

SESSION 10: MIGRATION AND REVERSE MIGRATION AMID COVID-19

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Objective:

1. To outline the source and destination streams of migrant labours in different regions of India.
2. To discuss the COVID-19 triggered reverse migration in India.
3. To provide a critical appraisal of government of India's intervention towards reducing the spread of COVID-19.

Outline(Key Themes and Issues)

- Migration: Source and Destination Streams
- Effects of the Lockdown
- Impact of COVID-19 on the Indigenous People in India
- India: COVID-19 Government Intervention Schemes

Session 10: Migration and Reverse Migration Amid COVID-19

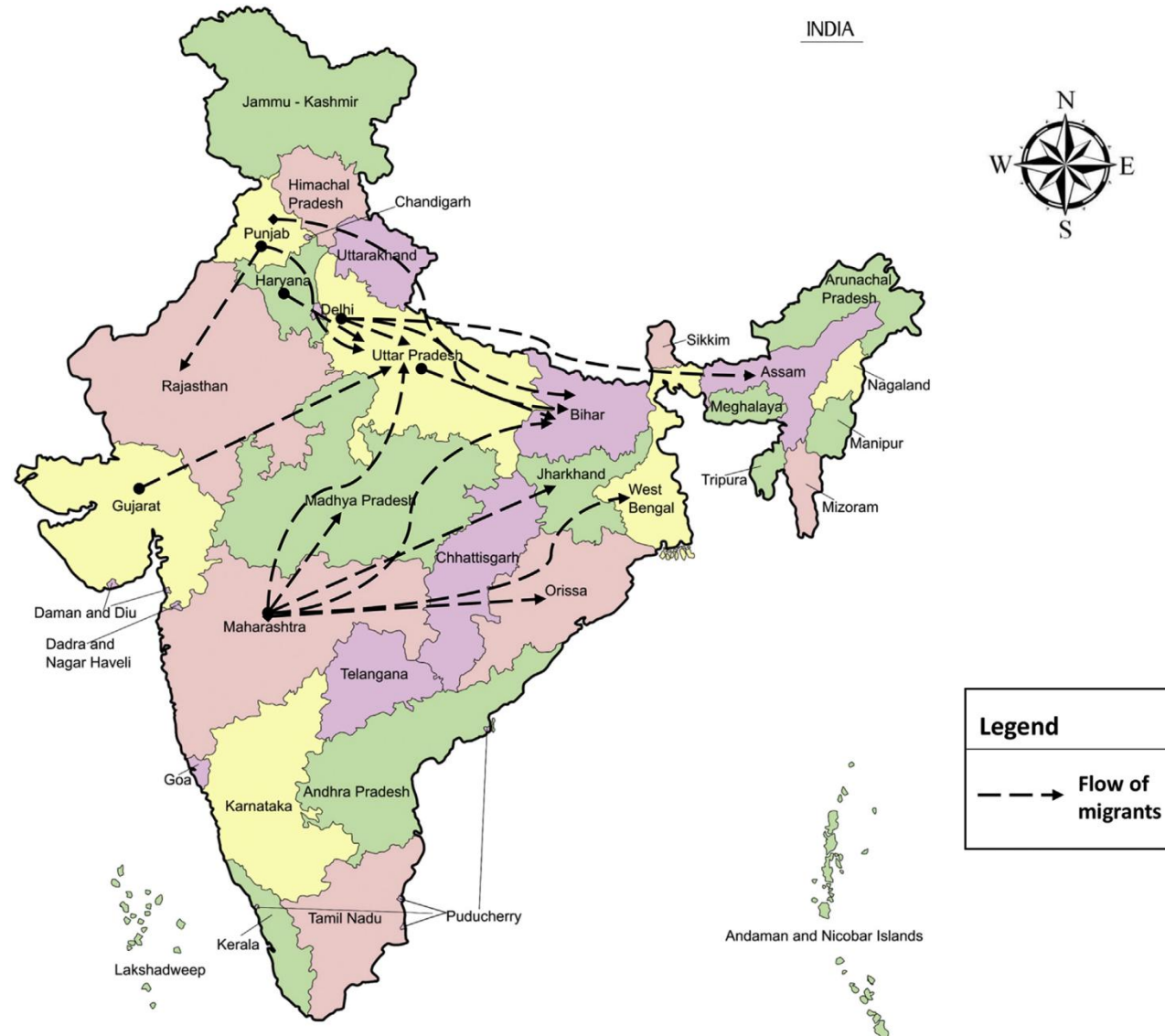
- ▶ Migration or the movement of population from one place to another is a product of social, cultural, economic, political and/or physical circumstances.
- ▶ Migration is usually defined as a geographical movement involving a change from the usual place of residence.
- ▶ Migration is a form of spatial mobility, involving change in the usual place of residence and implies a movement beyond an administrative boundary.
- ▶ Migrant workers constitute a key demography of the Indian workforce.

- ▶ The most striking feature of migration is that it can change the structure of labour market drastically at a given point of time.
- ▶ It also has a drastic impact on sectoral growth of the economy.
- ▶ For example, the current exodus has direct implications on MSMEs, supply chain of FMCG, agricultural products due to reverse-migration of rickshaw-taxi and truck drivers.

- ▶ Seasonal migration in India: 10 million.
- ▶ Reverse migration refers to movement of people from place of employment to their native places.
- ▶ Courtesy, COVID-19, the country is beholding the second largest mass migration in its history after the Partition of India in 1947, where more than 14 million people were displaced and migrated to India and Pakistan respectively, depending on their religious faiths.

Source and Destination Points

- ▶ According to the Census of India (2011), Maharashtra State and Delhi saw the maximum number of flow of migrants from the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Odisha, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Assam with around 54.3 million migrating out of their origin state.
- ▶ With the world coming to a stand still due to lockdown as a measure to combat COVID-19, limited employment opportunities, impending fear of unknown future and financial crisis, thousands of underprivileged people and labourers started to march back to their native places and home states.
- ▶ The outflow of migrants to their respective states has been depicted in Figure 1.



Source: Mukhra, Krishnan and Kanchan(2020:2). Map of India depicting the migration trends

Effects of the Lockdown

- ▶ The imposition of the lockdown as a measure to contain the exponential progression of the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the unskilled and semi-skilled migrant labourers the most.
- ▶ In the absence of transport facilities, during lockdown, the panic stricken labourers and their families including infants, pregnant women and the elderly walked thousands of kilometres barefoot without food and money to reach their native places.
- ▶ Many of these migrants were left stranded mid-way, facing starvation and misery, and some even died before they could reach their destination.

- ▶ The issue of crop harvest for rabi and the sowing of kharif will create some relief in the short run but the source regions cannot be relied upon to take the additional load of the returning sons and daughters of the region.
- ▶ Rough estimates indicate that roughly more than 120 to 140 million are, at the moment, either walking back or are stranded in various camps. This number does not take into account the vast majority of slums that characterise our cities and house the migrants.

- ▶ The actual numbers wanting to return home would be fairly large.
- ▶ The post-coronavirus recovery of the shattered world of migrants would witness diverse and multiple realities.
- ▶ ILO estimates are that around about 400 million workers in the informal economy are at the risk of falling deeper into poverty during the crisis.

- ▶ The extent of this sudden reverse migration was such that, even the best of the efforts of the Government of India, could not match the crisis.
- ▶ The authorities have developed shelters and quarantine homes for the deprived migrants and are looking after 600,000 migrants and providing food to more than 2.2 million individuals under Free Ration Scheme by Delhi Government and One Nation One Ration Card Scheme by the Central Government.
- ▶ Still millions of migrants are unreachable and are yet to receive aid by the Government.

- ▶ These migrants are vulnerable to the SARS-CoV-2 infection and can ultimately become the reservoirs for the spread of the disease. Even the labour camps and quarantine shelter homes may raise the jeopardy of contamination amongst them.
- ▶ Handling the compromised mental health of the migrating workers is another challenge.
- ▶ Depressed by the misery around, and lack of future employment opportunities and financial support is likely to result in suicidal tendencies.

- ▶ On the other hand, the industries, agriculture, textile or construction, etc. are dependent on manpower.
- ▶ The lack of labour is likely to affect the productivity of various sectors leading to an economic slowdown.
- ▶ Thus, the reverse migration is likely to hit the economy of the nation as well.
- ▶ The COVID-19 triggered massive reverse migration is going to have far reaching implications for the migrants as well as the country, unless adequate and timely measures are taken to address this issue.

Impact of COVID-19 on the Indigenous People in India

- ▶ There are 75 tribal groups who have been categorized by Ministry of Home Affairs as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in 18 States and UT of A&N Islands.
- ▶ The detection of 10 positive COVID-19 cases (patients are non-tribals) in Port Blair, the capital of Andaman and Nicobar Islands has put the administration on its toes.
- ▶ Nine of these infected people had travelled to Delhi to attend a religious congregation at Nizamuddin Markaz, organised by Tableeghi Jamaat, from 1-15 March 2020 while the tenth patient is the wife of one of those who travelled to Delhi.

- ▶ In addition, over 2,000 persons (non tribals) are under quarantine in Port Blair as on 1 April.
- ▶ Although as on date, no COVID-19 case has been reported among the tribes, experts and anthropologists have warned that the spread of the deadly coronavirus among the fragile indigenous peoples has the potential to wipe them out.
- ▶ There are reports that the Gotti Koya and other tribals in Mulugu district of Telangana were wearing face masks made of teak leaves, tribals in Chhattisgarh's Bastar district were wearing face masks made from palm leaves and tribals of Vizianagaram district in Andhra Pradesh were covering their faces with mask made from herbal leaves, due to non-availability of protective masks in the tribal areas.

Conclusion & Policy Implications

- ▶ First and foremost, the government needs to ensure that the distressed migrants get back to their homes safely.
- ▶ At the same time, quarantine strategies need to be devised to prevent this migration led spread of infection to the remotest places of India.
- ▶ The migrants should be assured of safety and financial security and motivated to get back to work at the earliest possible time.
- ▶ SARSCoV-2 is here to stay, and hence, it is recommended to follow due safety measures to combat its threat, at least till the time vaccine is developed.

Need for a Charter of Rights

- ▶ The pressure of this reverse migration is going to be felt in the fields of agriculture and allied activity and will put immense pressure on a system that is already broken.
- ▶ There is a felt need of a charter of the rights of the working population across the board that ensures the right to livelihood, food, security and above all dignity of labour (Dandekar & Ghai, 2020).
- ▶ Such a charter should become the guiding principle in the post-coronavirus phase of India's polity and economy.

- With this I come to an end of the session on ‘Migration and Reverse Migration amid COVID-19’ and leave you with few questions which you will find easy.
- Thanks for watching the video.

Quiz Question

Q.1 According to ILO(2020 estimates) approximately how many workers in the informal economy are at the risk of falling deeper into poverty during the crisis.

- (a) 400 million
- (b) 200 million
- (C) 300 million
- (d) None of the above

Q.2 Which one of the following region has the highest migrant population?

- (a) Mumbai
- (b) Delhi
- (c) Bangalore
- (d) Chennai

Q.3 Which one of the following streams is dominated by male migrants in India?

- (a) Rural-Rural
- (b) Urban-rural
- (c) Rural-urban
- (d) Urban-Urban

Readings

- Dandekar, Ajay and Rahul Ghai (2020) 'Migration and Reverse Migration in the age of COVID-19'. *EPW* Vol. LV, No. 19, , p.28-31.
- Mukhra, R . et.al (2020) 'COVID-19 Sets off Mass Migration in India'. *Achieves of Medical Research*, published by Elsevier Inc, June 3, p. 1-3.
- World Bank (2020) 'COVID-19 Crisis Through a Migration Lens. Migration and Development Brief, no. 32; World Bank, Washington, DC □ World Bank. Available at:. 2020. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/33634>.



Thank you