

AMIDST HOPE AND VULNERABILITIES: A POST-COVID 19 STUDY OF INTERNAL MIGRANTS FROM BIHAR

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ABSTRACT

Background: The Covid-19 unfolded an array of spatial, socio-economic, and political vulnerabilities that imposed various challenges for internal migrants across India. This period witnessed the peak of migrant's vulnerabilities that failed to cater their mundane livelihood requirements. It not only pushed these internal migrants into the brink of their sufferings or beyond, but also exposed the long-standing apathy of both the central and state governments towards them, including their policy perspectives and implications. **Aim:** This research attempts to explore the nature of vulnerabilities leading to job losses, economic instability, and social stigma faced by these migrants. **Method & Materials :** This study using qualitative techniques, including interviews and field observations, data were collected from 50 internal migrants from Bihar at Azadpur Mandi and Chandni Chowk in Delhi. **Results:** The study emphasizes the need for targeted policies and interventions to address these vulnerabilities, empowering migrants, protecting their rights, and facilitating their integration into society. **Conclusion:** The study further identifies that effective implementation and monitoring of existing policies are crucial to bridge the gap between policy formulation and real impact.

Keywords: Internal migrants, vulnerabilities, policies, covid 19

INTRODUCTION

Migration is a phenomenon that exhibits certain traits which are susceptible to certain social, economic, cultural, and political insecurities. It is a process which involves spatial movement for a stipulated period. This movement of an individual or a group of people require a change in administrative jurisdiction i.e., from one

village to another village, one town to another town, one city to another city, one state to another state or one country to another country. However, the reasons for such movement can be broadly classified as poverty (De Haan, 1999), low productivity, unemployment, underdevelopment, poor economic conditions (Srivastava & Sasikumar,

2003), lack of opportunities for advancement (Keshri & Bhagat, 2012), exhaustion of natural resources, natural calamities, marriage (Rao & Finnoff, 2015), inadequate availability of education (Singh, 2020) and many more that may compel people to leave their native place in search of better opportunities. These underlying causes push people to leave their home in search of better opportunities. According to Lee (1966) Push and Pull are the two determinants that characterize the flow of the migration. In the case of internal migration in India, both push and pull factors are strong determinants for migration (Kumar & Sidhu, 2005). People migrate due to compelling circumstances which pushed them out of the place of origin, or they are lured by the attractive conditions in the new place. The present data on migration in India revealed the presence of 450 million internal migrants based on their place of last residence (GOI, 2017). It highlights that Indians are moving far more significantly to other states than before. The report further identifies Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh as higher outmigration states in India. On an average, 5 to 6 million people between 2001 and 2011 move annually between the state for better economic opportunities (PTI, 2017). This figure on internal migration asserts that the daily earnings for migrants at the destination places are marginally higher. As a result, people migrate to undertake these works to improve their situation and maintain their families at home. Characteristics of such migrants are that they come from poor socio-economic background, might have primary education, often recruited in informal sectors, stationed at a particular destination for a short period of time, and maintain close connection with their place of origin. Movements of these migrants are typically brief, repetitive, cyclic, and with the common goal of changing residence temporary (Tumbe, 2018). They

begin to migrate for work during the lean months in agricultural calendar and return. Population size of these kinds of migrants is growing in numbers. The rate of such migration is seven times larger as compared to permanent and semi-permanent migration (Rajan & Bhagat, 2022). They widely move for economic purposes work in the informal sector, largely as manual laborers, rickshaw pullers, vegetable sellers, construction workers or helpers at manufacturing sites. Internal migrants are an important form of labor mobility in India-with an increasing shift of labor force from agriculture to industry and the tertiary sector (Keshri & Bhagat, 2012). Exposure to urban environments, where one encounters an exploitative economic system and an apathetic community, has far-reaching effects on migrants' physical and emotional well-being, including the loss of a decent lifestyle, poor living and working conditions, and unfair remuneration and compensation. Kumar (2011), based on the evidence from Kerala state, asserted that prevalence of insecurities among temporary or unskilled migrants in urban cities is prominent. Urban destinations are crisis-ridden which immensely affects the basic rights of these internal migrants. They live through extreme precarity due to their inaccessibility to basic resources which are generally needed to support a minimum way of living. As far as position of the vulnerabilities of internal migrants is concerned, they have always been present. Vulnerabilities of these migrants were observed at their peak during the period of lockdown which was imposed due to covid 19. This period witnessed the zenith of migrant's vulnerabilities that failed to fulfill their mundane requirements for survival. It not only pushed these internal migrants into the brink of their sufferings or beyond, but also exposed the long-standing apathy of both the central and state governments towards them, including their

policy perspectives and implications. Against this backdrop, the paper is an attempt to explore vulnerabilities among internal migrants and further identifies that effective implementation and monitoring of existing policies are crucial to bridge the gap between policy formulation and real impact.

METHODS & MATERIALS

This study was carried out in the Delhi National Capital Region, using qualitative techniques such as in-depth interviews with migrants and field observation. This approach was adopted as the insights and experiences of the sampled population formed the major determinants which foregrounded this study. Additionally, qualitative research aids in the development of new ideas and important research issues. Besides, qualitative research also facilitates to develop new concepts and key research questions (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). Interviews included questions related to challenges faced by migrants amid covid 19 pandemic and in the aftermath of it reflecting the new trends and unique features of their vulnerabilities. Additionally, interview was aimed to explore how recent policies that have been adopted have a significant impact on the capacity of internal migrants to cope with their vulnerabilities.

A total of 50 internal migrants from Bihar were interviewed for this study. Data were collected in two phases. In the first phase, 25 migrants working in the Azadpur Mandi areas were interviewed. In the second phase, 25 migrants working in the Chandni Chowk areas, were interviewed. The study has limited to temporary, seasonal, and circular types of internal migrants who are employed in informal jobs in Delhi. Purposive sampling was applied in both phases to collect data pertinent to the key objectives of study. To maintain the privacy and safeguard the identity of the participants, their real names have been changed. The data collection was carried out

during the period of 1 February 2023 to 31 May 2023.

VULNERABILITIES: CONCEPT, TYPES, AND IMPACT

The notion of vulnerability, in simple words, encompasses the state of being at risk of an attack or harm, either physically or emotionally. Some people are more likely to experience vulnerability as compared to others due to their exposure to various risks in life. In an effort to define "vulnerability" and its characteristics among migrants, Sabates-Wheeler and MacAuslan (2007) contend that vulnerabilities among migrants can be linked to a wide range of factors that extend across various dimensions, including social, economic, environmental, and cultural aspects. Vulnerabilities having these facets can also be shaped by structural inequalities and systemic discrimination present in the society (Derose, Escarce, & Lurie, 2007). Thus, migrants experience a sense of separation from their traditional support system and family networks. They are exposed to new ways of life or cultures that they may occasionally find unusual, which further renders them in a confused and disturbed state (De Varennes, 2003). Additionally, migrants are unaccustomed to the working conditions, may not know the native language of host places, and lack legal support and entitlements protection in new locations. In other words, any individual is more protected at home than she/he moves out to become a migrant where they may encounter the problems interlinked with mobility such as relocating to unfamiliar places, lack of available family support, adjusting with local language, food, clothes and many more.

Indeed, internal migration in India presents a complex landscape of vulnerabilities. Vulnerabilities among internal migrants refers to the heightened risks and challenges they

face due to factors such as economic disparities, social exclusion, limited access to services, and cultural displacement. These vulnerabilities manifest in various forms, including inadequate housing, limited job security, lower wages, compromised health and education facilities, social marginalisation, and difficulty in accessing social welfare schemes (Srivastava, 2020). Understanding the typical forms of vulnerabilities experienced by migrants is crucial to develop policies and interventions that protect their rights, foster empowerment, and effectively address the risk factors they encounter.

Spatial Vulnerabilities- Migration is fundamentally about the movement and the change of place. The process of spatial vulnerability is closely linked to the geographical location and involves risks associated with that location. Spatial vulnerability is inherently linked to migrants from the time they begin the process of leaving their home for migration (Bustamante, 2011). Within internal migrants in India, this vulnerability is particularly prevalent among temporary and short-term migrant laborers. These individuals face risks not only at their place of origin before migration but also during the journey and upon reaching their destination (Kumar, 2011). In their home location, migrants face various risks such as a lack of employment opportunities, limited resources for agricultural employment and subsistence farming, heavy indebtedness, and loss or with no prior possession of land and money, as a consequence they suffer from the lack of basic resources required to sustain a decent standard of living back home. While interviewing the migrants, Prakash Sahu, a 42-year-old fruit seller, espoused –

I used to farm maize with my family members in Bachhauta village of Khagaria district before moving to Delhi. We made a little money, but it was enough to meet our necessities. All of that changed six years ago

when we got into a land dispute with Dharm Singh, an upper caste community member. Our fields shared borders and there were 'jhagra fasad' (squabbles) over petty issues like irrigation. Dharm Singh took advantage of our weakness, started encroaching our land and threatened us to leave the place. Since he had political connections, he bribed officials and witnesses to prove that our land was his property.

During interviewing many narratives pointed out that migrants encounter risks associated with relocations, unfamiliar locals, safety issues and exploitative workplace conditions, despite the presence of opportunities. In continuation to this, Mahendra, 20 years old electrician, remembered his initial days in Delhi and said –

One day, I returned back from my work a little early than the usual time. As I was figuring out what to eat, I went to the nearby market place in Azadpur where a person rebuked me as 'oye Bihari' and pushed me aside. For a moment, I didn't understand what just happened. I fled out of fear and pledged not to go anywhere alone after that experience. Vulnerabilities of migrants increase when they are at their urban destination, especially if they are the first generation to migrate, or have migrated from rural lifestyle to urban, or have no known networks at destination. They feel insecure and uncomfortable because of their encounter with the unknown urban ecosystem. Moreover, presence of labour-exploitative markets, unorganised nature of their informal sectors in which they are predominantly employed, the negative attitude of urban society, and the poor dispense of state's public services, intensifies their vulnerabilities at host states. As a consequence of mobility, migrants may face challenges accessing basic necessities and care, thereby exacerbating their vulnerabilities. These factors at home, during transit, and at the destination pose risks to

basic human needs and hinder their overall well-being. While discussing about the Covid-19 times, Virendra, a 45 years old carpenter, remembered –

As government called for complete lockdown, I along with my village-mates decided to go back to our village. There were no tickets available in trains or buses. Thus, we bought bicycles and left Delhi. We travelled in break and somehow managed to reach our village in five days. The moment we reached our village, police administration put all of us in village school. They threw water on us like we are animals. We were given only one time meal. They even stopped our family members to meet and give food to us.

The vulnerabilities faced by internal migrants in India have persisted over an extended period. However, the covid-19 pandemic has introduced a multitude of factors and changes in dynamics. These include economic instability and widespread job losses, leaving them stranded due to lockdown, travel restrictions and lack of transportation. Furthermore, negative perceptions regarding disease transmission have resulted in social stigma, leading to mental distress both in host cities and upon their return in their homes. Additionally, their vulnerabilities to the spread of infectious diseases, such as covid- 19, have been exacerbated by inadequate sanitation and healthcare infrastructure.

Socio-Economic Vulnerabilities: Internal migrants are exposed to threats based on their social and economic identity in relation to caste, gender, language, culture, education, occupational status and among others. Migrants situated at the lower end of the socio-economic indicators face heightened vulnerability, enduring greater hardships and facing increased exposure to various risks (Jayaram & Varma, 2020). Such disadvantaged migrants encounter a multitude of socio-economic vulnerabilities. These

vulnerabilities include the loss of vital social support networks and discrimination based on regional, linguistic, or cultural backgrounds that further leads to exploitation, violation of labour laws, and inadequate access to education and healthcare services. In a conversation with Mohan, a 28 years old daily wage labourer, he pointed out -

I landed in Delhi with no idea what I was going to do here. With the help of mate (labour contractor), I began working as a sweeper in a store at Chandni Chowk during the day and slept outside of the store at night. I moved to a nearby colony as time passed, but I was not accepted there. They questioned my identity first and told me, I had to reside on the other side of the colony because that's where Dalits live.

Internal migrants often leave behind their place of origin and their existing social networks, resulting in a loss of community support. This lack of social support can lead to feeling of isolation, loneliness, and vulnerability, making migrants more susceptible to exploitation and abuse. Their risks can also be manifested in the form of xenophobic attitudes towards certain caste or region or labour class which subject them to psychological hardships. They frequently experience discrimination and prejudice based on their social-cultural background. They are often labelled as outsiders and viewed as a burden on urban resources, which leads to their social exclusion and marginalisation. While talking about the housing conditions and accommodations at the places of destination, Kaushal, a 35 years old factory worker, said – I live with a group of 10 people in a room with one toilet and a small kitchen. This space is as big as your toilet might have been constructed. It is very congested but we don't have any options. As we all are here to earn, therefore, we try to save as much as possible. Migrant's due to their low socio-economic status, they are compelled to endure

inadequate housing conditions characterized by living in slums or overcrowded and unsafe accommodations. These places lack access to clean water and proper sanitation, posing significant health risks. The living conditions for migrants resemble cramped, unmanageable spaces, often damp and devoid of fresh air, safe drinking water, drainage, hygiene, or sanitation facilities (Deshingkar, 2021). A modest room may house a maximum number of migrant workers. Some semi-permanent informal migrants are able to rent a house, but they live in slum communities due to their difficult working conditions. Even worse off are seasonal migrant workers. They often migrate to the cities for jobs and live in parks and on the pavements. While discussing about the work environment, Pramod, a 34 years old street vendor said-

Earlier I worked at a construction site in Noida where my supervisor was from Rajput caste. He often intimidated me by using slang words. He usually forced me to work for extra hours without even paying the full salary on time. He also used to undermine our safety at the site. Under such circumstances, I left my job and started working as a fruit vendor in Chandni chowk.

Unlike Pramod, many of these internal migrants compelled to take on low-skilled and informal sector jobs, which exposes them to exploitation and the infringement of their labour rights. These migrants have been severely impacted by job insecurity, long working hours, meagre wages and irregular payments. Additionally, they face inadequate safety measures in hazardous occupation, limited access to healthcare, and insufficient compensation for victims of occupational hazards. As far as socio-economic vulnerabilities experienced by these internal migrants are concerned, these are deeply distressing. Moreover, they are subject to exploitation within markets and businesses, while also grappling with the excessive rise

in urban standards and the high cost of living at urban host cities (Mishra, 2021). While discussing about the impact of Covid-19 pandemic, Sohan Lal, a 40 years old factory worker, remembered –

The outbreak of Covid-19 was a nightmare for me. Initially, the amount of my salary was reduced by half. Later, I lost my job. So in order to survive, I started selling vegetables and my wife started working as a domestic help. The economic situation of my family further deteriorated. Therefore, I shifted my children from a private school to government school. Due to the lockdown, the school conducted online classes, however, I had only one mobile which I gave to my son for attending his classes. Unfortunately, my daughter missed her classes.

The covid-19 pandemic disrupted various sectors, resulting in widespread job losses, economic instability, and social dislocation. Internal migrants found themselves stranded in unfamiliar places, separated from their families and support networks. The sudden loss of livelihoods and the lack of social safety nets left them in dire circumstances, struggling to meet their basic needs for food, shelter, and healthcare. Furthermore, the pandemic highlighted the precariousness of the informal labour market, where internal migrants are predominantly employed. The absence of formal contract and employment rights made them particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Furthermore, the impact on the education of migrant children has been severe. Even prior to the pandemic, their education was already lacking in host cities, but the shift to digital education has posed even greater challenges. Moreover, the children of migrants who were left behind rural areas face additional difficulties as they lack the means to afford digital devices, and the infrastructure for online learning is inadequate. The lack of access to digital learning resources for impoverished rural

migrant children highlights the existence of the digital divide.

Political Insecurities- The inability to exercise their right to vote is a significant political vulnerability faced by internal migrants in India. As they migrate from their place of origin to a distant locations for work, and other reasons, they often face challenges in exercising their right to participate in elections (Singh, 2020). These hurdles stem from practical limitations, such as geographical proximity, lack of remote voting, inadequate documentation, lack of administrative support from the institution and employer, absence of registration drive at host states, obstacles in retaining their names on the voter's list during extended periods of absence, and others. Consequently, these obstacles not only restrict their access to enfranchisement but also deprive them of the opportunity to actively participate in shaping the political landscape and influencing policies that directly impact their lives. Without political representation through voting, internal migrants especially the informal migrant labourers who are subjected to exploitations remain marginalised and their voices go unheard, perpetuating their political vulnerability and hindering their ability to advocate for their rights and interests within the democratic system.

When asked about political participation at any level in the recent times to a group, Suman, a 49-year-old migrant construction worker, he replied,

The last time I recall casting my vote was in 2010 Bihar state election. Back then, it was possible as I was staying Rasulpur village in Siwan district, Bihar. In these 13 years that I have worked in Delhi, neither my family that lives with me in Delhi nor I, could vote. We were fully aware of elections, but we could not go.

In continuation to enquire what prevented

them from casting votes in past elections, another migrant working on the same site named Subhash, aged 42, whose place of origin is Sonbarsha village in Siwan district of Bihar, stated -

It takes two or three days to travel back and forth from Delhi to my home in Bihar. Besides, our tekheadaar (contractor) would not grant us even a single day off from work. We work on meagre remuneration of 300 -350 per day and cannot risk even a single day's wage for election.... It hardly matters to anyone whether we vote or not.

The findings of the empirical study, conducted by Aajeevika Bureau (2011), shed light on the issue of internal migrants in India being unable to exercise their right to vote. The study revealed that seasonal migrants face multiple barriers that prevent them from voting in their home states and limit their political support in their host states. The proximity between their home and host states, unavailability of leave on election days, and the financial burden of travel expenses all contribute to their inability to exercise their right to vote. As a result, these migrants are unable to participate fully in the democratic process and are denied the opportunity to shape public policies that would benefit them. The lack of representation hampers their ability to hold their home state government accountable and undermines their capacity to advocate their rights and interests effectively. Addressing this vulnerability is crucial to ensuring the inclusion and empowerment of internal migrants in the political landscape of India.

Policies and Legislations: Impact on the Vulnerabilities

Internal migrant labourers face specific vulnerabilities due to various factors such as poverty, lack of social protection, and limited access to basic services. The lives of migrants are significantly influenced by various policies, including the Public Distribution System (PDS),

the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA), the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and many more. Some of these policies have proven ineffective in addressing the needs of migrants. For example, the limitations of state jurisdiction in identifying beneficiaries and the lack of portability of rights have hindered the Public Distribution System (PDS) from providing rations to migrants (Srivastava, 2020). Similarly, migrant children often encounter obstacles in accessing education, despite the constitutional guarantee of free and compulsory education for all up to the age of 14 under the Right to Education. Inadequate onsite educational facilities are among the barriers they face. Besides the nationwide general schemes, certain states such as Kerala have gained recognition for their specific initiatives, owing to their pro-labour stance and their efforts to support all beneficiaries, including a particular emphasis on migrant workers (Aggarwal, Solano, Singh, & Singh, 2020). However, despite these endeavours, these states have faced challenges in granting migrant workers access to healthcare and educational benefits.

In recent times, the government has introduced schemes and specific implementation measures to enhance the effectiveness and achievement of policy outcomes. These policy measures have been formulated in response to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has created an unprecedented crisis. The Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana played a vital role in allocating and distributing a significant portion of rations to ensure food security. Simultaneously, the Garib Kalyan Rojgar Yojana (GKRY) focused on creating employment opportunities in rural areas, considering the trend of return migration. However, the gap between formulation and implementations of policies cannot be neglected at the ground level. Ravi (43), a

migrant worker from Bhadas village in Khagaria district of Bihar, presented the conditions of plight of migrant workers in the context of GKRY –

I returned home from Delhi due to the hardships caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Under the Garib Kalyan Rojgar Yojana (GKRY), I was assigned to plantation work. I consistently worked for five months but received payment irregularly. Besides, I did not receive the promised wages. Thus, I decided to migrate back.

The program's deficiencies went beyond just the extended payment delays. It failed to adequately address critical aspects such as the selection of migrant workers, the division of skills among informal and semi-formal experienced migrants, and the lack of contingency plans for potential work disruption caused by floods or natural calamities. Besides these immediate problem-solving measures taken to cope with the disastrous impact of covid-19 on migrant's lives, the government also attempted to implement a set of sustainable measures. The introduction of the One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) initiative marks a significant milestone in ensuring food security across the Nation. This initiative specifically targets challenges faced by migrants in exercising their fundamental right to food due to the lack of portability across state boundaries. The complexity of administrative procedures has further exacerbated the difficulties in transferring benefits and rights from one state to another. Since its implementation in Delhi nearly two years ago, the ONORC scheme has played a crucial role in facilitating ration distribution to approximately 521,994 migrants in the year 2022-23 (TOI, 2023). These policies primarily aim to ensure food security for migrants by enabling them to access subsidized ration from any fair price shop nationwide. Although, this eliminates the need of migrants to transfer their ration cards

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when they relocate from one state to another, but it has not been able to reduce their vulnerability in terms of attaining food insecurity. Suresh, a migrant living and working in Azadpur area of North Delhi, shares his story when asked about the impact of the One Nation, One Ration policy. He said -

Accessing ration remains a constant struggle for me. Despite the policy promises, bureaucratic hurdles and kagaz-pattar (documentation) requirements often hinder my ability to avail the benefits. I hope that the government seriously looks into its implementation process truly ensures food security for migrants like me.

However, another migrant Khusbu, a domestic help, expresses that the ONORC scheme has proven to be effective in providing her with access to ration benefits irrespective of her location. She stated -

I was fortunate to receive help from my landlady in completing the required documentation to access rations. Being a migrant from Ekma village of Chapra district, Bihar, without an Aadhaar card or ration card, I faced numerous challenges. However, with her support, I successfully obtained my Aadhaar card, which now allows me to benefit from the One Nation, One Ration Policy.

Khusbu's experiences highlight the significance of social support in overcoming bureaucratic hurdles and also spotlights the importance of inclusive policies for migrants. Field observations revealed that the ONORC programme has been useful for migrants like Khusbu, but it has also presented challenges for many others. A few migrants residing in Azadpur, Delhi, expressed their concern over their inability to avail the benefits of the given scheme due to an array of obstacles such as lack of awareness, documentation issues, financial constraints, digital exclusion and so forth. Further, the scheme in question is designed with the intention of positively influencing the vulnerabilities experienced by

migrants. However, for this scheme to have a meaningful and positive impact on migrant workers, it is imperative that they are implemented rigorously, ensuring fair treatment and the fulfilment of entitlements. Above all, India has implemented new legislative initiatives that have initiated significant changes to labour legislation, directly impacting a large number of migrants engaged in semi-formal and informal labour. One of the significant legislations introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic was the Labour Code 2020, expected to have a direct impact on a significant proportion of migrants working in semi-formal and informal organisations. The current implementation status of the Labour code 2020 remains uncertain, making it difficult to determine its legislative impact on the vulnerabilities of labour migrants. However, theoretical legislation suggests potential implications it may have on their vulnerabilities. While the code aimed to offer potential benefits to informal laborers, it appears to fall short in addressing their specific conditions and determining an adequate minimum wage. Implementation delays and the lack of clear guidelines created uncertainty regarding its impact on labour practices and wage regulations (Jayaram, 2019). Additionally, the code fails to adequately consider the concerns of agricultural laborers, despite a significant shift in employment patterns towards the agricultural sector. The code also neglects the specific needs of migrant workers, disregarding their challenges related to social support networks, language barriers, cultural disparities, and limited employment options in their home states which widens the disparities between migrants and local workers, promoting unequal opportunities and resources available to them.

DISCUSSION

The pandemic served as a turning point,

shedding light on the extreme vulnerability faced by these migrants, and exposing gaps in social care policies that hindered their access to benefits solely due to their mobile nature. The failure to ensure the effective delivery and utilisation of social assistance can be attributed to several significant reasons. These include fundamental design and operational flaws in policies, such as the absence of a dedicated policy specifically for migrants, insufficient data on their population, inadequate consideration of their mobility, persisting difficulties in establishing a fixed domicile, and a failure to recognize the unique criteria and distribution methods determined by regional government jurisdictions (Srivastava, 2020). Collectively, these factors have significantly hindered the policies' effectiveness and their ability to adequately cater to the needs of migrant workers.

The appropriate implementation of labour policies holds the key to empowering migrants and enabling them to develop resilience, address shocks, and restore stability in their lives. As states make progress in formulating rules for labour codes, it is crucial to address weaknesses such as enhancing data collection and analysis, obtaining updated census data, and ensuring comprehensive documentation drives like Aadhaar cards to establish a full migrant population database. This will facilitate tracking and enable migrants to access the portability of their rights using their identification cards. Job creation efforts should align with population growth by focusing on both quantity and quality, encompassing diverse regions and fields, including agriculture and non-farm sectors to absorb unskilled labour in rural areas and prevent distress migration. Effective implementation of labour law reforms is paramount, accompanied by timely publication of associated rules to stimulate job growth while ensuring fair wages and suitable working conditions. Furthermore,

strengthening occupational safety regulations and ensuring transparent implementation can combat corruption and enhance business functioning and overall well-being of migrant labourers.

The indefinite span of a policy until its revocation emphasizes the importance of continuous discourse, as even well-designed and effectively implemented policies can face challenges during delivery or at later stages. To address these issues, active involvement of beneficiaries in the discourse is essential. By gathering real ground feedback and considering their interests without compromising them, alternative solutions can be identified. Unfortunately, migrants from disadvantaged groups often face neglect in policy discourse, highlighting the need for their inclusion and representation. To foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for migrants, it is imperative to establish a comprehensive support network that promotes inclusivity through social group support from residents and co-workers. Furthermore, the establishment of a dedicated migrant labour commission can offer a sustainable framework for advancing their rights, freely express their concerns, voice grievances, and engage in negotiations whenever necessary.

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