

# **MIGRATORY LABOUR & COVID 19 PANDMIC INDIAN SCENARIO**

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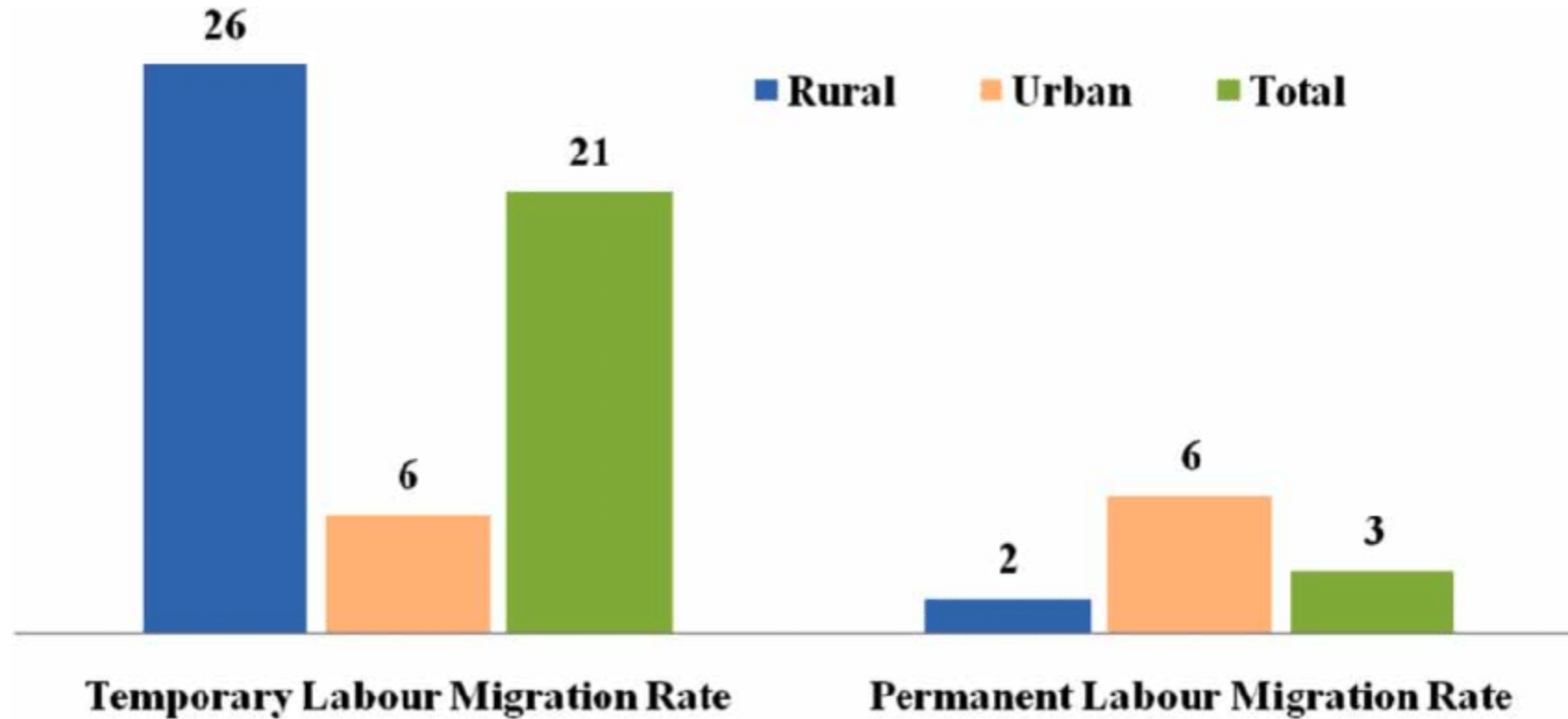
# MIGRATORY LABOUR IN INDIA

- MIGRATORY LABOUR -Migrant labour, casual and unskilled workers who move about systematically from one region to another offering their services on a temporary, usually seasonal, basis.
- INDIAN MIGRATION IS REGIONAL/DOMESTIC MIGRATION,
- The World Bank estimates that the magnitude of internal migration is about two-and-a-half times that of international migration.
- China and India each have over 100 million internal migrants. For the poorer sections of the population, especially from under-developed rural areas, migration to urban economic centers provides an escape from poverty and unemployment

# MIGRANT LABOUR & LOCKDOWN

- As per census 2001, about 307 million person have been reported as migration by place of birth. Out of them about 259 million (84.2%), migrated from one part of the state to another, i.e., from one village or town to another village or town. 42 million (2%) from outside the country. The data on migration by last residence in India as per Census 2001 shows that the total number of migrants has been 314 million. Out of these migrants by last residence, 268 million (85%) has been intra-state migrants, those who migrated from one are of the state to another. 41 million (13%) were interstate migrants and 5.1 million (1.6%) migrated from outside of the country.

# LABOUR MIGRATION, AGE GROUP 15 -64 YRS.





# MIGRATORY WORKERS' CAMPS & WORK





# PLIGHT OF MIGRANT WORKERS' DURING PANDEMIC



# PLIGHT....

- With no work and no money, and lockdown restrictions putting a stop to public transport, thousands of migrant workers were seen walking or bicycling hundreds of kilometers (or even more than a thousand kilometres) to go back to their native villages, some with their families. Many did so while hungry. Social distancing was not possible for these migrants since they travelled together in large groups. According to some of them, they would rather die from the virus at their own village than starve because of no work in the city.



# CONDUCT TOWARDS MIGRANT WORKERS



- Migrant workers who decided to stay back during the exodus faced assault from their neighbours, who accused them of being infected with coronavirus. They thus could not venture out to buy food. Many also faced police brutality if they ventured out of their homes.
- Upon their return to their hometowns and villages, they were treated with either fear or a "class bias", being hosed down with disinfectants or soap solution in some cases. They were feared to be carrying coronavirus from the urban areas where they had been employed. They faced assault and harassment from the people of their hometowns. Since many of them belonged to the lower castes, they had to face caste slurs. Thousands got into property disputes.



# CASE STUDY NO. 1 – RAKESH KUMAR

AGE -28 YEARS,

PLACE OF WORK – FACTORYWORKER IN PUNE, SALARY RS. 15000 ( € 150) PM, SHARING ROOM WITH ANOTHER WORKER, RENT RS. 4000

RESIDENCE – KHAMBA, UTTAR PRADESH, 1600 KMS. AWAY,

LOCKDOWN FROM 22<sup>ND</sup> MARCH, COMPANY PAID SOME MONEY,

17<sup>TH</sup> MAY – TRAVEL TO VILLAGE BY PRIVATE BUS, PAID RS.1000,

LAND IN VILLAGE – 1/4 ACRE,

FAMILY – MOTHER, FATHER, BROTHER (SCHOOL GOING),,,

NO INCOME FROM 17<sup>TH</sup> MAY TO 20<sup>TH</sup> SEPT.

NO FUNCTIONAL GOVT. HOSPITAL IN VILLAGE,

NO ONE HAS ANY WORK IN THE VILLAGE,

BASIC RATION FROM GOVERNMENT,



# CASE STUDY NO. 2 – SATINDER KUMAR

AGE – 26 YEARS,

PLACE OF WORK – FACTORYWORKER IN PUNE, SALARY 13500 (€135), SHARING ROOM AND RENT,

RESIDENCE – MANPURA, BIHER, 2000 KMS.

LOCKDOWN FROM 22<sup>ND</sup> MARCH,

TRAVEL TO VILLAGE BY TRUCK 50 PEOPLE, PAID RS. 4000, TRAVELTIME OF FOUR NIGHTS AND FIVE DAYS, NORMAL TRAIN COSTS RS. 400

FAMILY OF 15 PEOPLE, SMALL LAND HOLDING,

NO SALARY/INCOME FOR 4 MONTHS,

BASIC RATION PROVIDED BY GOVT.

SEEKS PRIVATE PRACTITIONER FOR ILLNESS, CHARGES OF RS. 300 , COSTLY MEDICINES EXTRA.



# IMPACT OF PANDEMIC

- There is a risk, with extended lockdown and risks of further waves of infection, that labour shortages could negatively impact the economy. There is a wider need to support re-entry back into the workforce and support livelihoods. National Survey Sample data shows that between 2007 and 2008, internal remittances amounted to US\$10 billion. These domestic transfers financed over 30% of all household consumption in remittance-receiving households.
- But future migration for work is likely to be severely impacted. As restrictions begin to ease, employers and businesses cannot necessarily rely on cheap available labour. Having faced destitution and hardship, many may wish to stay closer to families and local support networks.
- As Irudaya Rajan notes in *The New Humanitarian*, it is likely 'there will be a reduction in long-distance migration in India after this', as many migrants will be wary of being stranded again. This would be hugely detrimental to stimulating the economy as reverse migration could push down wages and subsequently demand.
- Another issue may be returning migrant workers, who have been working overseas, over half of whom work in the Gulf. It is unclear if, or when, migrants will be able to return to work, with the World Bank estimating that remittances from this group could fall by about 23%.



# MIGRANT LABOUR IMPACT .....

- However, what is striking has been India's support for this group - the Vande Bharat Mission has deployed flights and naval ships to help return migrant workers, especially vulnerable groups - in marked contrast to the lack of preparation and care for internal migrants.
- One factor for this may be the volume of remittances these migrant workers bring to the Indian economy, but it overlooks the contribution of internal remittances, on which there is far less robust data.
- But the current challenges can also be an opportunity. The scale of the migrant crisis has made visible an often-overlooked population of workers. With political will, and investment at federal and state levels, this could be an opportunity to transform livelihoods.
- As thoughts will turn to how to stimulate economies and get people back to work, it is imperative that those in authority turn their minds to how to create a more just society, that invests in healthcare, and has a social protection system that supports the most vulnerable in society.
- Migrants are not just objects of charity that need support. Internal migrants are key income generators that play a vital role in Indian society and should never be overlooked again.

# MIGRATORY LABOUR ISSUES -

- It is estimated that more than 90% of working people in India are engaged in the informal economy, with states such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar accounting for more than 80% of workers in this sector.
- A recent government labour force survey estimated that more than 71% of people with a regular salary working in non-agricultural industries had no written job contract. Nearly half of workers are not eligible for social security benefits.
- Daily-wage workers are particularly vulnerable, with limited or no access to social security and most living in poverty. Living hand to mouth, their loss of livelihoods has led to a lack of money to pay rents or pay for food. Women are impacted whether because of their gender, responsibilities as caregivers, or as members of disadvantaged castes and communities.
- COVID-19 has massively impacted this group of workers. Stranded Workers Action Network found that 50% of workers had rations left for less than one day; 74% had less than half their daily wages remaining to survive for the rest of the lockdown period; and 89% had not been paid by their employers at all during the lockdown.

# ISSUES (Cont'd)

- According to Supreme Court proceedings, relief camps are housing some 660,000 workers; some 2.2 million people also rely on emergency food supplies. Job losses, and home and food insecurity have left this group highly vulnerable.
- India's spending on public social protection excluding health is just 1.3% of the GDP.
- However, there are still other challenges to overcome. One is how to ensure coordination and coverage within, and across, differing states. The second is how to transition multiple schemes into one integrated system that can be accessed anywhere within the country, particularly important when many workers are on the move. There is an urgent need for a comprehensive system, which is adaptive and flexible to needs and provides adequate social and income support.
- Another coverage issue relates to the use of direct cash transfers (DCTs) to support people impacted by the loss of livelihoods, where funds are deposited within bank accounts. Such measures fail to consider the significant numbers of people who do not have access to banks and will not be able to access this support.



# CONCLUSIONS & POLICY PERSPECTIVES

- Indicators of migration correlates positively with those reflecting agricultural, industrial and infrastructural (incl. road, electricity, & credit) development,
- The correlation of migration with industrialisation & urban development are weak. This can be attributed to capital intensive industrial development and exclusionary urbanisation ,
- Rural transformation, given the low rate of urbanisation and sluggish sectoral shift towards industries and services, will be challenging. The possibility of absorbing migratory labour within & outside agriculturally developed regions must therefore not be dismissed.

