



# Interstate Migration: The Need for Integrated Policy and Governance Approach

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Discussion Paper

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Discussion Paper

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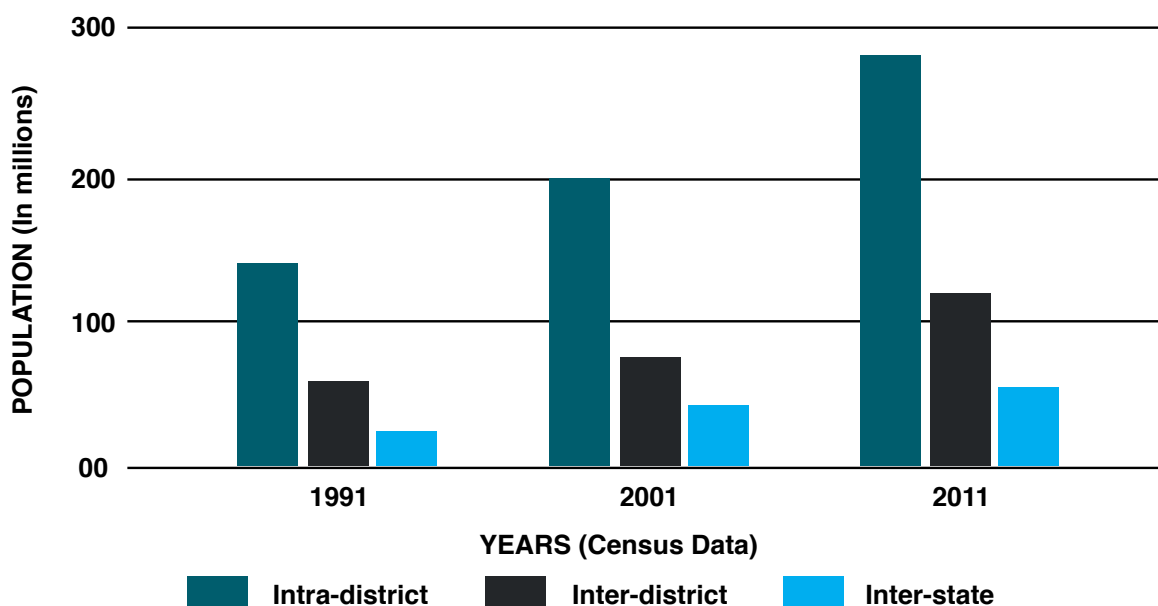
| Arushi Raj

## INTRODUCTION

The United Nations defines migration as the movement of persons away from their usual residence within a state (internal migration) or across international borders (immigration). Over the decades, migration has become a universal phenomenon. It has significantly impacted population change, mobility patterns, demographic transition, urbanisation, and economic development (Bhagat & Keshri, 2020). In a developing country like India, migration is mainly influenced by social structures and economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, underdevelopment, and regional disparities (Das & Saha, 2013). It is often seen as a coping and adaptive strategy for India's poor and marginalised groups. Recently, growing urbanisation, improvement of educational levels and opportunities, and development of transport and communication have also become new factors contributing to spatial mobility (Bhagat, 2016). Internal migration is both the cause and consequence of economic development and urbanisation.

According to the Census of India (2011), there were 454 million migrants in India (38% of the population), as compared to 315 million in 2001 and 220 million in 1991. In 2011, out of the total migrants, 99% were internal migrants, and 1% were immigrants. In India, an interstate migrant is defined as a person residing away from their usual state of residence and residing longer than six months in their destination state (Aggarwal et al., 2020). Interstate migrants constitute 12.1 % of total migrants comprising 54.2 million migrants compared to 26.6 million in 1991 and 41.1 million in the 2001 Census. In the last three decades, a significant number of interstate migrants have originated from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu, while Maharashtra, Delhi and Gujarat have been major destination states (Census of India, 2011). Interstate migration is linked to underdevelopment, poverty, social inequalities, regional disparities, rural stagnation, rural neglect, and uneven national development.

### INTERNAL MIGRANTS IN INDIA



Even though migrant workers account for 10% of India's GDP and serve as the backbone of several economic sectors such as construction, domestic work, textile and apparel, they remain at the periphery of society as they live in precarious conditions and face numerous difficulties in their destination state (International Labour Organisation, 2020). A majority of migrant workers, specifically interstate migrant workers, are what Jan Breman (1996) calls 'footloose labour', engaged in casual work in the informal/unorganised sector, where the lack of regulation compounds their vulnerability. They have no access to public safety nets, face unsafe and unsanitary working and living conditions, and are denied adequate healthcare, nutrition, and housing. Moreover, the recent COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown led to millions of migrants returning to their home states due to job losses and economic disruptions caused by the pandemic. It highlighted the magnitude of vulnerabilities and hardships faced by interstate migrant workers and the need for social protection policies and schemes for them.

While interstate migration provides millions of people with new avenues of employment and livelihood opportunities, it also pushes them into unequal and exploitative working and living conditions. The recent pandemic has further exacerbated this inequality and pushed vulnerable interstate migrant workers into extreme precarity. Interstate migrant workers in India are among the most vulnerable and disenfranchised groups, requiring serious policy attention. Till now, there is no integrated policy framework addressing the challenges faced by them. This paper aims to provide an overview of trends, changing patterns, and drivers of interstate migration in India, as well as to highlight the challenges faced by migrant workers and examine the key policy concerns related to interstate migration. Further, it calls for an integrated and holistic approach to understanding and building policies for interstate migrant workers in India.

## **LOCATING INTERSTATE MIGRANTS IN THE URBAN LABOUR ECONOMY**

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The Ministry of Finance's (2017) economic survey estimated an interstate migrant population of 60 million and an inter-district migrant population of 80 million. In terms of geographical streams, migration is classified into rural to rural, urban to rural, rural to urban, and urban to urban, depending upon the need and economic status of migrants and the availability of employment opportunities in different regions. The most predominant stream of movement is rural-to-rural migration, accounting for 62%, followed by the rural-to-urban stream at 20%, then the urban-to-urban at 13%, and urban-to-rural migration at 5% (Rajan & Bhagat, 2021). However, in recent years, the rural-urban stream of migration has been growing, and it has become an essential governing factor of spatial patterns and demographic changes.

Post-liberalisation period, uneven development became more pronounced, exacerbating the gap between rural and urban areas and accelerating growth in urban centres, primarily located in the

North, West, and Southern regions of the country (Srivastava, 2020a). This rapid urbanisation, along with a lack of livelihood growth in rural areas, debt and agricultural poverty, pushed people to migrate from agriculture-dominated rural areas with low marginal productivity of labour to capitalised urban regions with high labour productivity and higher wage structures.

The urban population was enumerated at 37.7 million in 2011, likely to increase to 600 million by 2030. India has about 8000 cities and towns, but 43 % of the urban population lives in only 53 cities with a population of a million or more (Singh, 2016). These cities are significant centres of wealth and economic growth, and most migration for work and employment is directed towards them. Nearly half of the urban population consists of migrants, and 20% are interstate migrants. However, recent studies suggest that economic reasons do not solely drive rural-to-urban migration. It may also be due to an individual's desire for a better life or an improvement in their overall well-being (Jha & Pandey, 2020).

The total number of persons who migrated from rural to urban areas increased to 32.15 million in 2011 as compared to 20.5 million in 2001 (Census of India, 2011). Migrants' main places of origin have traditionally been the densely populated and less urbanised states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, with major receiving states being the more industrialised and urbanised states of Maharashtra, Delhi, Punjab, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. In 2011, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar were the largest sources of interstate migrants, with 8.2 million and 6.3 million out-migrants. While Maharashtra and Delhi were the top receiving states of migrants, with 6 million and 4.7 million migrants, respectively (Census of India, 2011).

The outmigration from rural to urban areas does not only occur in a U shape. Interstate rural to urban migrants vary in terms of their duration of stay, socio-economic characteristics, and job status in the destination areas. For many decades, there has been a rise in seasonal and circular migration, where migrants return to their home regions after working in destination areas for varying periods. Recent evidence suggests that temporary or seasonal migration occurs at a much higher rate than permanent or semi-permanent migration. In 2007-08, about 21 out of every 1000 migrants (approximately 14 million people) were classified as temporary or seasonal migrants (Rajan & Bhagat, 2021). Since the liberalisation period, temporary/seasonal migration has become the primary form of labour migration in India. Due to agriculture being heavily dependent on seasonal factors, the seasonal cycle also shapes rural-to-urban migration.

It is observed that seasonal and circular migration from rural to urban areas is closely connected to the growth of the informal sector, as most interstate workers are absorbed into the unorganised sector of the economy. Interstate migrant workers typically come from lower-income groups with little to no education, making them more vulnerable to a lack of social security, limited rights, and inferior political and social status. They are usually engaged in precarious, manual, unskilled or semi-skilled jobs and struggle to find decent entry-level employment (John et al., 2020). The key sectors with a large concentration of interstate migrant workers are construction, domestic work, textile, and brick



manufacturing. Within these sectors, migrants are primarily employed to perform menial tasks that involve hard labour and carry a high level of risk, tasks that the local labour force is often unwilling to undertake (Borhade, 2017).

Data suggests that most interstate migrant workers are males between the ages of 16 and 40, and are semi-permanent or temporary migrants. The length of their stay at the destination state can vary from 60 days to one year, and they often send remittances back to their home villages (Abbas & Verma, 2014). Additionally, historically disadvantaged communities such as the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, religious minorities and Other Backward Castes are heavily represented in rural-to-urban migration (Deshingkar & Akter, 2009). For instance, one district of rice producing belt in India has almost 500,000 seasonal migrant flow, mainly coming from the lower caste, tribals and Muslims (Srivastava & Sasikumar, 2003).

Rural-to-urban migration exacerbates the problem of surplus labour in urban areas. This tends to reduce earnings within the urban informal sector and lead to a high prevalence of urban poverty. The flow of interstate migration is also associated with significant growth in informal squatter settlements and pockets of poor neighbourhoods that house both recent migrants and long-term urban poor residents. When they migrate to urban areas, most interstate migrant workers take on the most precarious jobs in informal labour markets and reside in informal settlements with limited resources and facilities, minimal access to social protection or rights.

## CHALLENGES FACED BY INTERSTATE MIGRANT WORKERS

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Migrant workers face unique challenges due to high levels of mobility and by virtue of belonging to economically vulnerable and socially marginalised groups. They are often disadvantaged in terms of employment, education, and health compared to native populations (Borhade, 2017). The major chunk of interstate migrant workers are unskilled and employed in the informal sector. They suffer a wide range of deprivations at destination states, such as inadequate social, economic, and health security or education for their children. These are also attributable to the absence of kin and social networks, difficulties adjusting to a new environment as well as administrative barriers across states.

Within the framework of exclusion from social protection, MacAuslan (2011) differentiates the vulnerabilities faced by migrants into migrant-specific, migrant-intensified and bureaucratically imposed ones. 'Migrant specific' vulnerabilities are caused due to exclusion from 'source'-based social provisionings, such as food insecurity at destination states caused by lack of socio-political networks, voice or even identity of migrant workers at the destination. Further, 'migrant-intensified' vulnerabilities refer to how migration can exacerbate pre-existing disadvantages, for instance, poverty. Bureaucratically imposed disadvantages refer to official attitudes and perceptions that enhance customary discrimination, in this case, the very invisibility of migrant workers as rights-bearing citizens. Due to

the combination of these different vulnerabilities, interstate migrants continually face difficulties in becoming a whole part of the economic, cultural, social, and political lives of their destination state.

## **INFORMAL NATURE OF EMPLOYMENT & EXPLOITATIVE WORKING CONDITIONS**

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Due to the large influx of migrant workers, fluidity in movement and informality of work, workers are hired irregularly by employers and intermediaries and constitute cheaper labour forces than locals. This allows employers to get away from providing them with basic minimum services, including health, education of children, appropriate living and working conditions etc. (Borhade, 2017). Due to the informality of the work, most migrant workers do not have enforceable contracts with their employers/ contractors. They are not united or backed by trade unions, are less educated, lack job market knowledge, and are disconnected from social networks/ family ties. Tracing the working conditions of internal migrants, Periodic Labour Force Survey of 2017-18 revealed that more than 70% of the workers in the non-agricultural sector with a regular salary, consisting primarily of migrants, lacked any written job contract, and 50% of not enrolled for any social security benefits (Khan & Arokkiaraj, 2021). In terms of wages in urban areas, the average wage earnings per day by casual labourers engaged in works other than public works ranged between Rs. 314 to Rs. 335 among males and nearly Rs. 186 to Rs. 201 among females during 2017-18 (Bhagat et al., 2020). Moreover, according to a study by NHRC, around 57% people in Delhi, 65% in Gujarat, 59% in Haryana and 69% in Maharashtra reported that employers discriminate against interstate migrant workers in the labour market in respect of wages and accommodation.

Further, they are subjected to unfair labour practices such as infrequent and low wages, long working hours, exploitative working conditions, high degree of exposure to a wide range of occupational safety and health (OSH) risks and hazards, including fire accidents, electrocution, crush injuries, etc. For instance, a report by UNESCO and UNICEF (2011) stated that migrant workers are often exposed to toxic chemicals, dust, accidents at sites and unsafe working conditions.

## **LIMITED SOCIAL PROTECTION - LACK OF HEALTHCARE, HOUSING AND OTHER ENTITLEMENTS**

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One of the significant problems that migrant workers face is loss of access to public services, welfare schemes and social protection when they cross borders to a different location. This is especially true for interstate migrants. Additionally, this issue is further complicated by barriers of language and jurisdiction. Even though the freedom of movement is constitutionally protected, the access



to entitlements is not, including entitlements under the National Food Security Act, 2013 through the Public Distribution System (PDS) or even access to government schemes such as the National Rural Health Mission. Many schemes and entitlements need minimum domicile (place of residence) requirements or knowledge of a local language which places migrant workers at a disadvantage regarding employment, education or access to benefits at the destination States (Kone et al., 2017). Thus, this non-provisioning of entitlements and non-portability of schemes creates a wide range of challenges for migrant workers. Further, an absence of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws translates into rampant discrimination encountered by migrants in terms of accessing housing, employment, education, etc.

Moreover, the lack of access to social benefits gets further aggravated due to migrants' lack of proper documentation and identification cards. For instance, research by Aajeevika Bureau, Udaipur, stated that as many as 34% of the 60,000 interstate migrant workers registered across their databases never applied for a Voter ID (UNESCO & UNICEF, 2011). Further, Abbas and Varma (2014) pointed out that birth registration rates in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar (top sources of migrant workers) are 6.5 % and 1.6 %, respectively. As a result, a large number of potential out-migrants already remain undocumented upon reaching the destination state. Additionally, the cyclical nature of interstate migration leads to their political exclusion as migrants are not accounted for either at source or at destination and often miss out on voting. A study conducted by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in 2015 found that states with higher rates of migrants were associated with lower voter turnouts (Aggarwal et al., 2020).

## **LACK OF ACCESS TO PDS AND HEALTHCARE FACILITIES**

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In terms of food security, social welfare schemes such as Public Distribution System [PDS], a significant source of food for the low-income household, depend on the ration card, which can only be transferred from one state to another if migrant gives up their ration card at source state and acquire a residential proof at destination state (Aggarwal et al., 2020). This creates a significant hurdle for migrant workers in accessing the PDS scheme. For instance, during the Covid-19-induced lockdown, a report revealed that only 25% of 80 million migrants were able to access the PDS scheme, leading to extreme food insecurity (Haq & Chatterji, 2020).

Further, even though India has a universal three-tier public health structure, quality healthcare facilities remain largely inaccessible to migrant workers. These migrant workers work in harsh and unsafe conditions and live in deplorable conditions without basic utilities such as water, sewage, hygiene and safety, making them more vulnerable to health issues and diseases. Many construction sites, mines, factories and companies where migrants live are not regulated and not properly maintained, resulting in exposure to physical and chemical hazards. For instance, body aches, sunstroke and skin irritation are common health concerns for labourers working in tile factories and brick kilns (International Labour Organisation, 2020). Further, the lack of access to little to no food, unclean water, and low levels of

sanitation mean that migrant workers have high rates of illness and malnutrition. Lack of adequate public healthcare facilities and health insurance also means that migrants resort to more expensive, low-quality private providers, which becomes a huge economic burden for them. Even the Urban Health Centres providing primary care remain inaccessible to migrants due to their timings, which compel workers to give up a day's wages in order to be able to access care. According to a study conducted by NHRC, about 32% of migrant workers in Delhi, 42% in Gujarat, 30% in Haryana and 41% in Maharashtra reported a lack of confidence in accessing health services in urban centres. This lack of access and unawareness about public services in destination states translates into poor health-seeking behaviour and poor health outcomes amongst migrant workers (Borhade, 2017).

## **LACK OF ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND SHELTER**

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A high proportion of urban poor in city centres constitutes rural to urban migrants in search of employment opportunities. Due to the temporary nature of movement and lack of domicile documents, many migrants are unable to access socially subsidised housing and shelter. As a result, many migrant workers reside in unauthorised slums, shanties or squatter settlements, often on public lands, with poor infrastructure and a lack of basic amenities such as water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities. Migrant labourers live in open, makeshift camps covered with plastic sheets on road pavements, under flyovers, railway tracks or even construction sites and factories. Due to the informality of these settlements, migrant workers are at constant risk of eviction and are repeatedly displaced (Srivastava, 2020b). Despite urban policies such as Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) and other provisions, poor migrant workers face great difficulty and high insecurity in meeting shelter and basic amenity needs.

## **LACK OF EDUCATION FACILITIES FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN**

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Universal education is severely impacted by seasonal migration as children of migrant workers drop out of schools to accompany their parents to destination states. More often than not, children accompany their parents, not because of the lack of option of leaving them behind but because they are an integral part of the household's survival strategy at the destination workplace where they engage in child labour (Srivastava, 2020b). At the destination workplace, the children are generally away from care and protection, health, nutrition, and education. Moreover, even those parents who attempt to enrol their children in school systems in destination cities face problems like the inability of public schools to accommodate the temporary status of migrant children, discrimination, language barriers, etc.

## LACK OF FINANCIAL INCLUSION

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Employers prefer migrant labourers as they are cheaper and can be paid on a piece-rate basis, with most of them being paid less than minimum wage. Due to the informality of their labour, many wage protection laws remain unimplemented in the case of migrant workers. Poor financial inclusion created by lack of legal documents, identity cards and bank accounts translates into migrant workers being unable to access social security schemes. Low levels of literacy and awareness create another layer of complexity as many social security benefits, such as Direct Bank Transfers [DBT], are implemented through banking systems (International Labour Organisation, 2020). Further, linguistic barriers generated another problem which led to many migrants falling prey to financial fraud in their attempt to access social security.

## POLICY CONCERNS AND OPPORTUNITIES

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The increasing magnitude of interstate migration in India has become a significant issue for policymakers. However, the current policy instruments, laws and national schemes have not adequately responded to the issues of migration at different levels. Only specific central policies and a few rights-based schemes, such as the right to education, have tried to address the issues faced by migrant workers (International Labour Organisation, 2020). It is only after the migrant crisis induced by the pandemic that interstate migration as an issue has garnered attention. To paint a holistic picture, this section highlights the pre- covid and post- covid responses to migration in India.

## PRE-COVID RESPONSE TO MIGRATION

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The Indian Constitution encompasses basic provisions relating to the conditions of employment, non-discrimination, right to work etc. which apply to all workers, including interstate migrant workers within the country (Borhade, 2017). Ministry of Labour and Departments of Labour at the state levels, are responsible for creating and implementing measures to protect migrant workers. To date, there exists only one piece of legislation governing the conditions of interstate migrant workers in India: the Interstate Migrant Workmen's Act of 1979. However, there are existing labour laws/policies that aim at improving the working conditions of migrant workers and preventing their exploitation. However, the law is poorly implemented due to uneven implementation in states, inadequate registration and lack of awareness amongst interstate migrants. Other laws that cover migrant workers include the Minimum Wages Act of 1948, the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act of 1970, the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976, and the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of

Employment and Conditions of Service) Act of 1996, and the Unorganized Workers Social Security Act of 2008. However, these laws are also not implemented adequately due to administrative apathy, lack of awareness amongst migrant workers, and blatant disregard by employers and intermediaries.

In 2020, different labour laws were consolidated into four labour codes: the Code on Wages of 2019, the Industrial Relations Code of 2020, the Code on Social Security of 2020, and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code of 2020. However, even these fail to adequately pay attention and address the challenges faced by interstate migrant workers. For instance, the Code on Social Security of 2020 recognises gig and platform workers, a large majority being migrants, as a separate category of workers and mandates that the central and state governments set up funds for unorganised sector workers. However, it fails to enable the portability of social security benefits, which is a significant hindrance for many interstate migrant workers (International Labour Organisation, 2020).

In addition, several central policies and schemes have fleetingly covered the various issues of interstate migrant workers. For instance, the national flagship programme for elementary education, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), has recognised the need to focus on needs and initiatives catered towards educating migrant children. It has asked states to identify and include children whose education has been impacted by migration in programmes such as the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and the Scheme for Alternative & Innovative Education (AIE) through which states could set up seasonal hostels or site schools. Further, the Right to Education (RTE) Act, with its goal to leave no child behind, has made it mandatory for schools to “admit children who are moving from one area or state to another for any reason, and for schools at origin to grant transfer certificates expeditiously” (UNESCO & UNICEF, 2011, 183). Even though SSA and RTE have given frameworks to protect the education of migrant children, the adequate coverage of these schemes has remained low as it fails to address the specific needs of migrant children.

## **POST-COVID RESPONSE TO MIGRATION**

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As noted above, even though internal migration is a prominent feature of India’s development landscape, it has been given scant attention in policy and governance frameworks. It has only gained considerable attention as a policy matter since the Covid instigated lockdown. In March 2020, in order to contain the Covid-19 virus, a strict nationwide lockdown was imposed by the government with immediate sealing of the interstate and international borders with four hours’ notice. As economic services were shut down, migrant workers in large numbers were stranded in urban centres with no jobs or resources to survive. The announcement of the lockdown triggered a mass exodus and reverse migration of labourers who walked back long distances to their native villages. This had a detrimental impact on the physical, mental and financial well-being of migrant workers. Millions had to deal with the loss of income, food shortages and uncertainty about their future. According to CMIE

(2020), 122 million people lost their jobs in April 2020, 75 % of whom were seasonal migrants, who were typically daily wage earners. Thus, the Covid-19 pandemic thrust the predicament of migrant workers in India into the public realm and pushed states to improve migrants' access to welfare services such as food security, health etc., as the crisis directly threatened essential services. This led to both short-term and long-term measures offered by the government to ameliorate their plight.

Regarding short-term policy measures, the government passed a sweeping order for no deduction of employees' wages and landlords seeking rent during the lockdown period. It announced a Rs 1.70 lakh crore relief package for the vulnerable sections, including migrant workers. The central government urged the state governments to mobilise the Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Welfare Fund, which would benefit around 35 million construction workers registered under the Act (Rao et al., 2020). In addition, several state governments such as UP, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan announced one-time immediate cash benefits of Rs 1000 to 5000 and free rations through the Public Distribution System (PDS). Shortly after this, another relief package of Rs. 20 lakh crores was announced to benefit the migrant workers, self-employed and small traders. State governments were also asked to use funds from allocations to the State Disaster Management Agencies to ensure migrant workers had shelter. Further, the government introduced special 'Shramik Special' trains from many districts and opened up thousands of quarantine centres for migrant workers (Kumar & Choudhury, 2021).

In terms of long-term measures, in order to integrate migrant workers across the country, the central government announced a Rs 50,000 crore scheme called the 'Garib Kalyan Rozgar Abhiyan' (Khan & Arokkiaraj, 2021). This scheme focused on employing returnee migrants, skill-mapping of migrant workers and connecting women with self-help groups to help them find employment opportunities. In view of the lack of data on internal migrants, the government also announced to conduct of an All India Survey on Migrant Workers and develop a National Database of Unorganised Workers (NDUW) through the eShram portal, which would include details of the migrants such as name, occupation, address, educational qualifications and skill type, etc. in order to secure employability and social security benefits for the interstate migrant workers (ibid.). Further, the scheme 'One nation one ration card' was announced to be implemented across India in 2021 to enable migrants to access ration from any fair price shop in India using a digital card. The pandemic highlighted the predicament of migrant workers, which further led to a flurry of ad-hoc and fragmented policies and administrative responses that failed to consider the multifaceted nature of migration in India.

## **THE NEED FOR AN INTEGRATED POLICY MEASURE**

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Migration is a complex policy issue that takes many forms regarding frequency, duration, spatial trends, etc. It is not sectorally aligned but embedded in every facet of development. A simplistic one size fits all approach or quick fixes cannot be applied here.. Till now, migration policy has not been

approached coherently. There exist significant gaps and implementation challenges in the existing policies and laws. The patchwork of fragmented policies developed over the years has not effectively addressed the challenges and vulnerabilities faced by migrant workers. The report on the 'Social Inclusion of Internal Migrants in India' by UNESCO and UNICEF (2013) stipulates that "it is clear that there is an urgent need to develop a governance system for internal migration in India, i.e. a dedicated system of institutions, legal frameworks, mechanisms and practices aimed at supporting internal migration and protecting migrants.

Research suggests that substantial migration now happens in the form of temporary/ seasonal/ circular migration, and these migrant workers require support and facilitation, better labour laws and regulations, improved living conditions at destination states, and access to social benefits offered by central and state governments (Rajan & Bhagat, 2021). Since social security falls within the concurrent domain, and social protection schemes are designed, funded, and implemented by governments at all levels – Central, State, and local. Hence convergence and coordination are required at multiple levels and departments of the government in order to address the challenges faced by migrant workers (Srivastava, 2020c). Integrated policies must pay attention to all arenas of employment, education, health, civil rights, social welfare, and housing and ensure access to rights, opportunities, and services. The development policies in these arenas need to recognise the existence of highly dynamic and mobile migrant populations. This would also require a multisectoral plan amongst different departments along with inter-ministerial cooperation to implement this plan.

All the Central Sector and Centrally sponsored schemes need to operate on a framework which supports mobility and portability. This includes creating an IT-based national data information network for each scheme (which already exists for several schemes), where social security entitlements and benefits are mapped for each worker and shared across states. Credible and robust data on migration is essential for an effective policy response. The proposed National Database for Unorganized Workers eShram portal, which aims to create a central database of all unorganised workers, including interstate migrants, is a positive step. However, relying on self-registration via Aadhaar cards could pose a problem for those without valid identity documents.

Building state capacity and strengthening inter-departmental cooperation within states and amongst local bodies is also important. Kerala, which has a significant in-migration and out-migration, presents a good example of coordinated action amongst various departments to create inclusive policies for migrant workers. Kerala is the first State in the country to enact a social security scheme for migrant workers coming to the state, known as the Interstate Migrant Workers Welfare Scheme (ISMWWS) in 2010. Under the scheme, a separate fund was generated for the welfare of migrant workers, and it provided them with financial support for treatment for ailments, grants for their children's education, maternity benefits and retirement benefits to those who complete five years under the scheme. Along with this, the State launched the Awaz Health Insurance Scheme for Migrant workers to provide health insurance coverage to migrants (up to Rs. 15,000 for medical care and accidental/ death insurance of Rs. 2.5 lakhs) and prepare a comprehensive database of migrant labourers in the state. In 2019, the state also launched the Apna Ghar migrant housing project to provide affordable



rental housing to migrant workers. The migrant hostel has dormitory-style rooms, cooking and dining facilities, and toilets and is available to migrant workers at a subsidised rent through their employer. Other states can benefit from formulating a similarly comprehensive and inclusive policy framework for migrants.

An integrated migration policy should be based on two main pillars: an inclusive urbanisation policy that addresses the needs of migrant workers in destination states and a regional development policy that promotes infrastructure, livelihoods, and economic opportunities in source states. The most comprehensive policy report on internal migration in India is the Working Group [WG] on Migration report (Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, 2017). The WG report recommends eliminating domicile provisions in state laws and other restrictions on entitlements for migrants across state borders. It also highlights housing as a significant concern. It suggests building rental housing, dormitories, and hostels for migrant workers and establishing NGO-supported Migrant Support Centers that offer ID cards, legal support, social protection and security, financial inclusion, and skills training and job opportunities. Therefore, it is essential to establish a policy framework that recognises the inclusion of interstate migrant workers and provides them with benefits and opportunities through an integrated approach.

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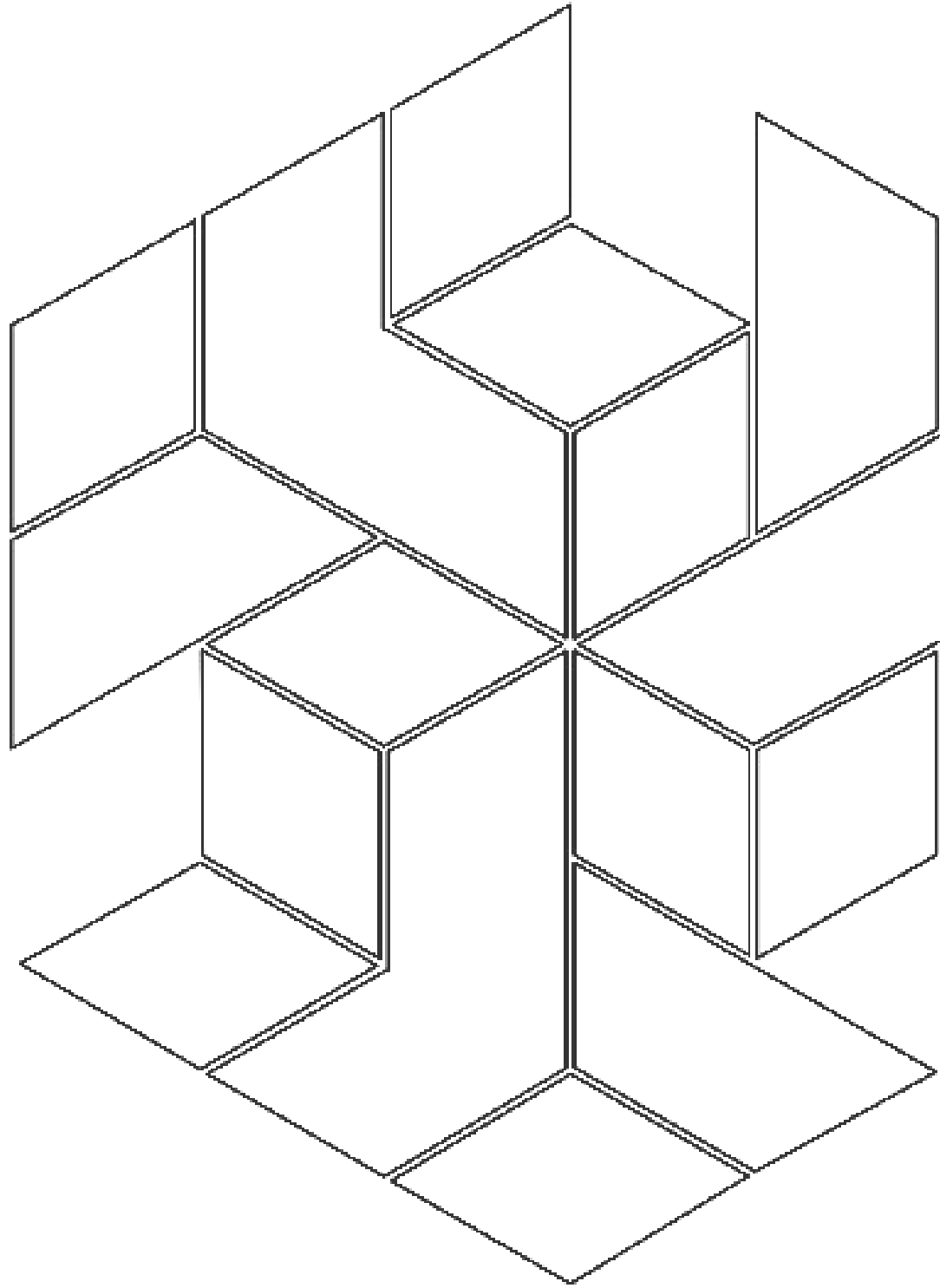
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