

Internal Migration, Poverty and Development: INDIA CASE STUDY

*Ravi Srivastava
Professor of Economics
Centre for the Study of Regional Development
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi*

Issues of data and visibility

- Two major official data sources.
- Both sources underestimate some important migration streams.
- Short-duration and temporary labour migration is especially underestimated.
- Migration has low, and mainly negative visibility

Internal Migration – key features

- Nearly 232 m or 27.4% of the population is migrant.
- Only 35% males and 2.3% females are “economic” migrants.
- Among migrant workers, 20 percent are salaried/regular workers, 40 percent each are self-employed and casual labourers.
- The poor form a larger percentage of shorter duration migrants than among permanent/semi-permanent migrants.
- There could be possibly 25 million short duration labour migrants alone, of whom 15 to 20 million are seasonal
- Open question: Has labour migration increased?
Possibly yes.

Migration, Poverty and Development

- Internal migration has strong links with the magnitude and nature of growth and accumulation.
- Multiple impacts on receiving and sending areas.
- Important household and individual level impacts.
- **Among these: higher incomes &/or income smoothing, lower poverty, and non-farm diversification.**
- Some negative impacts on receiving areas and a few on sending areas have been highlighted.
- **Major concerns: poor living and working conditions, deprivation of basic rights, entitlements and amenities, vulnerability to forced labour and trafficking.**

Existing Role of State in India

- No restrictions placed on internal migration.
- Some laws (Inter-state Migrant Workers Act, Contract Labour Act etc) to regulate working conditions but with very limited impact.
- Recent focus on education of migrant children.
- Initiatives in AIDS control directed at migrant workers
- Programmes for employment creation, watersheds, drought prone areas

Proposed initiatives by GOI

- Introduced an Employment Guarantee Bill. *Act to provide a ceiling of 100 days of unskilled employment per household. The Act will first be operative in 150 poorest districts.*
- Formed an National Commission for the Informal and Organised Sector. *One of the major objectives is to frame provisions for social security for informal sector workers which covers a large proportion of poorer labour migrants.*

Initiatives by non-state organisations

- Improve labour market outcomes through collective bargaining, better information flows, direct intermediation and training.
- Improve migrant's access to basic amenities and social provisioning.
- Strengthen migrant support networks, build capacity of local and state initiatives to support migration.
- (Help) Implement development and social security strategies which reduce distress migration.
- Build up advocacy for protection of basic rights and entitlements of migrants and elimination of their exploitation.
- **Issue: How can these be scaled up?**

Issues in internal migration in India

- ✓ Ensuring development which will improve the synergy between development and internal migration
- ✓ Improve labour market outcomes
- ✓ Ensure basic entitlements to migrants and their families
- ✓ Improve the economic, social and political environment in favour of migration.

Development Dilemmas

Focus on Regional Policy

- Regional Disparities have grown and policy instruments are weaker. **There is a debate on how to move forward.**

How to promote Rural Development

- Consensus on need for more vigorous pro-poor development strategy, through land & water management, investment in infrastructure & creation of non-farm employment, **but there is debate on priorities and instruments.**
- Improved access of the poor to physical assets land, infrastructure, institutions, credit and greater food security

Urban Policy Dilemmas

- Urban Policy is much more geared towards “cleaning up” and ‘world class” cities which conflicts with migrant rights and entitlements
- Concern: How to ensure compatibility of migration with urban development?

Ensuring basic entitlements to migrants and their families

- Social Security provisions for informal sector workers is under discussion. **Issue 1: How should the proposals address migrant worker concerns?**
- **Issue 2: How does one protect existing entitlements of migrants and their families?**
- Some form of universal registration to ensure:
 - ❑ *Food entitlements through temporary cards?*
 - ❑ *Education for migrant children in source and destination*
 - ❑ *Health camps and access to basic treatment facilities*
- Agreement between Centre / Provinces as a first step?

Labour market outcomes and advocacy for migrants

Improvement in labour market outcomes

- Simplification and stricter implementation of labour laws (**Issue: Should India move towards some core labour standards?**)
- Awareness building and organisation
- Improved information, skill and orientation
- Building resource pools in local bodies and NGOs.

Improve the economic, social and political environment in favour of migration

- Greater advocacy to remove stereotypes
- Campaign to strengthen voices of poor migrants

Thank you