



New Delhi Office

Cluster Office for Bangladesh,
Bhutan, India, Maldives,
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**National Consultation on "Children and Internal Migration in India"
22nd-23rd September 2015, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi**

Background Note

The Census 2001 reports internal migration in India accounts for 309 million people while the NSSO estimates the same to be at 326 million (NSSO 2007-2008). Migration in India is of two types: a) long term resulting in the relocation of an individual or household and b) short term or seasonal/circular migration involving back and forth movement between source and destination.

There are close to 80-100 million seasonal migrant workers in India¹ who primarily move from rural to urban areas in search of employment, better livelihood or mere survival. The majority of these seasonal migrant workers belong to the weaker section of the society and come from backward regions of India. They mostly engage as manual wage workers both in organised and unorganised sectors. With little capacity to bargain for their constitutional rights as workers, migrant labourers and their families are forced to live and work for six to eight months under harsh and testing conditions in the heart of a city or suburban area. As Jan Breman argues, "Migrant labourers build and sustain economies but are seen as being the perennial outsiders."

Although the number of accompanied and unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents in India may vary, the seasonal migrant children are estimated to be around 15 million². These children are largely invisible as migration sites are located in remote areas, away from habitation and mainstream public view. In the absence of crèche, early childcare services and initiatives for pre-school and formal education, migrant children miss critical inputs necessary in their early years for their physical, motor, cognitive, language and psychosocial development. The vulnerability of migrant children is aggravated since they are cut off from care and security, health and nutrition, learning and exposure, and an overall normalcy of childhood.

An Aide et Action and Bernard van Leer Foundation study³ on the status of and condition of young migrants living at worksites located in Delhi, Chennai, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Jaipur, Patna, Hyderabad and Guwahati portrays very grim picture of the children and their conditions. The assessment indicates 90% seasonal migrant children are excluded from accessing the ICDS services whereas 80% school going

¹ Srivastava Ravi

² UNESCO's report on "Social Inclusion of Internal Migrants in India", 2013

³ Young Migrants at worksites study in 7 cities of India – MiRC, Aide et Action 2013

children do not access education near worksites. While 65% of the children suffer from ill health, 40% work as child labour and experience various kinds of abuse and exploitation. Needless to say, “girl children endure many more deprivations than boys”, “receive less nutrition and less care than boys, and often have to do double work, at work sites as well as at home.”⁴ The adolescent girls living at the worksite are more vulnerable to abuse and sexual violence.

Recognizing the serious human rights violations and vulnerability due to distress migration of accompanied and unaccompanied children including adolescents, the UN General Assembly has adopted on 18 December 2014 the resolution 69/187 on Migrant children and adolescents in the context of international migration. The resolution is a positive step towards protection of rights and entitlements of international migrant children. The UN resolution is also highly significant and appropriate to frame policies for the internal migrant children in India due to its large population and geography.

Over the years, some progressive government intervention did target the internal migrants and children in India. The Sarva Siksha Abhiyaan (SSA), Department of School Education and Literacy, GoI, devised guidelines for setting up seasonal hostels, providing special trainings and education for the migrant children both at source and destination. The Ministry of Women and Children’s flagship programme on Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS) having a mandate to cover migrant children in urban locations; the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights’ (NCPCR) guidelines to make education and child care accessible for migrant children in destination; and **last but not least**, the Ministry of Labour and Employment’s initiatives promoting inter-State MOUs, inclusion under the Labour Welfare Board for social security, protection and basic services for migrants workers, are some of the welcoming steps taken by the Government to address the issues concerning migrant labourers in India.

On the other hand, NGOs, INGOs, foundations and key private sector agencies have also played key roles in ensuring education, crèche, elimination of child labour, anti-child trafficking measures and reducing distress situations of migrants both at source and destination areas. Aide et Action has been working with migrant children in various locations in India on child tracking, child care and learning, safe worksite environment, education, decent housing, research and advocacy on the rights and entitlements of internal migrant children.

Today the cities and urban areas in India are fast becoming the engines of economic growth and generating huge employment potentials for both unskilled and skilled workforce. The Census 2011 indicates demographic transition from rural to urban locations, and it is likely that by 2030, the population of some of the large cities in India will surpass the population of some of the countries across the world.

All evidence indicates that migration is large and growing. The growth of rural to urban migration is a huge challenge and opportunity for the policy makers and

⁴ “Locked Homes and Empty Schools – The Impact of Distress Seasonal Migration on the Rural Poor”, America India Foundation 2006

actors to plan for inclusive future cities. The more complex issue before the state and the civil society today is to develop an inclusive policy, programme and convergence to safeguard and protect the interest of millions of migrant children in India.

Therefore, it is of utmost importance to deliberate, plan and devise meaningful and effective government programme, convergence and policy on some of the critical issues affecting the migratory children, such as:

1. Tracking and mapping of migrant children at source and destination

Need for a comprehensive tracking and monitoring of children movement is necessary both at source and destination for better planning of programme for the migrant children.

2. Access to child care, health, nutrition, crèche and Anganwadi at worksites

Urban planning for better targeting and delivery of basic services and entitlements is crucial to reach out to migrants living in inaccessible and temporary worksites. Some of the key services like health care, crèche, ICDS at worksite are crucial for the development and growth of children.

3. Inclusive access and right to education of migrant children

Migrant children face exclusion due to lack of access to schooling at the destination. It is imperative to make school education accessible to children of migratory population irrespective of their mobility and stay in multiple locations.

4. Decent housing and healthy environment at worksites for migrant families

Migrant workers and their families live in testing and hazardous condition. Every child has the right to decent and safe and healthy living in a worksite.

5. Migrant child labour and safety and security of adolescent girls living in worksites

Migrant families living inside a worksite face various vulnerabilities. Cases of child labour and violence against adolescent girls are often reported from the worksites.

6. Portability of government entitlements and service-need for convergence and policy

Migration is multidimensional and multi-location. Poor people are excluded from accessing various services, entitlements, schemes, privileges and participation in governance process in native as well as at the destination. The policy for portability of basic entitlements, services are crucial to enhance citizenship rights of internal migrants.

7. GO-NGO-Corporate partnership for the welfare of migrant and children at worksites

Financial inclusion and welfare of migrant workers and their families is vital through effective and collective endeavour of government, NGO and corporate house.

Taking all into consideration, Aide et Action in collaboration with Bernard van Leer Foundation (BvLF) is planning to organize its 4th National Consultation on "Children and Internal Migration in India" on 22nd-23rd September, 2015 at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.

National consultation objectives:

Participants will address the question of how the government, civil society, corporate house and local stakeholders can contribute, and suggest inclusive policies, programme and partnership to safeguard the rights and entitlements of internal migrant children in India.

1. Deliberate and understand the dynamics of internal migration and its impact on children
2. Outline solutions for inclusion of migrant children in accessing education, protection and healthy environment in cities
3. Share best practices on migrant children's care, safety, learning and healthy environment across selected states of India both by the government and civil society organizations
4. Identify hurdles, challenges, policy gaps and opportunities to create inclusive policy formulations for government and other stakeholders
5. Identify area of convergence between various departments of the Government and civil society organizations on the issue
6. Bring-in organizations and groups working with migrant children on a national platform for learning and collaborative efforts.

Conference participants: Close to 80-100 participants from the Government, academia, UN Agencies, NGOs/INGOs will deliberate and suggest various alternatives for the welfare and rights of internal migrant children.

Partners: Aide et Action, Bernard Van Leer Foundation, UNESCO, National Institute for Urban Affairs (TBC)

Date and venue: 22nd and 23rd September, 2015 at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

Contact:

Priyanka Pathak, Programme Manager, Aide et Action South Asia

Email: priyanka.pathak@aide-et-action.org

Mobile phone: +91-9711383266

Phone: +91-11-26265437