arrangements and working conditions of migrants in the informal economy and through obstacles in their access to shelter, education, health care and food.
- Informal social networks (for example, friends, neighbours, members of the same caste group and co-villagers) help migrants in providing access to the urban job market in the initial

stages, but do not have any positive effect on upward mobility (Mitra 2011).

- There is lack of institutional and governance support to facilitate safe transfer of remittances of migrants to their left-behind families.
- Other positive impacts of migration remain unrecognized. Migration may provide an opportunity to escape caste divisions and restrictive social norms and to work with dignity and freedom at the destination (Deshingkar and Akter 2009). Women left behind as a consequence of migration of male members enjoy empowerment effects, with increased interaction in society, including their participation as workers and decision makers of households. Migrants bring back to the origin a variety of skills, innovations and knowledge, known as 'social remittances', including change in tastes, perceptions and attitudes (for example, non-acceptance of poor employment conditions, low wages and semi-feudal labour relationships, and improved knowledge and awareness about workers rights) (UNESCO-UNICEF 2012b).

Facts and Figures

- Migrants do not constitute a homogeneous category, and migrants are segmented along gender, class, ethnicity, language and religion. Women and children remain among the most invisible and vulnerable groups among migrants.

- Seasonal migration in search of livelihood is undertaken by socially deprived groups such as the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), who are asset-poor and face resource and livelihood deficits (Deshingkar and Akter 2009).
- Evidence reveals that migration rates are high among both the highly educated and the least educated, with a high proportion of illiterates among seasonal migrants (UNESCO-UNICEF 2012b).
- Estimates of the domestic remittance market were roughly \$10 billion in 2007–2008 (Tumbe 2011).
- Evidence reveals that with rising incomes, migrant remittances can encourage investment in human capital formation, particularly increased expenditure on health, and also to some extent education (UNESCO-UNICEF 2012b).
- The intensity of migration could increase in the future as a response to economic crises, political instability and climate change impacts (UNESCO-UNICEF 2012b).
- Evaluate and assess sector-wise contribution of migrants in different industries of the economy, including their contribution to GDP.
- Design differentiated social strategies for mainstreaming migrants in development policies and programmes that are based on age, gender, social category and distance.
- Sensitize and train policymakers, local government officials, NGOs, employers and financial institutions regarding obstacles in accessing public services for migrants.

Adopt innovations in institutions and service delivery for migrants

- Scale up outreach of customized services for migrants.¹
- Establish a tracking database to monitor outcomes of migrants in centrally sponsored health, education and labour market programmes.
- Set up walk-in resource centres for migrants, which provide legal counselling and information on grievance handling and dispute resolution mechanisms (for example, Aajeevika Bureau and PEPUS).
- Conduct targeted interventions for health protection that address health issues of high-risk migrant populations (for example, NACO strategy on HIV Intervention for Migrants and Red Ribbon Express trains).
- Facilitate secure transfer of remittances of migrants, through mobile banking and banking correspondents, while incorporating flexibility in bank procedures (such as modification of KYC norms, no-frills accounts and special banking hours).

Policy Recommendations

Develop a protective and promotive migrant-sensitive policy framework

- Prioritize implementation of existing labour laws including the Minimum Wages Act (1948), Payment of Wages Act (1936), Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act (1970), Equal Remuneration Act (1976), Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act (1976), Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act (1979), Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (1986), Workmen's Compensation Act (1923), Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act (1996), and Unorganized Workers Social Security Act (2008).

¹ For a detailed discussion, refer to *Internal Migration and Social Protection: The Missing Link* policy brief in this series.