



Migration Centric Development

This editorial is based on [“A retelling of the Indian migrant worker’s plight”](#) which was published in The Hindu on 28/12/2022. It talks about the issues faced by Migrants and the requirement of tangible and comprehensive migration policy.

For Prelims: International Organization of Migration (IOM), UN State of the World Population report, Covid-19 pandemic, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Unorganised workers, National Food Security Act List.

For Mains: Positive Effects of Domestic Migration in India, Challenges Associated with Domestic Migration in India, Sustainable Development Goals and Migrants.

According to the [International Organization of Migration \(IOM\)](#)’s **World Migration Report 2022**, there were 281 million international migrants globally in 2020, with nearly **two-thirds being labour migrants**.

Population pressure on cities has increased with the development of the manufacturing and service sectors. According to the **“World Cities Report 2022**, India’s urban population to stand at **675 million by 2035**. A result of urbanisation and the growth of cities in India is a significant strain on basic infrastructure and services, **particularly housing and sanitation**. Migrant workers suffer most from the lack of access to these basic needs.

The [Covid-19 pandemic](#) has further aggravated the **poor housing conditions** of the urban poor/ migrant workers. So, it’s high time India started addressing the issues facing **migrants in a comprehensive manner** and worked towards improving their living conditions.

What are the Positive Effects of Domestic Migration in India?

- **Diversifying Labour Markets:** Migration fills the gap between demand and supply for labour, and efficiently allocates **skilled, unskilled, and cheap labour**.
- **Development of Skills:** Exposure and interaction with the outside world enhance migrants’ knowledge and skills.
- **Quality of Life:** Migration enhances **employment opportunities and economic prosperity, which in turn improves quality of life**. The migrants also send money home, which has a positive effect on their families back to their hometown.
- **Social Evolution:** Migration helps to improve the **social life of migrants, as they learn about new cultures, customs, and languages** which helps to improve brotherhood among people and ensures greater equality and tolerance.
- **Food and Nutrition Security:** According to the **2018 State of Food and Agriculture report by Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)**, outmigration often leads to improved food and nutrition security for migrants.

What are the Challenges Associated with Domestic Migration in India?

- **Feminisation of Agriculture:** Due to their **education opportunities and preference for physical labour, men are typically viewed as breadwinners.** Due to this, males in the Indian rural belt tend to migrate to urban areas in search of better jobs, **whereas women are primarily responsible for household chores and agriculture.**
 - The **separation of male spouses, the lack of companionship, and the increased household responsibilities** may lead to mental health problems among left-behind female spouses.
- **Absence of WASH Facilities:** In a 2020 report by the [International Labour Organization \(ILO\)](#) on internal migrants, the **lack of adequate [water, sanitation, and hygiene \(WASH\) facilities](#)** has been a major challenge for migrant workers where lack of social security compounds the lack of decent housing.
- **Inaccuracy of Identifying Migrants:** Migrants are placed within two larger categories that have troubled policymakers for a long time: **unorganised workers and urban poor.** Despite the use of the **e-Shram portal**, it has been difficult to accurately distinguish and target migrants.
 - Policy interventions in major urban destinations continue to conflate the **urban poor with low-income migrants.**
- **Pressure on Resources of Host Cities: Influx of workers and population explosion increase competition for jobs, houses, schools, etc, and overpopulation overloads resources, amenities, and services in host cities.**
 - Resulting from **mass migration** is the development of slums, which **compromises quality of infrastructure and life at destinations**, which further causes **unhygienic conditions, crime, and pollution.**
- **Prone to Abuse: Non-literate and underqualified migrants lack basic knowledge and remain out of the pursuit of formal jobs** that makes them prone to abuse, **exploitation, trafficking, psychological abuse, and [gender-based violence](#)** against female migrants.

How Sustainable Development Goals Recognise Migrants?

- As part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (with its core principle of "**leave no one behind,**" **including migrants**), migration is recognized for the first time as a **contributor to sustainable development.**
- **11 out of the 17 [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#)** contain targets and indicators that are relevant to migration or mobility.
- **Target 10.7 in the SDGs** stresses the importance of facilitating **orderly, safe, regular and responsible migrations**, including by implementing well-managed migration policies.

What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Migration-Centric Policies:** In order to achieve inclusive growth and development and reduce distress-induced migration, India needs to develop **migration-centric policies, strategies, and institutional mechanisms**, helping India on the path of **achieving Sustainable Development Goals and reducing poverty.**
- **Organising the Informal Economy:** Migrant data must be collected for the purpose of city development like the [SMART Cities Mission](#) can result in a **large number of green jobs for migrants.**
 - The Labour Ministry's proposed [Unorganised Worker Index Number Card](#) would also help formalise the workforce.
- **Urban Employment Guarantee:** To provide basic living standards to urban poor as well as migrants, urban areas need a scheme similar to **MGNREGA.**
 - The **Indira Gandhi Urban Employment Guarantee Scheme has been rolled out in Rajasthan** is a good step in this direction.
- **Social Security:** Having a [social security](#) blanket is important to ensure migrants do not run out of funds during **health crises, child-rearing, or child-education.**
 - As a result, migrants' **psychological conditions** will also improve.

- **Upgrading Slums:** Providing basic amenities such as **Clean Water, Sanitation and Electricity** to the slum areas should be at priority.
 - Slums need to be rehabilitated and upgraded along with establishing identity markers based on the [National Food Security Act List](#) as well as recording the hygiene condition.
- **Migration Support Centres:** To reduce the trauma of migrants arriving in cities in search of work, **Migration Support Centres** can be established.
 - Support for the **destitute and the homeless** must be made a priority.

Drishti Mains Question

Discuss major issues associated with domestic migration in India. Also suggest innovative measures to improve the living conditions of migrants.