



SAAPE WORKING PAPER SERIES

Working Paper 5.20 | January 2020

Migration in South Asia: Poverty and Vulnerability

India Poverty Report 2020

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Published by

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Author's Introduction

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**No one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark.....**

No one leaves home **unless home chases you**
fire under feet hot blood in your belly.....

... no one would put their children in a boat
unless the sea is safer than the land....

No one burns their palms under trains
beneath carriages....

No one spends days and nights in the stomach of a truck....

**No one crawls under fences
wants to be beaten, wants to be pitied....**

No one chooses refugee camps
or ...or prison,
because **prison is safer
than a city of fire.....**

I want to go home,
but home is the mouth of a shark
home is the barrel of the gun
and no one would leave home
unless home chased you to the shore
unless home told you
to quicken your legs
leave your clothes behind
crawl through the desert
wade through the oceans.....

No one leaves home unless home is a sweaty voice in your ear
saying- **leave, run away from me now**

(Extracts from 'Home', by Warsan Shire, British-Somali poet)

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1. About the SAAPE Migration-India Report

The purpose of this report to give an overview of migration scenario in India (with a special focus on migration of the poor, underprivileged the deprived) and to understand the decisive factors that shape the migration situation in India. Since this report is prepared as an input-material for the South Asian Regional Report on Migration, 2019 of the South Asia Alliance for Poverty Alleviation (SAAPE), due attention is given to bring its focus to the themes of inequality and poverty, which are among the core concerns of SAAPE while addressing the development issues of the South Asia region. Accordingly, in this report, an attempt is made to discuss the issues related to migration, by seeking its connections to poverty and inequality.

Migration can be broadly divided into two categories. The first category is the 'migration of the better offs for betterment', where the people who are relatively resource-rich (and with better human resource profile – e.g. highly educated) move from their native places, in search of better living standards and for earning higher incomes. The next category comprises of the migrants, who are (partially or fully) pushed out of their places of origin due to adverse circumstances – be it is unemployment, poverty, resource-crunch in rural areas, social exclusion/violence, environmental hazards and so on. While the first category of migration is more of voluntary in nature, the second one is characterised by some degree of involuntariness and socio-economic coercions, as the migrants are forced to leave their home-lands, due to certain compelling reasons. Given the keen concern of SAAPE on issues of poor and underprivileged, the focus of the present report is on the second category of **involuntary and forced-out migrants**, who are mostly poor and often from socially and/or economically weaker sections. In the subsequent parts of this report, we will be elaborating on the details of distresses, compulsions and dilemmas faced by these '**marginalised**' segments of migrants.

Reasons such as absence of resources, unemployment and so on force the poor to move outside their places of origin - sometimes for a short duration and at times for several years or even for good. Many of these migrants find it difficult to continue in their villages and view **migration as a coping up mechanism** or survival strategy. The present report will try to capture the dynamics of such migrations and to connect it to the larger binding issues of poverty and inequality. To pursue this objective, attention will be given to understand the issues related to migrants/migration at different stages– **pre-migration, post-migration and return-migration phases**.

Given its focus on 'pushed-out' population, from their native-places, the report naturally takes into consideration the **issues of refugees**. This is a deliberately chosen decision, as many of the issues faced by the refugees have commonalities with the issues of migrants.

While discussing forced or involuntary migration, it needs to be clarified that the element of coerciveness and involuntariness can be present in varying degrees in different cases. For

instance, following a war or a communal tension or a natural calamity, the resultant migration/refugee movement will be **fully involuntary**. But, when an unskilled worker from rural area decides to move to an urban centre for employment, it can have connections to **both push-factors** (e.g. acute unemployment and poverty in rural area) **and pull-factors** (e.g. the aspiration and willingness of the worker to earn more by moving to urban). Nevertheless, in both the cases we can see an underlying element of involuntariness and compulsion. For instance, these cases are not similar to a case of an educated youth's migration to a city in his own country or another country for higher education; or to case of a highly qualified professional from a less developed country, moving to United States of America for a job, which fetches him/her very high salaries, compared to his/her present pay in the native-country.

Given the already stated bias of the report in favour of the migration of the poor, deprived and distressed, the following categories of migration are given prioritised attention:

-) Internal and international migration of socio-economically weaker sections (including unskilled and semi-skilled workers), for employment and better livelihoods
-) Internally displaced persons – as victims of development activities or natural calamities or climate-change
-) Marriage migration of women (especially from socio-economically weaker sections), **who eventually enters in the labour markets** of their post- marital destinations
-) Refugees who are forced to move to other countries to escape adverse circumstances due to social/ political /communal tensions

On the other hand, the report will not be giving much attention on the following categories of migration

-) Internal and international migration for education
-) Internal and international migration of skilled workers and highly qualified professionals
-) Internal and international Migration of socio-economically well of sections, for economic up-gradation and better living standards
-) Marriage migration, which does not have very strong labour-market connections

1.2 Objectives of the Report

-) To give an overview of migration scenario in India, focusing on internal, international and intra-regional aspects (and the scenario of refugees)
-) To discuss the major drivers of migration in India and to link these determinants to the binding issues (core drivers) of poverty and inequality
-) To have a closer gendered-analysis of migration scenario in India, to capture specific issues concerning women's migration.
-) To situate the neo-liberal state in India and to understand its implications for the contemporary migration scenario.

1.3 The Central Concerns

(a) Poverty and Inequality

`**Poverty** 'and' **inequality**' are the two key concepts that bind the discussions and analyses in this report. A closer analysis of the reasons underlying migration and forced displacement/movements of populations, suggest the centrality of poverty and inequality as the linking factors. **Economic deprivation or poverty** is often the single largest push-factor underlying migration. Resource poor in rural/urban areas or less-endowed regions/countries (the landless, less educated, unemployed and so on) view migration as a major strategy of survival. Many of these migrants eventually move to new destinations (within or outside the country), in search of better livelihood options. Here, the destination areas are considered as more resource-rich. And, thus, one can see that **'regional disparity'** is a driving force for the migrants, who expect better outcomes (in terms of employment, income and living standards) in their destinations. The case of refugees (be it is socio-political, climate or development induced refugees) is also similar, as they are also driven by the attraction of safer and better living and livelihood options.

Available data suggests that, over time, **income-inequality** in India has widened considerably during the post-liberalisation period, commencing from early 1990s. Surprisingly, this period happens to be period of higher rates of growth for the Indian economy. This scenario of deepening income-inequality in a period of economic growth has, thus, necessitated a situation for more and more resource-poor persons to move out of their native-places in search of better employment and livelihoods.

Along with economic inequalities, **social inequalities** also assume importance as a push-factor for migration, especially when one considers the social dynamics of rural urban migration. There is a growing body of evidences and research that suggest that many migrants from rural areas move out from their villages, essentially to escape situations of caste-based harassments and social exclusions.

In the above backdrop, the report will try to capture the dynamics of migration through the vantage points of **poverty and inequality (both economic and social)**.

(b) Neo-liberal State

A key concept engaged in this report is 'Neo-liberal State'. Accordingly, due attention is given in the report to have a critical assessment of the role of the state concerning issues of migration and migrants. Put in simple words, the neo-liberal state is the one which is moving more closely with the interests of capital, market and privileged segments of the society. The pro-market stand of the state can be direct or indirect. So, it is important to analyse the state's action and inaction to see the resultant implications. Further, neo-liberal state is considered to be less interested in taking care of the issues of marginalised and underprivileged in the society. As migrant poor come within this category, obviously, there is some merit in engaging the concept of neo-liberalism in understanding the migration scenario and migrants' worries. The report, thus, will critically look at the role of state and its policies, giving attention on a wide range of aspects such as: state's expenditure on social

head; indifferent approach of the state towards welfare programmes and protective legislations; shrinking of social security measures; anti-poor and pro-rich policies and so on.

(c) Holistic Approach

The report tries to capture migration scenario in India, by looking at both **internal migration** (i.e. migration within India) and **international migration** (i.e. migration across the country's borders). While discussing international migration, due attention is given to understand the **intra-regional dimensions** (i.e. migration from/to India to/from other countries in the South Asia). As mentioned above, given the commonalities between the issues of migrants and refugees, the report will also include discussions on refugees in India.

In terms of disciplinary approach, the report follows an **interdisciplinary** method, as migration needs to be understood in its totality with adequate attention on all relevant dimensions -historical, social, political and economic and legal. Given this interdisciplinary nature of the report, attention is also given in including different categories of data – ranging from official statistics/secondary data to excerpts from literary works/media clippings. Attention is also given in presenting the report in a more digested and simplified manner so as to cater to a wide range of readers including: social activists, researchers, policy planners and development practitioners working on issues related to migration, poverty and inequality.

(d) Migration of the Marginalised

As mentioned earlier, the focus of the report will be on vulnerable-most segments among migrants, who were/are 'forced' to leave their places of origin due to multiple reasons, including: economic, social, political and environmental. This category essentially comprises of poorest among migrant workers, refugees, trafficked-population and victims of climate change/natural or human-made disasters. These 'marginalised-migrants' are usually less-endowed (in terms of physical and human resources) and are more prone to precarious jobs and unsafe working conditions. Weaker access to social security measures and abysmally lower levels political/citizenship rights often push them to a vicious circle of poverty and exploitation.

(e) Gender Dimensions of Migration

The report also attempts to give a closer look at gender dimensions of migration in the Indian context, to understand the special issues concerning migration of women. Due attention is, thus, given on capturing specific vulnerabilities of women, discriminations based on gender divisions and so on. Attempt is also done to capture the connections between women's migration and the approach of the state – in terms of policies, regulatory framework and so on. One aspect, which is followed up in the report is the linkages between marriage migration (which is the prominent most reason for women's migration in India) and the labour markets. It has been shown that many women, who move to newer places following marriage eventually enter in the labour markets in their new destinations. In certain cases, they even migrate further to new destinations in search of better jobs and

livelihood options. This is a crucial aspect that explains the 'hidden labour migration' behind the stream of marriage migration.

Apart from this there are many other issues that are special to women migrants, which the report will be discussing. These include: unequal treatment in labour markets (lower wages, longer hours of work), sexual harassment at workplace, trafficking, biased policies and systems (that reinforce the patriarchal controls on women in the Indian society) and so on.

1.4 The Scheme of the Report

The rest of the report begins with a discussion on the migration profile of India. Accordingly, Chapters 2 and 3 discuss the International and Internal scenarios of migration. While discussing international migration, attention is given to briefly explain the issues of refugees in India. Chapter 4 discusses the major drivers of migration and establishes the centrality of poverty and inequality as the core determinants of migration in the Indian context. The issues and problems related to India's migration scene are also briefly discussed in this chapter. Chapter 5 takes a close look on the women's migration in India, highlighting some of the unique aspects of migration from a gender-perspective. Chapter 6, the concluding chapter, discusses the role of neo-liberal state in shaping the migration-landscape of India.

Chapter 2

International Migration: The Indian Scenario

India assumes a significant place in the international migration map, as a prominent country of origin, transit and destination in the South Asia. It is the largest migrant sending country in South Asia (Rajan, 2017). As per estimates, in 2015, one out of twenty migrants in the world is born in India and 15.6 million Indians are in the other countries (Connor, 2017).

History of migration from India is considerably long and dates back to indentured labour migration of Indians to Africa and Caribbean countries, more than a century ago. Immigrants from India have also been historically significant in countries like Malaysia, Burma (Myanmar) and Sri Lanka. But, in the most recent times, Gulf countries (GCC countries), North America and Europe are the major destinations of International labour migration from India.

As per the latest data available from UN-DESA (Table 2.1), UAE has the largest stock of migrants from India (3310419), followed by United States of America (2307909) and Saudi Arabia (2266216). Pakistan also hosts a considerable number of Indians. But, unlike the migration to other countries, this stream is more connected to the large scale movement of people across India-Pakistan borders during the time of partition.

Table 2.1: Destination Countries of Indians going abroad, 2017

Countries	Number of Person
UAE	3310419
United States	2307909
Saudi Arabia	2266216
Pakistan	1873650
Oman	1201995
Kuwait	1157072
United Kingdom	836524
Qatar	658488
Canada	602146
Nepal	440198

Source: UNDESA (2017)

There has been a visible growth in International migration of Indians in the past few decades. For instance, in the past twenty five years alone, there has been a more than double increase quantum of Indian migrants abroad. Since the 1970s, there has been a large scale migration of unskilled and semi-skilled workers from India to the countries in Persian Gulf and by now, **GCC countries are among the top destinations of Indian migrants.** The state of Kerala continues to be the largest migrant sending state, followed by Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar (Oommen, 2017). The latest data indicates that in the ECR category (unskilled category), Uttar Pradesh has already overtaken Kerala with higher number of unskilled international migrants to Gulf countries (ILO, 2018)

When it comes to **intra-regional migration** (i.e. international migration within South Asian countries), India has a unique position. As a sending country, Indians are there in large number in countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka in large numbers (Rajan, 2017).

As **receiving country** also, India has a huge presence of migrants from South Asian countries. As per UN-DESA (2017), Pakistan has the highest number of Indian migrants (1095149). But, as mentioned earlier, this stock of migration has connection to India-Pakistan partition in 1947. Bangladesh and Nepal are the next two prominent countries. There are lakhs of Bangladeshi and Nepali migrants working in India, especially in the unskilled jobs in the informal sector (as construction labour, domestic helps and so on). India shares a porous border with Bangladesh. As per UNDESA data, in 2017, India has 3139311 Bangladeshi migrants. It is widely discussed that the number of Bangladeshi migrants in India is a highly contested figure, due to large scale illegal migration from Bangladesh.

Nepal has open boarder with India and India is the highest receiving country of migrants from Nepal. In addition to this, there are also migrants from Sri Lanka and Bhutan. Of late, the number of migrants from Afghanistan as well as African countries are also on the rise. As per bilateral arrangements, Nepalis and Bhutanese can come to India freely without following the usual formalities regarding passports and Visa. Number of Maldivians visiting India (mostly for medical and educational purposes) is also increasing in recent years.

Table 2.2: International Migrants in India

Countries	Number of Person
Bangladesh	3139311
Nepal	537517
Bhutan	6580
Maldives	197
Pakistan	1095149
Sri Lanka	153643

Source: UNDESA (2017)

India is the largest recipient of overseas **remittances** in the developing world (Upadhya, 2017). Remittances to India are about 4 per cent of GDP in 2013. In 2016, remittance inflows to India amounted to USD 68.91 billion, the largest in the world (IOM, 2018). It is estimated that the flow of remittances to India is larger than the earnings from IT exports (World Bank, 2013). Though India receives highest remittances in absolute terms; but as proportion to GDP, India's share is much lower. Currently, remittance-GDP ratio of India is around 2.8 per cent, which places India in the fifth position in this regard among South Asian countries - after Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Notwithstanding this, for certain states in India (e.g. Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh) the remittance-GDP ratio is much higher than national average (Tumbe, 2012). Remittances from migrants is one of the most influential factor that shaped economic development of the southern state of Kerala, which attained higher levels of human development indicators, despite having lower shares to GDP.

Box 2.1. : International Migration from India – Some Interesting Facts

- J **Nearly half of India’s migrants are in just three countries:** the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan and the United States. UAE has 3.5 million Indians, followed by Pakistan (2 million) and US (close to 2 million – of which 10 per cent are people of Indian origin born in US)

- J Despite being the top migrant sending country in the world, **the emigration rates from India is one of the lowest**, given the huge size of population, which is the second largest in the world. Emigrant-population ratio (proportion of international migrants to population) is visibly lower for India (1.24 %). Maldives is the only country in South Asia that lags behind India in this matter. Afghanistan, highest (13.58), followed by Sri Lanka (8.27%), Nepal (5.93 %), Bhutan (5.44 %), Bangladesh (4.55 %), Pakistan (3.03 %)

- J **Propensity for international migration is higher for religious minorities in India.** For instance, 19 % of Indian migrants abroad are Christians, who account for only 3 % of the population in India. 27 % of International migrants are Muslims (constituting 14 % of the population). On the reverse, Hindus constituting 80 % of the population has only 45 % share in the international migration

Sources: Connor, 2017; IOM, 2018

India is home to the largest number of **refugees** in South Asia. There are large number of refugees from neighbouring countries including Tibet, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka.

The flow of Tibetan refugees began in 1949, following the Chinese invasion in 1949. During that time, about 80000 Tibetans sought refuge in India. At present, there are around 1.5 lakh Tibetans living in India, in scattered communities and settlement spread across many states such as Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir (Ladakh), Arunachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Sikkim, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Odisha.

As per some estimates, now there are about 90,000 Sri Lankan refugees in India. The flow of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka started in early 1980s with the commencement of conflicts between Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan government. There are also refugees from Bhutan (the Hindu Nepalese in Bhutan), who had to move to Indian states such as Assam and West Bengal, in the mid to late 1980s, following the ethnic tensions with local Bhutanese.

According to some estimates, more than 10 million Bangladeshi refugees took shelter in India, during the Bangladesh's war of independence in 1971, fleeing the conflict between

the Pakistani army and Bangladeshi forces. This along with a continuous flow of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, has resulted in a situation of high presence of Bangladeshi migrants in many states of India (especially in states like Assam, Tripura and Manipur). Another stream of refugees is the Rohingya refugees, who had fled due to political and ethnic tensions in Rakhine province of Myanmar. It is estimated that, in 2015, India had around 20,000-25,000 Rohingyas spread into various places such as Delhi, Jammu, Noida, Mewat (Haryana), Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Aligarh, Hyderabad and Mumbai (Majumder et. al., 2015).

Yet another group of refugees are the Chakma and Hajong refugees, who had sought asylum in India (and Bangladesh), following the conflicts in Chittagong hill tract in mid 1970s. Recently, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs cleared a proposal of giving citizenships to the Chakma and Hajong refugees in Arunachal Pradesh, based on a Supreme Court directive.

Chapter 3

Internal Migration in India: An Overview

Being the seventh largest country in the world (in size) and the second largest in terms of population, India is a vast country. Due to this, internal migration flows in India are quite important. Given the huge disparity within the country in terms of urbanisation, regional prosperity, economic development and employment opportunities, millions of Indians migrate continuously in search of jobs and better opportunities. Economic Survey, 2016-2017, based on the a new Cohort based Migration Metrics (CMM) reports that there were about 60 million interstate migrants and 80 million inter-district migrants in India during the period, 2001-2011. As per this, the per year flow of inter-state migrants averaged around 5-6 million. This trend has further gone up in the next period 2011-16, as per an estimation based on the internal work related migration data carried out for the Economic Survey (using railway passenger traffic flows data). Accordingly, there is an annual average flow close to 9 million migrants between various states of India.

A comparison of Census data on migration (which is considered as a conservative estimate of migration – as pointed out by Economic Survey, 2017¹) shows that the decadal annual growth of internal migration nearly doubled in the case of India. From 2.4 per cent during 1991-2001, this figure rose to 4.5 per cent for the next decade (i.e. 2001-2011). This rising trend in growth rate suggests that by now close to 7-8 per cent of Indians are moving within the country every year as work-related migrants.

Many of these migrants move to long-distant destinations, which are with drastically different circumstances compared to their native lands in terms of climatic, geographical, social, political, linguistic and cultural aspects. Thus, despite the fact that these migrants are moving inside the country, their migration situations are often akin to those of international migrants – who have to eke out a living in a totally alien environment.

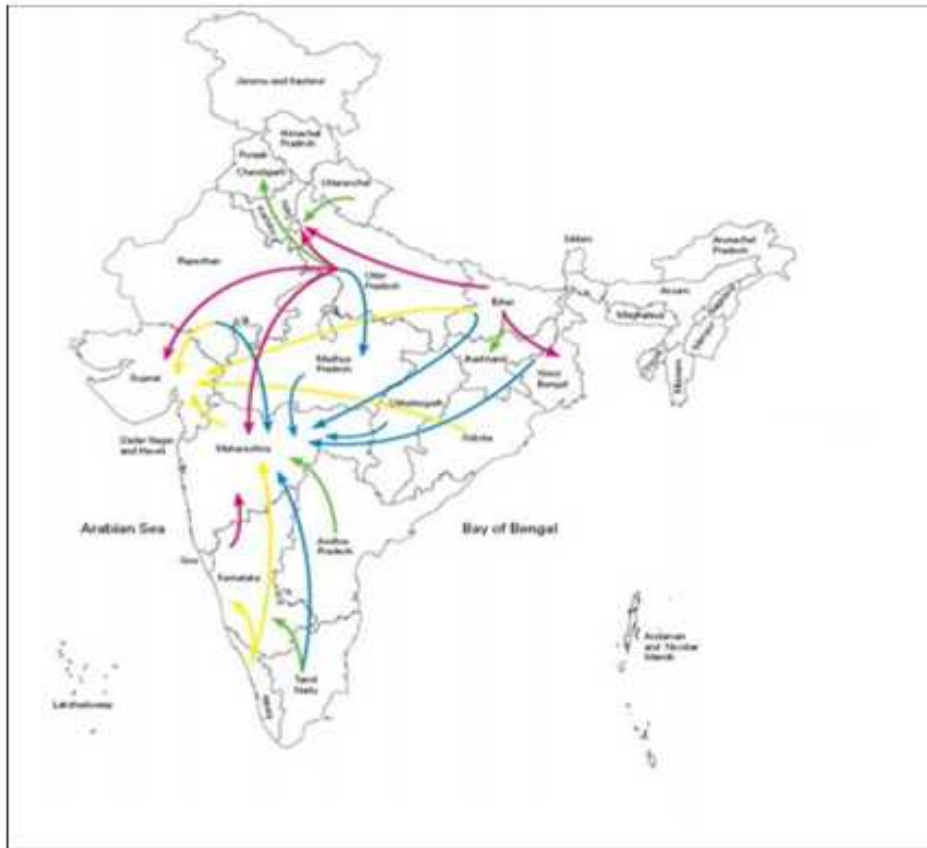
Metro cities and urban centres are found to be the most prominent destinations for internal migrants. For instance, Delhi region is the largest migrant receiving pocket – with more than 50 per cent of the total internal migrant moving towards this destination. A district wise analysis of the internal migration data suggests that the city districts in Delhi, Gurgaon and Mumbai top among the net in-migration districts in India.

Regional disparity in development is a crucial factor that explains the internal migration of people for work. By explaining the correlation between real income and migration, the Economic Survey 2017 shows that relatively less developed states (such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar) have high net out migration, whereas those states which are comparatively developed (Goa, Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu) have net in migration. It is also shown that internal migration rate has dipped in Maharashtra in recent times, while the

¹ As per Economic Survey, 2017, the Census Data shows only about 3.3 million interstate migrants in India per year – for the period 2001-2011. Whereas the estimate of a new Cohort based Migration Metric (CMM) shows it as 6 million per year.

same has gone up in Southern states such as Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Further it is shown that, the states such as Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh the out-migration rates have been increasing. All these highlight that over time, Southern states in India have attained more prominence as migrant-receiving regions.

Map 3.1. Internal Migration in India



Key Source States	Key Destination States
Uttar Pradesh	Delhi
Bihar	Maharashtra
Jharkhand	Gujarat
Madhya Pradesh	Tamil Nadu
Punjab	Andhra Pradesh
Rajasthan	Kerala
Uttarakhand	Karnataka
Jammu & Kashmir	Goa
West Bengal	
Odisha	
Himachal Pradesh	
North Eastern States	

In 2015-16, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar together accounted for more than 50 per cent of the total internal (out) migrants. Other major net out migrating states are Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir and West Bengal. The major destination states are Delhi, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.

Among the various streams of internal migration (i.e. Rural to urban; rural to rural; urban to urban; and urban to rural), rural to urban is the most important one, in the context of India. 40-70 per cent of rural households in India are with at least one person from their family working and living in urban area (Rains et. al. 2018). These migrants often end up in the informal sector activities in various industries, trade and services. Quite often, these migrations are seasonal in nature. For instance, there are many streams of migrant workers from drought-prone regions of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra, who seasonally migrate to other parts of their states and neighbouring ones and working in various activities such as construction, brick kiln work and farm work. Certain other internal migrants also move from harvest work of one region to another region and then reach back to their own villages in a 'circular' way.

During the past few decades, many new streams of internal migration have picked up momentum. The massive out-migration from India's North Eastern states is one such new stream of internal migration. Till the end of 20th Century, North East was a pre-dominantly migrant receiving region. But, by now, there are thousands of people from the North Eastern states living and working in far off destinations like Delhi, Bangalore, Chandigarh, Mumbai, Kolkata and many other small cities and towns. Long-distance migration to Kerala is another new stream of migration. Till recently, the inter-state migrants worked in Kerala were largely from the neighbouring state, Tamil Nadu. But, in the most recent times, the scenario has changed considerably and the state has large number of long-distant migrants hailing from far-off source regions such as Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar and North Eastern States.

The migration pattern among people belonging to scheduled tribes and scheduled castes have been predominantly seasonal where they migrate to nearby urban places to work in construction sites, as domestic workers and in many other informal sector activities, and return back to their village during harvesting season. Internal migration (including inter-district, inter-state – short and small distance) is the most prominent category of migration for these segments of population. International migration is not a major option for these categories, since they do not have the required resources to meet the cost of international migration. Apart from economic and employment reasons, migration of underprivileged communities (STs and SCs) is also often for escaping caste hierarchy and social exclusions/discriminations existing in their native places. However, the social baggage of caste remains with them and in many cases, they face caste based exploitation at the destinations too.

Chapter 4

Drivers, Core Determinants' and Issues

4.1. Drivers of Migration

A closer analysis of the migration of poor in the context shows that there are certain significant drivers. These include:

- Urbanisation and Regional Disparities
- Rural Distress
- Climate Induced Displacement
- Development Induced Displacement
- Demographic Factors
- Socio-Political Conflicts
- Improved Connectivity and Communication Channels

In this chapter, each of these drivers will be discussed very briefly to have a broader idea on how these drivers shape the migration scenario of the country.

4.1.1. Urbanisation and Regional Disparities

In India, rural to rural migration is a major stream of internal migration. Differences in urbanisation rates and the higher employment availability in urban areas prompt the people from rural areas to migrate. As discussed in labour surplus theories and Harris-Todaro model, expected higher wages/income is a major consideration of the migrants, while deciding their migration to urban centres. During the past few decades, the urban centres in India have witnessed a large scale boom of infrastructure and construction. There were also growing job opportunities in the urban centres and peripheries as workers in: factories, shops and establishments; ancillary and support services, domestic services, street vending, security services, restaurants and so on. Migrant workers provided the continuous pool of these jobs in cities and towns. Along with pull factors (better jobs, higher wages and other attractions of the city), push factors (such as lack of employment, low income, natural calamities and socio-political tensions) are also found shaping this 'urbanisation-driven' migration.

A crucial aspect of rural-urban migration is existence of wider regional disparities. Normally, the opportunities and facilities in the destination regions (urban) will be better or very attractive compared to the rural source-regions. And, this aspect act as a pull factor for the rural-urban migration – be it is internal or international.

4.1.2. Rural Distress

A closer examination of the rural to urban migration indicates that more than anything it is 'rural-distress' that determines the migration of the poor. Lack of employment opportunities (declining labour absorption in farm sector) due to multitude of factors including: growing rate of landlessness, depletion of natural resources, decline in common property resources, conversion of lands, land grabbing and so on.

Box 4.1: Jharkhand's Resource Depletion leading to Migration

Jharkhand, which was carved out of Bihar in 2000, has rich assets of natural resources. However, these resources have been vanishing due to rapid urbanisation. The tribal communities such as Santhal, Munda, Ho, Oraon, Kharia and others have been, of late, uprooted from their source of livelihood due to deforestation and rapid urbanisation. Landless labourers are the ones who are badly affected and hence, migration remains the only option with them.

Source: <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/economy/distress-call-52702>

Due to non-viability of agriculture, small peasants and landless labour in rural area are finding it increasingly difficult to sustain their livelihoods. This phenomenon of 'agrarian crisis' is a continuous characteristic of rural India for the past few decades. Escalating cost of cultivation and price-crash for agricultural produce together makes agriculture as a non-viable option. Quite often, crop loss due to bad monsoons, droughts and other natural reasons also add to the rural-distress. Inefficacy of governmental intervention (regarding implantation of minimum support prices, rural warehousing and marketing facilities and in terms of provision of institutional credit) is also an augmenting reason. Of late, there are reports that show the adverse implications of some of the recent policy measures (such as GST and Demonitisation) on farmers, small traders and entrepreneurs. Such a situation, coupled with a decline of support systems in rural area (e.g. PDS, MGNREGS etc.) is argued to have resulted in deepening of the economic distress in village societies.

Box 4.2: Agrarian-distress and natural disaster induced migration

According to news report covered by an online media house, Bundelkhand was badly affected by famine, back to back for two years in 2015 and 2016, which led to migration of approximately 45 lakh people from this region. Of them nearly 18 lakh migrated to Delhi. Due to repeated crop failure followed by drought, damaging Kharif crop and unseasonal rain damaging winter crop, there was no adequate food for families, leave alone the cattles. Nearly 3000 cattle died famine. Since famine affected almost 85% of the land in some areas, the employment of people was badly hit, making migration the only desirable option.

Source: <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/GPVmiHEC94V9Cg0o6VKrdP/Cattle-deaths-and-hunger-signal-looming-famine-in-Bundelkhan.html>

<https://www.news18.com/news/india/bundelkhand-famine-18-lakh-people-migrated-to-delhi-alone-in-1-year-1225421.html>

Increasing incidents of suicides by small/marginal farmers and agricultural labourers is an indicator of the growing unrest and distress in rural areas. Quite often, such rural-distress results in massive exodus of people from villages to cities, in search of better livelihood options. Quite often such migrations are 'footloose' in nature as the migrants do not have any clarity about their destinations.

Box 4.3: Uttarakhand's Ghost Villages

Over 700 villages in Uttarakhand have been deserted and more than 3.83 lakh people have left their villages in the last 10 years with half of them going out in search of livelihood. 70 per cent of the migrating population had moved only from one part of the state to another and not outside it. The data forms part of a commission's report on the status of migration in the state over the last ten years which was released by the Chief Minister. According to the data, a total of 3,83,726 people have migrated from their homes in Uttarakhand villages over the last 10 years with 50 per cent of them going out in search of livelihood and the rest due to poor education and health facilities. Since the 2011 census, 734 villages in Uttarakhand have become totally depopulated out of which 14 are within an aerial distance of 5 km from the borders.

Source: 'Over 700 Uttarakhand villages deserted in 10 years', *The Economic Times*, May 6.

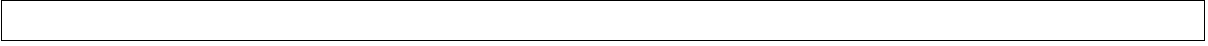
4.1.4. Climate Induced Displacement

Climate induced displacement is a major driver for internal migration in India. Thousands of people leave their homes every year due to natural disasters like floods, earthquakes, Tsunami and many other natural calamities (such as river bank erosion). There are many streams of such climate induced migrants in India from the states of Assam, Bihar, Odisha, and West Bengal (to cite a few states).

Box 4.4: Climate Refugees of Sunderban Delta

Sunderban delta has been one of the most vulnerable site which has generated lots of climate refugees in India. Summit Pramanik, resident of the same island, studies 250 km away from his hometown in West Bengal. Every time he leaves for his hostel, he looks back his home with the hope that it remains in the same place when he returns back. Unfortunately, every time he returns back, his house is shifted a few meters back. In May 2016 semester break when he went back to his home, there was mounting fear of cyclone. The high water tide entered the village and broke away all the bamboo fence and destroyed many huts made of mud. Once there is flood, the ferry would come to the island with supplies. Sometimes the turbulence is so high that ferry is unable to reach the banks. People are also ferried in boats to the nearby settlements.

Source: <https://www.firstpost.com/india/sundarbans-meet-indias-own-climate-refugees-from-ghoramara-islands-2823328.html>



4.1.5. Development Induced Displacement

In India, every year, thousands of people have to leave their places of origin, due to loss of land and livelihoods due to development projects such as dams, irrigation projects, roads, highways, canals, mines, power plants and industrial development activities. Sizeable number of population is also found getting shifted due to construction of new cities, towns and urban centres. With the expansion of metro cities and larger towns to suburbs, many of the erstwhile marginal and small farmers and agricultural labour get eventually pushed out of their villages and join the pool of 'transit labour' and 'footloose labour', who increasingly constitute major segments of migrant-labour in urban spaces.

India also is home to populations which are displaced by development projects in neighbouring countries. A classic example is that of Chakamas and Hajongs from Chittagong Hills, now in Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh

4.1.6. Demographic Factors

The demographic profile of India is found to be a major factor that determines the flow of Indians to some of the destinations countries. India is currently in a phase characterised by a 'demographic dividend', where a larger share of the population falls in the working age group. This aspect helped Indian labour to find employment in those countries, which are going through the phase of 'ageing' and those countries with 'scarcity of labour' in some occupational categories. Thus, in the case of large scale migration of unskilled workers, nurses, domestic workers and care-givers from India to GCC countries the demographical profiles of India and the receiving countries have crucial roles.

4.1.7. Socio-Political Conflicts

Another major reason for migration is the tensions based on identity, religion, ethnicity/social group, language and so on. In order to escape socio-political conflicts large number of people move from their places to other destinations. India's North Eastern States provide a good example for this category of migration. There is a growing body of literature on the north-east migrants in India, which suggest that younger people had to migrate from states like Manipur and Nagaland, because of socio-political tensions. Many of these migrants are youth migrants – who initially migrate for their education and eventually enter the labour markets of their destinations for better employment prospects.

Socio-political tensions also lead to reverse migration in certain cases. Many migrants from other states had to leave Maharashtra when there was a strong move against migrants from other states (Sons of the Soil Movement). Similarly, in 2014 there was a massive exodus of North-Eastern persons in Bangalore, following a rumour mongering episode.

Many of the refugees and asylum seekers in India are also victims of socio-political conflicts. These include Sri Lankan refugees who migrated to India during the Sri Lankan civil war between LTTE and the Sri Lankan forces; and the Rohingya Refugees who fled the violence in Rakhine province of Myanmar.

4.1.6. Improved Connectivity and Communication Channels

Improved connectivity between source and destination regions is a factor that helped higher rates of migration, especially when it involves long-distance movement of people. In the case of internal migration improvement in rural-urban connectivity (through improved transport facilities, roads, infrastructure, express ways, and connecting trains) has resulted in the emergence of new migration streams. During earlier times, the internal migrants were mostly short-distance migrants (intra and inter-district migration). But, with improved connectivity, many new streams of long distance migration have picked up prominence. The long-distance migration of unskilled workers from North and North Eastern states of India to far-off destinations (even in down South, i.e. in Kerala and Tamil Nadu) is an example for this.

Apart from facilitating migration flows, improved tele-communication and information channels are found helping the migrants in terms of connecting with their families and transferring remittances.

4.2. Core Determinants: Poverty and Inequality

While the above reasons are central in necessitating migration, it can be argued that **poverty and inequality are the core determinants** that eventually shape the migration of poor. Irrespective of the reason (be it is rural distress; development-induced; climate-induced or any other), those who are resource-poor are the ones who are migrating due to compulsions – for better employment and livelihood options. The richest segments in the source regions often cope-up with adverse circumstances, as they have some fall back options and resources to rely on, during adverse circumstances. Thus, while understanding the root causes, one can see that **inequality at different levels matters** considerably, when it comes to migration of the poor. Those who are less possessed and without any support systems are the first to move. And, when these resource-poor reach the destinations, their poverty force them to participate in inferior quality jobs, where terms and conditions of work are abysmally low. Thus, the deplorable plight of migrants in the destinations is also a case of **vicious circle of poverty and inequality** – where inequality perpetuates poverty (miserable plight of migrants) and vice versa.

4.3 Migration Dilemmas : Issues faced by Migrants

The issues related to migration and those of the migrants can be broadly divided into three categories, according to the phases involved in migration process. These are:

-) Pre-Migration Issues (Issues in Source Regions and during Transit)
-) Post-Migration Issues (Issues at Destination)
-) Issues of Return Migrants

(a) Pre-Migration Issues (Issues in Source Regions and during Transit): There are many issues concerning the preparatory and transitory phases of migration. The most important pre-migration issues are regarding the contexts that prepare the migration. The reasons for

push factors (e.g. agrarian distress, unemployment, socio-political tensions, resource depletion and so on) are all very crucial for the migrants – deciding their decision to migrate. The working or non-working of social safety nets such as PDS or employment guarantee schemes (e.g. MGNREGS) etc. are also, thus, can be linked to pre-migration issues.

Absence of right information about the destination regions, and employment availability there in destinations; absence of reliable institutional mechanisms (like employment exchanges or information/guidance bureaus) and institutional credit facilities and so on are other issues in this regard.

Yet another issue is the malicious practices of recruitment agents and middlemen. There are several instances of migrants being charged exorbitantly and illegally by the agents (in the name of commission or brokerage). There are also issues of cheating and trafficking. An oft-cited issue in the case of international migration is the difference between promised and actual wages and working conditions. Transportation and accommodation arrangements during transit are also a major issue.

(a) Post-Migration Issues (Issues at Destination)

Majority of the poor migrants face many issues at their destinations. Many of them end up in informal sector jobs with pathetic working and living conditions. Absence of adequate living facilities is one of the most important problems. Along with this, migrants were often forced to accept subhuman working conditions (and are often away from the reach of protective labour legislations and labour welfare schemes). Irregular payment of wages, withholding of wages, difference between promised and paid wages, salary deductions, denial of medical insurance and long working hours etc. Migrants are normally with lower levels of employment security. For instance, in GCC countries, one can see Indian migrants working as *permanently temporary workers* for 30 years or so.

Declining Job Prospects a burning problem for the Indian migrants in GCC countries. As mentioned earlier the continuous influx of Indian migrants to GCC countries has resulted in major demographic changes in the receiving countries. Accordingly, by now, most of the GCC countries now have a major proportion of Indians as residents. United Arab Emirates (UAE) alone is estimated to have more than 3.5 million Indians in 2015. However, due to changes in demography of gulf regions the employment prospects of Indians in gulf countries are steadily declining – *Emiritisation, Saudisation and Omanisation*– There is a large supply of labour of its own in the Gulf – this leads to tensions. Accordingly immigration policies in the gulf are changing considerably, in recent times.

Migrants in urban areas often live in sub-human conditions. Most of them find their stay in slums and temporary settlements with deplorable living conditions. These include inadequate access to water, electricity and other basic facilities.

Due to hostile attitude of local societies and discriminatory treatment (in terms of charging higher rents, exclusion from activities related to local-community and so on), migrants often prefer to stay in their own groups. Accordingly, in most of the destinations there are

migrants-own localities. Despite the fact that these migrant neighbourhoods provides avenues for socialisation and mutual help for migrants, the flipside is that formation of such settlements also lead to a situation of Ghettoization. There are many studies that reports that migrant ghettos are mostly characterised by sub-human living conditions (in terms of availability of water, electricity and other basic facilities). Further, such insulated communities are also often fall prey to targeted attacks from anti-social groups, whenever there is a tension between local communities and migrants.

Migrants are often left out from the democratic institutions. Obtaining voter ids, bank accounts, passports, ration cards etc. are major issues for migrants. Many a times, establishing their Indian identity itself is a major challenge. This issue is much more severe for the Bangla speaking migrants, as there is an ongoing tension in many states of India regarding the massive infiltration and illegal migration of people from Bangladesh. The introduction of NCR is the most recent episode related to this issue.

Box 4.5: Being the poorest in rural areas, migrants become the poorest in urban centres.

The vast majority belong to Scheduled Castes – between 70 and 100 per cent, compared to 11.4 per cent of Bangalore’s total urban population – and are mainly landless or own very small plots in their villages. Infrastructure in these settlements is non-existent: there is no connection to the electricity network, water is purchased from vendors, and garbage removal and security services are unknown. Bus stops are located more than three kilometres away, as are health centres, and there is no trace of government, NGO or other outside support. Lacking identity papers in the city and not being registered as voters, they are unable to attract political patronage or official support.

Source: Slum types and adaptation strategies: identifying policy-relevant differences in Bangalore, Anirudh Krishna, M S Shira, Purnima Prakash, June 26, 2014

Portability of social security benefits is a major issue. Many of the migrants fail to access some of their basic entitlements, as the documents proving their eligibility are not with them. For instance, most of the internal migrants (who are temporarily moved to an urban centre) are not with a ration card or RSBY card and thus are not in a position to access these benefits in their destination-regions.

Most of these post-migration (destination-related) issues are common to both internal and international migrants. In both the cases, the poor migrants end up in informal sector work (with precarious work conditions), in migrant-ghettos or slums – where living conditions are abysmal; and are subjected to different layers of social and political exclusion – including exclusion from local and democratic institutions.

(b) Issues of Return-Migration

There are many issues related to return-migration. Most of the migrants, especially the long-term migrants, find it very difficult to come back and settle in their native-regions. Financial help during the time of return, provision of institutional credit, assurance of basic social security benefits and/or availability of some basic employment back home are the major issues that the return-migrants often look for.

The issues faced by Indian migrants in GCC are special to mention here. There are many migrants from India, who are in jails in the gulf countries waiting for their release and safe-return. Similarly, many Indians in GCC are working illegally (without proper documents) and looking forward to a safe-return. Stories of slave-like-labour in trapped situations (as explained in a well-known Malayalam novel *Aadujeevitham – Goat Life*) are also not very rare. Releasing these Indian emigrants (by extending legal, financial and diplomatic support) is a major requirement regarding return-migration. Provision of support in terms of financing the cost of return journey of those who are helpless and in terms of arranging the transportation of dead bodies of migrants who died abroad is also an important concern.

Integration of return-migrants back to their native economies is also a major challenge, as the labour absorption capacities of local economies are strikingly low.

Chapter 4

Women and Migration in India

The report also attempts to give a closer look at gender dimensions migration in the Indian context, to understand as to see the special issues concerning women. Accordingly, attention is given on capturing specific vulnerabilities of women, discriminations based on gender divisions and so on. Attempt is also done to capture the connections between women's migration and the approach of the state – in terms of policies, regulatory framework and so on.

5.1. Women and Internal Migration

Women has always been an important participant in the process of Migration. As per Census 2011, 70% of internal migrants were women (see table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Composition of Internal Migrants – Male and Female, 2011

Category	Male (%)	Female (%)
Rural to Rural	89.4	10.6
Urban to Rural	73.1	26.9
Rural to Urban	55.4	44.6
Urban to Urban	59.1	40.1

Source: Census 2011

As shown in the table above, women form a major percentage of internal migration in all four categories i.e. rural to rural, rural to urban, urban to rural and urban to urban. For 71.2% of this migration among women, marriage has been cited as one of the major reasons. However, marriage as one of the major reason for migration has been declining over time.

There are millions of tribal women who migrate from tribal belts of Orissa, Jharkhand, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Assam, Mizoram etc. to urban areas to work as domestic helps. There has also been a trend of single women migration to these urban centres, either through middlemen or in groups.

The internal migration from rural to rural or from rural to urban is mainly seasonal in nature. However, beyond 'livelihood' being one of the important reasons of migration, for women such seasonal migration entails a great deal of freedom to escape the problems at home and to move away from the clutches of parental and familial control and explore the opportunities at new place.

Many poor women struck by the agrarian crisis have been flooding into construction and related areas, which is revealed by an increase in the proportion of women in construction. Distress migration of households into other rural and urban areas has been marked and well documented. Some of this work - such as in brick kilns are extremely exploitative, with

workers tied by credit and debt bondage to layers of contractors who control their lives and work.

Many of the women migrants who migrate from rural to urban areas view migration as a strategy that helps them to earn dowries or to save enough money for having a settled family life. The widely discussed case of Sumangali System in Tamil Nadu is a classic example for this.

Box 5.1: Sumangali System in Tamil Nadu

Sumangali Scheme is a form of illegal labour practice that still persists in parts of Tamil Nadu, southern India. Young girls are sent by their families to work in factories, including cotton spinning mills, under the promise of the payment of a wages after three of five years that is used as marriage dowry by the families. But they often endure poor working conditions, low pay and never see their wages at the end of it. Rooting out the practice of Sumangali Scheme requires long-term action on multiple fronts. As founder members of the Tripura Stakeholder Forum, “we partnered the non-profit organisation SAVE in 2010 to fight exploitation and raise awareness in the community about the prevention and eradication of Sumangali in the textile industry. Since then, our work has covered a population of more than 402,000 in 671 villages across Tamil Nadu, and we have seen more than 19,000 young people directly benefit from our projects, and more than 50,000 others indirectly benefit.”

The connection between marriage migration and the labour markets is very important to explore. It has been shown that many women, who move to newer places following marriage eventually enter in the labour markets in their spouses’ native lands. In certain cases, they even migrate further from there to seek better jobs. This is a crucial aspect that explains the ‘hidden labour migration’ behind the stream of marriage migration.

Box 5.2: Bought Wives in Haryana

Several newspaper reports cover various stories of such bought wives in Haryana. Saeeda doesn’t know her age or the place from where she belongs. All she remembers is that she was brought in Haryana 20 years ago when she was 11 years old. On pretext of being taken to Delhi by her sister and sister’s husband, she was brought to Haryana and was kept in a closed room where numerous men visited to see and offered money to purchase her. In yet another case, Geetha, purchased from Kerala, says that they (purchased wives) have to be behind veil throughout the time. It is difficult for them to adjust to food as well as climate of Northern India. Language was yet another concern. Rubina, purchased from Assam mentions that they are treated like animals. If a man is in need of money, they can be sold, re-sold or shared.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/mar/07/india-girls-women-trafficked-brides-sexual-domestic-slavery>

At times, marriage migration can also be linked to trafficking, where women from socio-economically weaker sections are brought to distant places through coercion or by deceitful practices. The trafficked women are also sold off to states with lower sex ratio such as

Haryana, Rajasthan as *Paro* or *Molki*. The sold bride is constantly under surveillance by people around her. The groom's family fear that if she is left alone, she might run away. Owing to the idea that she has been purchased, she does not have any right at home. Even when she casts her vote, the vote will be casted as per the choice of the husband. These women are expected to perform unpaid work in the home and agricultural field along with the reproductive work.

Box 5.3: Marriage Migration Stories or Slave Trade? Voices of Women Migrants

Saeeda doesn't know her age or the place from where she belongs. All she remembers is that she was bought in Haryana 20 years ago when she was 11 years old. On pretext of being taken to Delhi by her sister and sister's husband, she was brought to Haryana and was kept in a closed room where numerous men visited to see and offered money to purchase her. In yet another case, Omana, purchased from Kerala, says that she had to be behind veil throughout the time. It is difficult for her to adjust to food as well as climate of Northern India. Language was yet another concern. Rubina, purchased from Assam mentions that they (purchased wives) are treated like animals. If a man is in need of money, they can be sold, re-sold or shared.

There are many such cases like Saeeda, Omana and Rubina, which lies on the blurred line of trafficking and marriage migration.

Source: Compiled from multiple newspaper clippings.

5.2. Women's International Migration

Migration of women has also crossed national boundaries and has expanded to the international terrain. There are several women from India who travel to another country to work as domestic workers, nurses, teachers, IT professionals etc. However, the emigration policy of the home country restricts the migration of women, in some cases, by putting age as one of the major criteria for migration. For migrating to Africa or GCC countries, women should attain at least 30 years of age. In many cases, the restrictions are also imposed through licensing the channel of migration. For example, for recruitment of domestic help and Nurses from India to GCC countries, certain registered agencies have been licensed in India, only through which these women can be recruited. Any other agencies are not authorized to recruit women in these two professions for the GCC countries. The government claims these policies will act as preventive mechanism taking into account, the increased cases of trafficking and violence on immigrated women in GCC countries. The solution for increased violence on women lies in the view that the best way to protect Indian women from abuse is not to let them go in first place (Kodoth, 2016). However, such licensing leads to increase in the cost of migration, which propels a person to undertake unauthorized and undocumented means to immigrate and hence exposing themselves to the risk of being exploited. Complete reliance of migrants on the sponsor in the destination country and the lack of support from Indian embassy, perpetuates violence on these women.

Migration of women to these countries are not just economic opportunity but a planned strategy motivated by the objective of collecting dowry, saving enough for to get married, gaining experience for further migrating to developed countries such as US, UK, Australia etc. The words quote in the box shows that the situation is very akin to that of Sumangali System in the case of internal female migrants in Tamil Nadu.

Box 5.4 : Migration to save for Marriage and Higher Studies

“After graduation, I’ll work here for two years [in India]. That is the minimum experience required for the Gulf and it will give me the time to save up for the fare. Once I am there I will work for two years and then I’ll get married. My husband will come to work with me in the Gulf. After two years it will be possible to have children. During that time, we will have the time to save money and I’ll have the time to pass the TOEFL and maybe the CGFNS. So it will be possible for us to go to England or to Connecticut where I have some family.”

--Prospective nurse migrant (20 years) from Kochi (Kodoth, 2016; p45)

There have been immense cases where these immigrant women are being exploited. Trafficking, sex trade and organ trade has always appeared in the policy debate concerning female migration. The **Kafala system** of Saudi Arabia, associates an immigrant with an employer, which s/he cannot change as per their will. This dependence on the employer leads to exploitation of these women. In the recent incident where a women from Kerala working as domestic help in Saudi Arabia, her hands were chopped off by the family where she worked. This case generated lots of spur in the country. However, as of now, India does not have any policy which can protect its citizens working in different countries, from any form of physical or mental exploitation.

Apart from the mental harassment in the destination country, these women, when they move to another country, leaving back their family and children, they are sometime looked down upon by their family members as well as the society. The inability to fulfil the *duty* of being a mother and a care giver for elderly parents, she is tormented by the family members back home.

5.1. Women’s Migration: Some Generic Issues

Irrespective of the category of migration (i.e. internal or international) women’s migration and women migrants have some issues in common. Women migrants compared to their male counterpart often face discrimination in the labour market in terms of lower wages and adverse working conditions (e.g. longer hours of work, absence of basic facilities and confinement to lower work). Adding to this, quite often sexual harassment at workplace is also a major problem.

Trafficking is another crucial aspect, which associated to women's migration. In several instances, women who are from socio-economically weaker segments of the society become victims of trafficking. And, quite often, even the anti-trafficking laws will also tend to penalising the victims.

In certain cases, 'women's only' migration is restricted legally or in practice. The age-restrictions on migration of women to GCC countries is an example for legal restriction. The Jodi system exists in informal labour markets in Northern India (and in many other parts) is another example. Here, the labour recruiters and employers will consider to employ women, only if they are joining the work, along with their husbands. Accordingly, in many factories and workplaces in North India, one can see married couples working together. Some of the field studies show that even some unmarried girls access such Jodi jobs, by showing one of the male workers in the workplace, as her husband. Such arrangements sometimes lead to more complicated issues like wage-theft, rent-seeking and other pernicious practices by the fake-husbands.

Both the cases cited above shows some underlying patriarchal considerations related to women's migration. In the first case, women below a particular year is considered as helpless and thus to be protected by law. This is *prima facie* appears to be a supportive intervention. But, in effect, it may also create barriers for women to freely migrate. At times, in order to circumvent the law, some of them may even resort to illegal ways of migration, eventually falling prey to the uncouth practices of middlemen and traffickers.

The single-woman migrants or women-along groups of migrants, who migrate through middlemen, are made to stay in very deplorable condition with 15-20 people in a single room and poor hygiene facilities. Because of their dependence on middle men for employment and stay, they are left alone and vulnerable, both before being placed for work and even after placement. Their salaries are partially paid, their documents are withheld and are harassed by the middlemen. Many of these girls are even duped by middle men and are later sold in the cities. Sometimes, women, after migrating to cities, are contracted with diseases such as HIV and Cancer. Such cases are also attached to the notion of purity and on the ground of breaking social norms, their families are boycotted back in villages.

It is important to note that migrant women are not a homogenous group and thus the issues concerning various streams of women migration vary considerably. Accordingly, it is very important to capture concerning the specificities of distinct categories of women's migration – such as migration of tribal women to cities for domestic work; migration of rural women for work in factories (e.g. Garment Sector, Fish processing industry) and informal sector jobs (brick kiln work). In most of such situations women migrant workers are found trapped in exploitative work conditions and confined workplaces. Even in international segment, we can see women migrants moving too far off countries and work and live in difficult conditions, as nurses, factory workers and informal sector workers (see box below)

Box 5.5: Kerala Nurses trapped in ISIS affected areas

Lots of Nurses from Kerala migrate to West Asian countries for work. Lots of newspaper covered the case of Tikrit hospital of Iraq which is one such hospital which employs nurses from Kerala. On 13th June 2014, the militants occupied the ground floor of the Hospital and opened random firing. The patients and doctors rushed to second floor, which had to be converted to dormitory, to accommodate everyone. The masked gunmen would come upstairs and take few doctors and nurses downstairs to check their patients. Later, after 3-4 days, all the nurses were asked to leave Tikrit hospital and were taken to a nearby non-conflict location. They were made to sit in a row and were recorded on camera to convey the world that since they saved their lives, they were not killed by the ISIS members. Later, the militants arranged for the bus so as to drop them off at the borders where they could meet the rescue team. After meeting the rescue team, special flight were arranged to bring these Kerala nurses home.

Source:<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/how-india-got-back-46-nurses-from-isis-in-2014/flight-to-home/slideshow/62220931.cms>
<https://www.deccanchronicle.com/140705/nation-current-affairs/article/%E2%80%98unpaid-nurses-risked-their-life%E2%80%99>

Chapter 6

Migration and the Neo-liberal State

While understanding migration scenario and issues of migrants , with respect to India, it is important to examine the role of state, which is a crucial factor in terms of defining and determining the overall governance framework of migration and the broader background for the working and living conditions of labouring poor and resource poor in a country.

World over, there is a general understanding that the governments have become more and more neo-liberal in nature and it has implications for working poor (including categories such as migrants). So, the first step is to understand as to what neo-liberal state is and what are its features.

As explained earlier, the neo-liberal state is the one which is moving more closely with the interests of capital, market and privileged segments of the society. The pro-market stand of the state can be direct or indirect. So, it is important to analyse the state's action and inaction to see the resultant implications. Further, neo-liberal state is considered to be less interested in taking care of the issues of marginalised and underprivileged in the society. As migrant poor falls to this category, obviously, there is some merit in engaging the concept of neo-liberalism in understanding the migration scenario and migrants' worries. Accordingly, the report will critically look at the role of state and its policies, giving attention on a wide range of aspects such as: state's expenditure on social head; indifferent approach of the state towards welfare programmes and protective legislations; shrinking of social security measures; anti-poor and pro-rich policies and so on.

6.1. Neo-Liberal State: Generic Features

A salient feature of a neo-liberal state is its friendly approach to private capital and openness to international trade and investment. So, in order to understand whether the state is neo-liberal, the first thing is to examine whether the state is becoming more and more capital-friendly. As per the available data, during the post-liberalisation era, there has been a considerably increase in FDI flows to India. As compared to FDI equity inflow at USD 2378.68 million in 2000-2001 and USD 35120.8 million in 2011-2012, FDI equity inflow for 2016-2017 has been that of USD 43478.27 million. Total FDI for financial year 2016, stands at USD 55.56 billion which increased to USD 60.22 billion in FY 2017.

Movement from nationalisation to de-nationalisation and privatisation is a characteristic feature of neo-liberal state. Thus, understanding the process of privatization of state-owned Industries will help understanding the penetration of neo-liberalism'. About 30 states – owned enterprises have been privatised since 1992. In India, there are several examples including de-nationalisation of public sector companies, auctioning out oil fields, air fields, water and natural resources to the private sectors and bringing in reform in almost all sectors, including in electricity, environment and so on.

The other features of neo-liberal state include: Cutting down public expenditure on social heads and reducing the safety net for poor. In India, the social sector spending has declined considerably since the liberalisation period. And, there is a tendency of moving away from right-based approach when it comes to social security and welfare measure for poor. Accordingly, rather than providing benefits to poor directly by the state (such as subsidies, support prices, unemployment allowances, pensions, health security benefits, housing facilities and so on), there is a visible move towards shifting these responsibilities to insurance providers and/or the beneficiaries themselves. Thus, the large scale emergence of insurance based health care (RSBY, Ayushman Bharat) and increasing priority given to direct-income transfer to beneficiaries etc. need to be viewed from this angle.

Box 6.1: Migrants Living in Slums - An Indication of Failure of Housing Schemes?

“Affordable housing initiatives in India have catered to permanent migrants, while ignoring the needs of temporary and seasonal migrants. Seasonal migrants are not in search of permanent residence, rather low-cost rental accommodation would better suit their transient nature. In the absence of such accommodation, seasonal migrants are forced to live in de-humanised circumstances, be it slums, open spaces or in small, shared rental homes. Seasonal workers, quite often, also end up living in their workplaces. From the perspective of inclusive growth and development, the role of any housing scheme is to provide affordable avenues of residence to migrant workers as well as job seekers whether long-term or seasonal. **If migrants resort to living in slums, then the housing scheme has failed. PMAY (U) has suffered failure in this sense”.**

Source: D’Souza (2019)

Note: Emphasis added

Yet another aspect is the exclusionary tendency in governmental schemes, acts and other interventions. Migrants are often excluded from many benefits that are available to the local community in the destination areas. These include denial of subsidised and free facilities (such as PDS, cooking gas) and health insurance schemes and/or welfare programmes (e.g. RSBY, welfare funds). In certain cases, the participation of migrants in democratic institutions are also restricted by denying them voter cards, licences and other basic documents (bank accounts, aadhar cards and so on). Quite often, the exclusionary tendencies also include discriminatory practices in recognising and legalising migrants/refugees. The cases of Chakamas, Rohingyas and the recent matter of introduction of NRC are to be understood in this context.

Box 6.2: NRC and Its Implications

National Register of Citizens (NRC) has been one of the most burning issues of North East India (especially Assam) concerning migration and migrants. Assam allegedly has huge illegal migrants from Bangladesh, so much so that the local population feel threatened to be cornered as minorities in their own land. The government, in order to identify the illegal migrants, has implemented NRC in Assam, initially in pilot mode in 2010 and later in full-fledged way in 2015. The registration requires an individual to obtain a proof of them being a citizen of India. As per the registration data, as of 30th July 2018, 40707 people are out of the list, the fate of who are undecided. The Bangladeshi government rejects any claim of illegal infiltration from Bangladeshis to India, which means these people won't be accepted in Bangladesh, while their Indian citizenship already seems to be at stake. Hence, these groups of people are on the verge of becoming stateless.

The entire process of registration has been under criticism by several activists. The people under scrutiny, whose name does not appear on the list are majorly poor, helpless and uneducated people. They haven't even been provided the lawyer on behalf of the government to appear before Foreign Tribunals (FT). Hence, these people, in order to save their citizenship, end up selling their assets and other belongings in order to hire a lawyer for them. Those who work in far off places are called several times in a month to appear before the FTs. Even the minor documental error such as spelling mistakes, which is quite prevalent in Indian government documents, has led to rejection of their identity as an Indian citizen. Women are the worst sufferers as these women, who have hardly attended schools and are married off to distant villages; do not find their name inscribed in any of the government documents, hence making them an illegal migrant or a non-citizen. In this entire process, it seems quite easier to declare anyone as non-citizen because the same set of documents can be challenged multiple times by different set of officers involved in the process and the onus to prove the citizenship lies on these people every time.

Amidst these tensions of NRC, the government introduced a bill in 2016 named Citizenship Amendment Bill. The bill intends to grant citizenship to all Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis, Jains and Christians from neighbouring countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Therefore, this automatically filters out all the Muslims from these countries residing in India and those listed in unregistered list of NRC. This has sparked another criticism for the government for putting up its Islamophobic stance. India has already been dealing with Rohingya crisis for over a long period of time and with the advent of NRC, there is an apprehension that, there will be yet another episode of struggles of stateless people.

6.2. Neo-Liberal State: Specific Aspects Concerning Migration, Labour and Migrant's Issues

Coming specifically to migration and issues related to migrants also one can assume that in a neo-liberal era more and more resources are earmarked for corporate forces and this results in erosion of livelihoods. This situation of resource-insecurity faced by poor inter alia forces them to migrate.

The legal protection and welfare measures given to migrants are very weak in India. For instance, India has not, so far, ratified any of the ILO conventions related to migration. There is only one major law in India related to internal migration. This act, Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act of 1979 in its essence aims at providing fair working conditions to workers, regulating the contractors and assuring welfare of the migrant workers. By now, it is widely understood that this act is not very effective and it is not properly implemented. Further, this act is also being considered to be repealed in the near future, if the draft labour codes, under consideration of the government, are approved. Trade Union Act is currently being considered to be repealed. Overall, there is an openness to reduce wages, deunionisation of workers and to promote unregulated labour markets (which is evident from the growth of precarious work in India, during the past few decades – a phenomenon, which has even penetrated to secured zones such as organised private sector and government sector).

Many of the government interventions to combat agrarian distress and to promote rural livelihood options (such as Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, Attracting and Retaining of Youth in Agriculture - ARYA) are not fully successful in providing employment and checking distress-migration. The ever increasing quantum of rural-urban migration is an evidence to support this argument.

Box 6.3: Distress Migration – A Sign of Failure of Employment Guarantee Programme?

The agrarian-distress affected migrants from Bundelkh and vouch due to lack of funds and corruption, MGNREGS (which has the potential of checking out-migration from the area) had failed to provide adequate jobs. This forced them to leave their villages in search of employment.

Source: <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/GPVmiHEC94V9Cg0o6VKrdP/Cattle-deaths-and-hunger-signal-looming-famine-in-Bundelkhan.html>

State's laxity on migration matters can also be seen in the case of adequate availability of reliable data on various categories of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. There is no systematic and consistent efforts and mechanisms for gathering data on various categories of migration and migrants. The data on international migration is very sketchy as there is no

focussed effort on strengthening it. Coming to internal migration, importance given to data sources such as NSSO has been considerably on the decline, which will surely emerge as a constraint for planning effective measures for the benefit of migrants. The growing trends of homelessness, slum formations and ghettoization in urban areas is also in a way owe to the absence of data with the development planners.

Box 6.4: Non-Documentation and Under-Estimation of Data on Urban Settlements

“Indian government agencies have only recently started to count the number of people who live in slum settlements, and the methodologies that different official agencies employ disagree with one another. Adopting one definition of slums, the National Sample Survey Organization counted 44 million slum dwellers in 2008, but adopting another definition, the Census of India counted 65 million slum dwellers in 2011. Regardless of definition, these official agencies commonly underestimate the slum population. These issues are hardly unique to India; across the Global South, there is an “astonishing lack of data about informal settlements””

Source: Rains et. al(2018)

Changing role of the state can be seen from two sides. On the one hand, there is a reduction in the proportion of public expenditure earmarked for the welfare of poor. On the other hand, there are instances to show that the state is becoming more and friendlier towards the process of privatization and growth of corporate capital. In such a situation the issues concerning labouring poor and marginalised groups are often neglected. And, migration landscape of India provides ample supporting evidences for this argument.

In conclusion, it can be stated that along with poverty and inequality, the discernible shift in the role of state towards the neo-liberal path is a crucial factor that shapes the migration landscape of India, especially when it comes to migration of the poor and the deprived.

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