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# On the Internal Mobility of Indians: Knowledge Gaps and Emerging Concerns

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## **Abstract**

*This paper identifies key knowledge gaps on the issue of migration and commuting workers in India. First, we need to understand how the sources of income of rural households in India have changed over time. We need to be able to quantify the importance of remittances by migrants and economic contributions of commuting workers as a source of income. Second, we need to understand why estimates of various types of migration flows, in particular short migration flows, captured by official data are at variance with localized studies. It is important to identify and plug the source of this disconnect. Third, we do not fully understand the extent to which rural-urban migration contributes to the phenomenon of urbanization of poverty. And finally, given the concern over exclusionary urbanization we need to understand the legal and structural impediments to migration.*

**Keywords: Internal Migration, Commuting by Workers, Exclusionary Urbanisation**

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## On the Internal Mobility of Indians: Knowledge Gaps and Emerging Concerns

### Introduction:

Jan Breman, who studied the transition in the rural economy of southern Gujarat over a span of 30 years, not only documented the changing importance of non-agricultural activities in rural India, but also highlighted the mobility of workers in search of work. He finds that on account of slow growth and stagnation in job creation in agriculture, rural workers are moving towards urban economy. Much of what he talked about in his book - seasonal migrants and foot loose labour (workers commuting daily for work) - has become extremely relevant today in the context of understanding mobility of India's workforce (Breman 1996). In the recent past, these issues have also received their fair share of column inches in the newspapers. Veteran journalist P Sainath, in his columns<sup>1</sup>, has described the trip from Mahbubnagar in Andhra Pradesh to Mumbai. He mentions that in 1993 there was one bus every week. Ten years later, not including the private bus services, there were as many as 42 to 45 buses a week. The increase in the bus service was to keep pace with the increase in number of individuals migrating to Pune and Mumbai in search of improved livelihoods. Sainath also writes that, since 2008, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) had a salutary effect and people found work in their villages. The proof of the pudding being that the number of buses from Mahbubnagar to Mumbai declined to 28 per week. Migration stream from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to Haryana and Punjab, which used to be very high at one time, has reduced in the past few years because of the cumulative effect of MGNREGS and also the development observed in the origin states.

It is also true that the seasonality in availability of jobs means that, in addition to migration, workers seek opportunities on a daily basis and commute to where jobs are available. Breman too did shed light on this phenomenon in his book. Data from official sources indicate that in 2009-10, a total number

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<sup>1</sup> P Sainath (2003) The Bus to Mumbai, The Hindu, June 1, 2003  
<http://www.hindu.com/mag/2003/06/01/stories/2003060100520100.htm>  
P Sainath (2008) NREGA hits buses to Mumbai, The Hindu, May 31, 2008  
<http://www.hindu.com/2008/05/31/stories/2008053154170900.htm>

of 8.05 million workers not engaged in agriculture commuted from rural to urban areas for work, while 4.37 million workers not engaged in agriculture commuted from urban to rural areas for work. In addition there are 5.03 million rural and 7.17 million urban residents without a fixed place of work (Chandrasekhar 2011).

The long and short of it is that there are large numbers of Indians, in particular workers, who are mobile. The Indian Railways have had to provide for the increase in demand from the migrant and commuter population. In 2011, the Northern Railways alone ran 74 trips of special trains to clear the rush of passengers travelling on account of the Chhat festival. In 2012, the Southern Railways ran special trains during Pongal to cater to increase in the number of passengers. The Western Railways is yet to meet the long standing demand of commuters to have local trains run from Churchgate in Mumbai to Dahanu which is 125 kilometers away. Presently, the local trains run till Virar and the commuters have to wait considerable time for the connecting train to Dahanu.

Anecdotal evidence and case studies apart, there are many aspects of the phenomenon of mobile workers that we are yet to come to grips with. We can ill-afford not to have a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon. This article focuses on the different forms of mobility, provides estimates of the same based on data from official sources, identifies data and knowledge gaps and then proceeds to highlight emerging concerns in the context of India's mobile population.

### **Defining Mobility and Extent of Mobility:**

There are two aspects of mobility: migration and commuting. Migration by itself is of various types – temporary, permanent, return, and short term (See Box 1). In addition there is distress migration, a phenomenon that is not captured in the official data sets and hence not well understood. In the context of this paper, we define commuting as one where the place of work (rural, urban, no fixed place) differs from the usual place of residence (rural, urban). We first discuss the issue of migration and then move onto the issue of commuting.

There are two sources of data on migration: Census of India and surveys of National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO). Since information from Census of India 2001 is dated we provide estimates based on NSSO's survey on employment & unemployment and migration conducted over July 2007-June 2008<sup>2</sup>. Further, information on short term migrants and return migrants is not available as part of Census of India data. The kind of information available in the two data sets is different (See Box 1).

-Box 1 Here-

Migration can be in context of the entire household or specific individuals. Recognizing this distinction, NSSO in its surveys seeks details on the following: whether the household migrated to the village/town of enumeration during the last 365 days, whether any former member of the household migrated out any time in the past (out migrants who are not currently members of the household), and migration particulars of household members.

A total of 2.07 million households residing in rural areas and 2.11 million households residing in urban areas reported having moved to their current residence location in the 365 days preceding NSSO's survey in 2007-08. These households constitute 1.3 percent and 3.3 percent of rural and urban households respectively.

Considering all households, we find that among rural and urban households, 95.4 million and 21 million individuals have respectively migrated out any time in the past. These out migrants are not currently members of the households who were surveyed. Among rural (urban) households with out-migrants 36.5 (24) percent of households report receiving remittances. The average remittance received by a rural household with an out-migrant is Rs 20,700 per year and average remittance received by a urban household with an out-migrant is Rs 43,600 per year. This information by itself is not very useful when we want to understand the issue of diversification of sources of income. Davis et. al (2007) find that in Asia, the proportion of rural households classified as migration/transfers-oriented varies from

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<sup>2</sup> NSSO integrated the collection of migration data with the quinquennial survey on employment and unemployment. Before the 65th round survey conducted in 2007-2008, migration particulars were collected as part of 38th round (January 1983-December 1983), 43rd round (July 1987-June 1988), 55th round (July 1999-June 2000). The 49th round collected information on housing condition and migration in India.

1.2 percent in Vietnam to 11.5 percent in Indonesia. In Latin America, it varies from 0.9 percent in Nicaragua to 5.9 percent in Guatemala; and in Africa it varies from 1 percent in Nigeria to 3.4 percent in Ghana<sup>3</sup>. These figures show that the proportion of migration or transfers oriented households is still not sizable. Our lack of understanding of sources of income of household is in our opinion an emerging concerns and a knowledge gap.

Whether a member of the households is considered as a migrant or not is inferred based on the response to a question on whether place of enumeration differs from last usual place of residence. A migrant is an individual whose place of enumeration is different from the last usual place of residence. Overall, in 2007-08, 26.1 percent of rural residents and 35.4 percent of urban residents could be classified as migrants. There are over 193 million migrants in rural and 94 million migrants in urban areas (Table 1). Given that women moving on account of marriage are considered as migrants it is not surprising that they account for bulk of the migrants in India.

-Table 1 Here-

A total of 12.5 million rural residents and 1 million urban residents can be classified as short term migrants. The interesting point to note is that short term migrants are overwhelmingly men and this is because men are relatively more mobile than women in search of work. The estimate of short term migrants has been contested by some commentators and researchers. For instance, Deshingkar and Akter (2009) put out an estimate of 100 million short term migrants. They arrive at this number by adding the number of child workers (estimates by International Center on Child Labor and Education to be roughly 25-30 million where as census 2001 states this figure to be around 12 million), workers employed in brick kiln industry (10 million), textile industry (35 million), and construction industry (30 million). The way this number is arrived at, does not seem to be very realistic and need to be reconsidered, given that not all these workers can be migrants. But still the numbers estimated from

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<sup>3</sup> They proposed a typology of rural households based on the sources of a household's income: farm-oriented (more than 75% of total income from farm production); farm, market-oriented (more than 50% of agricultural production sold on market); farm, subsistence (<= 50% of agricultural production sold on market); labor-oriented household (more than 75% of total income from wage or nonfarm self employment); migration/transfers-oriented household (more than 75% of total income from transfers/other non-labor sources); and diversified households.

NSSO surveys does seem to be very low. The issue of under count of short term migrants we identify as an emerging concern and a knowledge gap.

The phenomenon of return migration is sizable. Return migrants are those who report their present place of enumeration as their usual place of residence any time in the past. In the rural and urban areas, there are a total of 23.2 million and 10.2 million return migrants. There is a valid perception that return migration is on the rise. There are newspapers reports indicating that over 50,000 workers in Surat, Gujarat working in the textile and diamond industry have returned to their homes in Ganjam, Orissa on account of a variety of reasons including dispute over wages. The fact that employment related reasons is an important driver of return migration is also evident from the NSSO data. Of course there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that discrimination at the destination may force migrants to return to their origin place. The large size of return migration calls for a careful analysis of this phenomenon in order to get a clearer picture.

When feasible, an alternative to moving permanently i.e. to migrate, is to commute long distances to work. This is particularly so in the current context where the seasonality in availability of jobs and anemic growth in nonfarm employment has meant that workers seek opportunities on a daily basis and commute to where jobs are available. Sainath has written about the hundreds of women in Gondia district of Maharashtra “who spend just four hours a day at home and travel over 1,000 km each week (by train) — to earn Rs.30 daily”<sup>4</sup>. In the context of workers engaged in non-agricultural activities and commuting across rural-urban boundaries on a daily basis, Mohanan (2008) writes, “ ... movement of rural workers to urban areas is somewhat reinforced by the daily picture of overcrowded trains and buses bringing people to the cities and towns from the surrounding areas, sometimes called the floating population” (p 61).

Estimates of commuting workforce, are available from NSSO’s survey on employment and unemployment (66<sup>th</sup> round, 2009-10), which has a question on location of workplace (rural, urban and

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<sup>4</sup> P Sainath (2007) It's been a hard day's night, The Hindu, Jan 24, 2007  
Accessed: <http://www.hindu.com/2007/01/24/stories/2007012404621300.htm>

no fixed place) for all workers engaged in non-agricultural activities. The size of workers residing in rural areas but working in urban areas is 8.05 million, accounting for 8.16 percent of rural workforce engaged in non-agriculture; whereas urban residents working in rural areas are 4.37 million constituting 4.94 percent of urban workforce. It should be noted that 5.03 million rural residents and 7.17 million urban residents report not having any fixed work place<sup>5</sup> (Table 2). So, we have a total of 24 million workers, who commute on a daily basis across rural and urban boundary for employment purpose. Of course, these numbers do not reflect the distance travelled by the commuting worker.

-Table 2 Here-

Typically, the size of the rural (urban) workforce is set equal to the number of workers living in rural (urban) areas. Mohanan (2008) and Chandrasekhar (2011) have argued the need for adjusting the size of rural and urban workforce to reflect the commuting workers. If one were to ignore the workers with no fixed place of work, then for the year 2009-10, the urban workforce needs to be adjusted upwards by 3.68 million (8.05 million rural-urban commuters less 4.37 million urban rural commuters) and the rural workforce will have to be adjusted downwards by a similar magnitude.

Chandrasekhar (2011) points out that a disaggregation of the number of commuter workers by state reveals patterns that fit popular perceptions. The states adjoining the National Capital Territory of Delhi, i.e, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh have a large number of rural residents reporting working in urban areas. The National Sample Survey regions adjoining Delhi from these four states have a sizeable number of workers reporting living in rural but working in urban areas. These four states account for nearly 35 percent of the workers (all-India) living in rural areas but working in urban areas. The data does suggest interesting commuting dynamics (rural-urban and urban-rural) in these four states and this need to be explored in detail in the future. The four southern states – Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu – account for nearly 25 percent of such workers, while

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<sup>5</sup> These numbers have been calculated using unit level data from NSSO's 66th round (2009-10) survey on Employment and Unemployment. The survey provides information on commuting by workers engaged in non agricultural activities (National Industrial Classification divisions 02-99 and industry groups 012, 013, 014). Information is available on location of residence (urban, rural) and location of workplace (rural, urban, no fixed location). Even though, we know the district and state of residence location of workers, information on district and state of work location is not available.



Maharashtra and Gujarat account for 11 percent of workers living in rural, but working in urban areas. These averages are not surprising since these states not only have higher level of urban population, but also sizeable urban centres that would attract the commuter worker. Individuals might be inclined to live in rural areas to take advantage of lower cost of living, in particular housing. The four southern states account for 27 percent of urban residents working in rural areas, while the share of Maharashtra and Gujarat is 16 percent. Thus, the movement of workers across the rural-urban or urban-rural corridor is in the urbanized states of India or where large urban centres act as magnets.

Which sectors are the commuting workers employed in? Around 60 percent of commuting workers are concentrated in three industries- manufacturing, construction and wholesale and retail trade, repair. Among rural residents working in urban areas, construction has highest share (31 percent) of workers, whereas 28 percent urban residents work in wholesale, retail and repair industry in rural areas. The fact that there are not enough jobs in manufacturing is evident from the large share of construction industry.

Coming back to the estimates of the commuting workforce, using the NSSO data, we can differentiate the workers in terms of rural to urban and urban to rural streams, as well as workers with no fixed location. This ignores the urban to urban and rural to rural stream of commuters, who also constitutes a large share of commuting workforce. The limitation of the NSSO surveys which only collect information on workplace (rural, urban and no fixed place) leads to lack of a discourse on these streams. If information on these commuting streams were collected the size of commuting workforce is likely to be higher than the estimates of 24 million.

### **To Migrate or to Commute**

Migration and commuting are both aspects of mobility. The question is which of these two aspects is likely to become more prominent in this decade. This question is important given the perception that

India's cities are unwelcoming for migrants. India's Vice President Mohammad Hamid Ansari surely thinks so. Delivering the Yusuf Meherally Memorial Lecture 2011<sup>6</sup>, Vice President Ansari said,

*“Our urban spaces and governance mechanisms have become the theatres for political conflicts and economic struggles. ‘Exclusionary’ urbanization is benefitting certain social groups to the detriment of others, and directing resources to large metropolises depriving small and medium towns of funds needed for infrastructure and essential services.”*

Exclusionary urbanization can be defined as the forced or market driven deprivation of a part of urban residents from basic urban amenities such as clean water, affordable housing, sanitation, sewage facility as well as legal citizenship in the cities and large urban settlements. Urban exclusion has been documented in the context of Brazil and China (Feler and Henderson 2011, Cai, 2006).

Five indicators – one anecdotal and other four based on official data - suggest that the phenomenon of exclusionary urbanization is evident in India.

There has been extensive media coverage on the discrimination against migrants. The provocative statements made by certain politicians against migrants living in Mumbai are a cause for concern. This goes against the spirit of Article 15 of Constitution of India which prohibits discrimination on any grounds. The rights of migrant workers are on paper protected under labour laws including the “Inter-State Migrant Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979”<sup>7</sup>. Two core parts of this act focus on the role of contractors in the employment of migrant workers and the minimum benefits that should be ensured to the migrant workers. The contractor is required to keep a record of the following: the name and place of the establishment wherein the workman is employed; the period of employment; the proposed rates and modes of payment of wages; the displacement allowance payable; the return fare payable to the workman on the expiry of the period of his employment and in such contingencies as may be prescribed and in such other contingencies as may be

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<sup>6</sup> <http://vicepresidentofindia.nic.in/content.asp?id=346>

<sup>7</sup> In addition they are covered under many laws including: Minimum Wages Act, 1948; Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970; Equal Remuneration Act, 1976; The Building & Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996; The Building & Other Construction Workers' Welfare Cess Act, 1996; Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923; Payment of Wages Act, 1936; Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986; Bonded Labour Act, 1976.

specified in the contract of employment; deductions made; and such other particulars as may be prescribed. The contractor is also required to furnish details in respect of every inter-state migrant workman who ceases to be employed. The law also specifies the wages, welfare and other facilities to be provided to the inter-state migrant worker. Are migrant workers aware of the responsibilities of the contractor and do they receive a passbook with all the necessary information? Does the contractor fulfill the requirements as required under the law? There is valid skepticism over whether migrant workers actually receive their entitlements. Newspapers not only routinely report discrimination against migrant workers but also the increasing number of wage disputes.

Viewed along certain dimensions life in the cities is deteriorating for new comers. Moving on to indicators from official statistics, the first indicator is urbanization of poverty. India is no exception to the phenomenon of urbanization of poverty. Over the period 1983–2004, the number of Indians in rural areas living below the poverty line declined by 12.3 percent (31.03 million), while the total number of urban poor increased by 13.9 percent (9.86 million) (Government of India 2002, 2007). Due to paucity of data it is not possible to understand what proportion of the increase in number of urban poor is attributable to rural-urban migration. Whether it is the rural poor or non-poor who migrate to urban areas has implications for the incidence of poverty among non-migrants in rural areas. Consider two possible extreme scenarios. In Scenario A, only the poor migrate from rural areas, other things constant. In this scenario there is a reduction in the incidence of rural poverty as measured by simple head count. In Scenario B, only the non-poor migrate, other things constant. In this scenario there is an increase in the incidence of rural poverty. In reality, both the poor and non-poor migrate, and Scenarios A and B set the bounds for change in rural poverty if migration were the only pathway to improved livelihoods. Decomposing the reduction in rural poverty suggests that over the period 1993-2002, migration accounted for only 19 percent of the reduction in worldwide rural poverty while 81 percent of the reduction could be ascribed to improved rural livelihoods (World Bank 2007). This suggests that in the Indian context migration is not necessarily the most important pathway to reducing rural poverty and rural anti-poverty programs have an important role to play. In fact, total number of

urban poor is expected to further increase in India. As per one estimate the total number of urban poor could increase to 113.60 million by 2020 (Mathur 2009).

The second indicator pertains to the proportion of population living in slums and slum like conditions. Recently a committee appointed by Government of India considered moving to a regression based approach to count slum dwellers using indicators of household conditions. The committee estimated that 75.26 million (26.31 percent of urban population) lived in slums of urban India in 2001 and projected that 93.06 million would be living in slums in the year 2011 (Government of India 2010). Based on their analysis of temporal changes in poverty and well-being in Indian cities during the period 1993-2002, Chandrasekhar and Mukhopadhyay (2010) find that the evidence on improvements in well-being in urban India is mixed. They compare the joint distribution of monthly per capita expenditure (a private good) and access to drainage (a public good) in the slums and non-slum areas of Indian cities to understand changes in well-being. Not only do they not find evidence for improvement in the well-being of slum dwellers over time, they also do not find that non-slum urban dwellers are better off in 2002 as compared to 1993. Due to data paucity neither are we unable to understand the phenomenon of urbanization of poverty at any depth nor are we able to understand in any coherent fashion the evolution of livelihoods in the slums and non-slum areas of Indian cities.

The third indicator pertains to migration streams and migration rates. Given that the quality of cities is not necessarily improving for one and all, it is not surprising that during 2001-11 nationally representative surveys in India did not record large increase in rural-urban migration. Based on the 2007-08 data, the share of the four migration streams are as follows: rural-rural (62 percent), rural-urban (19 percent), urban-rural (6 percent) and urban-urban (13 percent) (NSSO 2010). This distribution is the same when we examine data from NSSO's survey conducted in 1999-00 (NSSO 2001). Migration is predominantly movement of workers within the same state rather than across state boundaries. Comparison at two points in time 1999-00 and 2007-08, reveals that among rural-urban migrants the share of inter-state migrants increased from 19.6 percent to 25.2 percent (Table 3). This is

the one important change that is evident from the data. Overall, there has also not been any discernable increase in the migration rate, i.e. the proportion of migrants in the population.

-Table 3 Here-

There has been a marginal increase in migration rates in rural and urban India between 1999-2000 and 2007-08 (Table 4). However, this increase in migration rate is only driven by increased female migration in both rural and urban areas, guided by non-economic factors. The male migration rate has decreased in rural areas (6.9 to 5.4 percent) where as urban areas have shown a miniscule increase (25.7 to 25.9 percent). We do find that there is a decrease in the migration to urban areas if we take 1993 as the reference year. Do these patterns indicate a reduction in mobility of male workers, i.e. away from migration? One will have to wait for the data from the NSSO's next round before being able to say anything beyond doubt.

-Table 4 Here-

The fourth indicator pertains to return migration. Comparison of data for the years 1993-94 and 2007-08 indicates clearly an increase in rates of return migration. The return migration rate is calculated as the ratio of the total number of return migrants to total number of migrants. Note that given the way the question is asked the return migrant is also a migrant. Overall, in rural India, the return migration rate has almost doubled from 6.5 percent in 1993-94 to 12 percent in 2007-08. Similarly in urban India the return migration rate increased from 5.4 percent to 10.9 percent.

-Table 5 Here-

The fifth indicator pertains to the rate of growth of cities. The share of urban population increased marginally from 27.8 to 31.1 percent over 2001-2011. This increase however masks important undercurrents and this brings us to the third indicator, viz. the increase in the population of urban agglomerations. Two predominantly urban states of (Delhi and Chandigarh) India and few important urban agglomerations (Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Ahmedabad) reported their lowest ever population growth rate over the period 2001-11 while Mumbai recorded an absolute decline in its

population. In this context, Kundu (2011) points out that lower net birth rates cannot explain the dynamics of urban population change. So that leaves two plausible explanations: out-migration from cities and reduced rate of in-migration to the cities. Commenting in the State of World Population 2011, Amitabh Kundu, observes, that *“some of India’s major cities are experiencing “degenerative peripheralization”—where the people are driven out by the high cost of living and the scarcity of jobs that pay a decent wage to live in ad hoc settlements on the periphery of metropolitan areas. In those peripheral settlements, people have lost the advantages of both urban and rural life. Big cities are losing the poor because they can’t afford to live there. Earlier, people would pick up something like 1,000 rupees [about \$22] and come to Delhi and look for a job for a month. Now with 1,000 rupees you can’t stay for a week. We are sanitizing our cities. Sanitization means making the environment clean,...clearing the slums, pushing out the low-income colonies. And in the process, cities’ miss out on any opportunity to transform the urban poor into drivers of growth and development and instead perceive illiterate, unskilled workers only as liabilities to health, hygiene and law and order”* (p.78, 79).

In a scenario where cities are unwelcoming of migrants and anemic employment growth in agricultural and non-farm sector, an alternative, albeit effective, livelihood strategy is commuting daily from rural to urban areas for work. And this is the reason why we think that the debate will increasingly be along the lines: “To Commute or to Migrate”.

Writing in the State of World Population Report 2011, Osotimehin observes that *“while some countries are attracting more people to emerging mega-cities where jobs are plentiful and the cost of living is high, others are seeing waves of migration from to city centres peri-urban areas where the cost of living may be lower but basic services and jobs may be in short supply”* (p ii, iii ). In the same publication, F. Ram points out that India should expect an increase in number of commuting workers: *“Even though people on marginal or even middle class incomes have been pushed out of Mumbai city, they still want to work there. He said there are commuters coming into the city from numerous outlying areas, including Pune, 163 kilometres to the southeast of Mumbai, where population growth has also been rapid. Pune is now connected to Mumbai by a six-lane motorway that cuts travel time for those with cars or money for intercity buses”* (p 79 ).

For more reasons than one, during this decade we expect that there could be an increase in the number of commuting workers. India's five year plans also strive for balanced regional development. The Government of India has strived to encourage investments in rural and backward regions. Under the industrial location policy, manufacturing units, in particular polluting industries, cannot be located within a city. Recent research provides evidence of the organized sector moving from urban to rural areas and an increase in unorganized sector activity in urban areas. This will induce workers to commute across rural-urban boundaries while retaining their current place of residence. During the decade of 2010, Chandrasekhar (2011) argues that three additional factors would come into play. The first factor is an increase in the number of towns from 5,161 in 2001 to 7,935 towns in 2011. One could observe two-way commuting among residents of the smaller towns and nearby villages if the town does not have a strong economic base to employ all its residents. The dynamics between the rural and urban areas will be different between towns and villages and between urban agglomerations and their peripheral regions. Second, an expansion in construction, manufacturing and the wholesale and retail trade sectors, will drive workers to cross the rural-urban boundaries in search of work. The third factor is greater transport linkages between rural and urban India. The various initiatives taken by government to increase rural-urban connectivity through construction of rural roads (Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana), the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor, the Golden Quadrilateral (Roads) Project connecting the large metros, offers the option of commuting as an alternative to migration. Hence it is reasonable to conjecture that rural-urban or urban-rural commuting by workers is a viable strategy.

### **Emerging Concerns and Knowledge Gaps**

The focus of this chapter has been on two aspects of labour mobility - migration and commuting and to provide the corresponding estimates. We do not find any increase in the rural-urban migration rate. In light of this we focused on the issue of exclusionary urbanization and provide some indicators to suggest that the concerns are not unfounded. Among the critical emerging concerns include portability of benefits and rights of migrant workers.

Portability of rights of individuals from minority groups could become a highly litigated issue in the coming years. A migrant individual from a minority group is not entitled to reservation benefits (for example in jobs or education) in the destination state, since the reservation is given based on state and union territory of origin. This is as per the interpretation by the courts of Article 341 and 342 of Constitution of India. This interpretation of Article 341 and 342 does affect a large part of inter-state migrants belonging to minority groups particularly. In the recent past there have a few cases argued before the courts seeking a review of the interpretation that reservation benefits are not portable. The last word on this issue has not been said or written. A two judges bench of Supreme Court in the matter relating to State of Uttaranchal vs. Sandeep Kumar Singh & Ors case (2006 case filed, order in 2010) that a bench of three or more judges of Supreme Court of India should be constituted to examine the issue of portability of reservation benefits.

Some government programmes that are not specific to minority groups have the feature of portability built into them. Consider the case of Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY), a health insurance scheme for below poverty line families. Under RSBY it is possible to issue a split card in case a member of the household is moving to another district. The split card can be used at a district different from the place of issue. The total amount covered with the two split cards is equal to the amount of coverage before the card was split. While the RSBY is migrant friendly, the same cannot be said about the ability of migrants to avail of the necessary documents. The NSSO's 58<sup>th</sup> round survey on housing amenities sought specific information from slum dwellers on the following aspects: possession of ration card, voter ID card, passport by the head of the household, benefits received as a slum dweller (received allotment of land / tenement, received other benefits; received no benefit etc). The findings from the data did reveal that a large proportion of slum dwellers did not have ration card, voter identity card or received any benefits. For some inexplicable reason NSSO's 65<sup>th</sup> round survey on housing amenities did not collect such information similar to the 58<sup>th</sup> round. Because of this we do not know the extent to which slum dwellers and migrants suffer from some form of exclusion.



Certain government programmes need to be tailored keeping in mind the needs of migrants. The best example is that of National AIDS Control Programme (NACP). While NACP is credited with reducing overall HIV incidence in the country, migrant workers and their spouses have emerged in the high risk group. They are vulnerable to this infection and indeed the incidence of HIV infection is highest among migrants. Of the 1.2 lakh estimated new infections in 2009, the six high prevalence states accounted for only 39 percent of the cases, while the states of Orissa, Bihar, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat accounted for 41 percent of new infections. The latter states are the source of majority of migrants. Some of the gaps in the implementation of NACP IV include the absence of information about the linkage between source, transit and destination across high migration and high HIV prevalence States<sup>8</sup>.

At the outset, we pointed out that there are many aspects of mobility that we do not fully understand. Before we conclude we would like to reiterate the data and knowledge gaps that we need to address on a priority basis in order to better inform policy formulation. First, we need to understand how the sources of income of rural households in India have changed over time. We need to be able to quantify the importance of remittances by migrants and economic contributions of commuting workers as a source of income. Second, we need to understand why estimates of various types of migration flows in particular short migration flows captured by official data are at variance with localized studies. It is important to identify and plug the source of this disconnect. Third, we do not fully understand the extent to which rural-urban migration contributes to the phenomenon of urbanization of poverty. And finally, given the concern over exclusionary urbanization we need to understand the legal and structural impediments to migration.

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[http://nacoonline.org/upload/NACP%20%20IV/Consultation%20I%20May%202011/Reports/5.%20Concept%20note%20Migrant%20intervention%20Sub%20group%20NACP%204%20comments%20May%208%203%20pm%20clean%20011%20\(2\).pdf](http://nacoonline.org/upload/NACP%20%20IV/Consultation%20I%20May%202011/Reports/5.%20Concept%20note%20Migrant%20intervention%20Sub%20group%20NACP%204%20comments%20May%208%203%20pm%20clean%20011%20(2).pdf)

### Box 1: Definition of Key Terms related to Migration

#### Census Definitions

**Migrant:** A person who has moved from one politically defined area to another similar area. In Indian context, these areas are generally a village in rural and a town in urban. Thus a person who moves out from one village or town to another village or town is termed as a migrant provided his/her movement is not of purely temporary nature on account of casual leave, visits, tours, etc.

**Non- Migrants (Immobiles):** People, who are seen living their entire life-time and die in the same village/town in which they were born, are defined as Immobiles or non-migrants.

**Birth Place Migrant:** If at the time of Census enumeration, there is a change in the usual place of residence of an individual with reference to his/her birth place, he/she is defined as a migrant in accordance with 'birth place' concept.

**Last Residence Migrant:** If at the time of Census enumeration, a change in the usual place of residence of an individual is noted with reference to his/her previous usual residence, he/she is termed as a migrant in accordance with 'last residence' concept.

**Migration rate:** It is taken as the ratio of total migrants counted in the Census to its total population multiplied by 1000. While discussing the migration result, the term population mobility is taken as a synonym to migration rate.

#### NSSO definitions

**Migrant:** As per NSSO definition, migrant is defined based on the last place of residence, i.e. for an individual if the place of residence at the time of enumeration differs from the last place of residence at the time of the survey.

**Temporary and Permanent Migrants:** Migration is temporary in nature, if the migrant intends to move again to the last usual place of residence or to any other place. If the migrant, in normal course, is likely to stay at the place of enumeration and did not plan to move out of the place of enumeration, it is treated as a permanent migration. Those who migrate temporarily, are further categorized in two groups, viz., those with expected duration of stay less than 12 months and those with expected duration of stay 12 months or more.

**Return Migrant:** Those migrants who had reported that the present place of enumeration was usual place of residence any time in the past was considered as return migrant.

**Short term Migrant:** Person who had stayed away from the village/town for a period of 1 month or more but less than 6 months during the last 365 days for employment or in search of employment are termed as short-term migrant.

**Source:** <http://censusindia.gov.in/Metadata/Metada.htm#Mig> and National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO)'s report on Migration in India, 2010.

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**Table 1: Size of Migrant Population**

Rural			
Gender	Migrants	Short term migrants	Return migrants
Male	20,618,579	10,671,627	4,894,476
Female	173,193,548	1,912,980	18,357,100
Total	193,812,127	12,584,607	23,251,576
Urban			
Male	35,705,919	876,633	4,161,885
Female	58,325,264	159,891	6,093,890
Total	94,031,183	1,036,524	10,255,775

Calculations based on unit level data from NSSO's survey on employment, unemployment and migration, 2007-08

**Table 2: Estimated size of non agricultural workforce based on sector of residence and place of work (All India)**

Sector of Residence	Place of Work			Total
	Rural	Urban	Not Fixed	
Rural	85,556,220* (86.73)	8,050,036 (8.16)	5,035,493 (5.1)	98,641,749 (100)
Urban	4,370,678 (4.94)	76,947,337 (86.95)	7,177,731 (8.11)	88,495,746 (100)
Total	89,926,898 (48.05)	84,997,373 (45.42)	12,213,224 (6.53)	187,137,495 (100)

(values in bracket are in percentage)

(Workers in NIC div. 02-99, industry group 012,014,015)

\* Number and percentage of workers living in rural areas but working in urban areas. Similarly for others.

Source: Author's calculation based on NSSO Employment and Unemployment Survey, 2009-10 (66<sup>th</sup> round)

**Table 3: Distribution of internal migrants by last usual place of residence for each component of rural-urban migration streams**

Migration streams	Intra district	Inter district	Intrastate		Interstate	All
			(Intra district+ Inter district)			
55th round (1999-2000)						
Rural-to-rural	75.3	20.1	95.4		4.6	100
Rural-to-urban	43.8	36.5	80.3		19.6	100
Urban-to-rural	46.5	33.5	80.0		20.0	100
Urban-to-urban	36.6	43.5	80.1		19.9	100
64th round (2007-08)						
Rural-to-rural	72.4	23.2	95.6		4.4	100
Rural-to-urban	41.2	33.6	74.8		25.2	100
Urban-to-rural	48.8	33.8	82.6		17.5	100
Urban-to-urban	27.9	49.2	77.1		22.9	100

Source: NSSO (2010) Report on Migration in India

**Table 4: Migration rates from different NSSO rounds**

Round(year)	Category of persons		
	Male	Female	Person
Rural			
64th (2007-08)	5.4	47.7	26.1
55th (1999-2000)	6.9	42.6	24.4
49th (1993)	6.5	40.1	22.8
43rd (1987-88)	7.4	39.8	23.2
38th (1983)	7.2	35.1	20.9
Urban			
64th (2007-08)	25.9	45.6	35.4
55th (1999-2000)	25.7	41.8	33.4
49th (1993)	23.9	38.2	30.7
43rd (1987-88)	26.8	39.6	32.9
38th (1983)	27.0	36.6	31.6

Source: NSSO (2010) Report on Migration in India

**Table 5: Return Migration Rate**

Sector	1993-94			2007-08		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
Rural	19.6	4.3	6.5	23.7	10.6	12.0
Urban	6.1	4.9	5.4	11.7	10.4	10.9
Rural +Urban	12.2	4.4	6.2	16.1	10.6	11.6

Source: NSSO (2010) Report on Migration in India