



Internal Migration and Social Protection: The Missing Link

Key Message

As social protection policies and programmes are focused on only settled populations, internal migrants lose access to social security benefits linked to permanent residence. There remains no concerted strategy to ensure portability of entitlements for migrants. Planning for migrant families who are not settled, but are on the move, warrants a fundamental rethinking of development approaches and models in order to protect and promote migrants' access to social services and enable migrants to become socially and politically active citizens.

Challenges

Most social protection programmes require registration of eligible beneficiaries and issuance of beneficiary cards to them. Lacking documentary proofs of identity and local residence, migrants are often unable to register themselves for social protection programmes and lay claim to basic entitlements. As a result,

- Migrants are denied access to subsidized food available through the Public Distribution System and face difficulties in accessing housing and other basic amenities such as water and sanitation. They are unable to access banking facilities and are forced to rely on informal networks (for example, friends and relatives visiting home, informal couriers or bus drivers) to remit money to families left behind.
- Working mostly in the informal sector, migrants

lack employment-related social security and legal protection and are seldom unionized.

- Migrants' health is affected by occupational health hazards, poor living conditions, poor access to affordable health services, as also sexual risks.
- Education of migrant children suffers when children accompany their parents during seasonal migration and are forced to drop out of schools.

Facts and Figures

- Currently, government policies and programmes fail to recognize migrant populations as a priority group for ensuring rights and entitlements.
- Fragmented references to migrants exist in some legislation and policies such as the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act (1979), the Right to Education Act (2009) and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, but they inadequately address the nature and complexities of internal migration in India.
- Shelter solutions in urban areas are in fact discriminatory towards migrants (for example, criteria for slum dwellers to be eligible for slum rehabilitation schemes include demonstrating evidence of residency prior to certain year-wise cut-off dates, which are biased against entry of new migrants into the city).
- Biometric smart cards issued under the

Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) and the Unique Identification Number (Aadhaar) have the potential for providing migrants proof of identity and are a basis to claim other socio-economic entitlements. However, it remains to be seen whether these mechanisms will be able to overcome complications stemming from multi-locational residence.

Policy Recommendations

Devise a universal national minimum social security package with portable entitlements

- Adopt recommendations on a National Minimum Social Security Scheme for informal workers suggested by the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS), with the following features:
 - i. Universal registration of workers and issuance of unique photo identity and/or smart cards by grass roots organizations (for example, Aajeevika Bureau in association with the Rajasthan Labour Department).
 - ii. Complete portability in terms of registration, payment of premium (where applicable), and receipt of benefits of all centrally sponsored social protection programmes, irrespective of where migrants reside.
 - iii. National Minimum Social Security Package for all workers consisting of a retirement benefit, a life cover, and a family health cover.

Develop customized social protection products and services for migrants

- Set up migrant resource centres offering pre-departure counselling, access to labour market information and institutionalized access to jobs, including training, placement and skill upgradation (for example, Labournet in Bangalore and Gramin Vikas Trust).
- Create labour helplines and legal clinics providing legal counselling to migrants at both the source and the destination (for example, Aajeevika Bureau in Rajasthan).
- Arrange night shelters and short-stay homes for migrants to provide seasonal and temporary

accommodation for migrant workers in high in-migration states (for example, Ram Roti Yojana by the Bhopal Municipal Corporation in Madhya Pradesh and Indo-Global Social Service Society).

- Issue temporary ration cards to migrants at the destination to enable access to subsidized food through the Public Distribution System (for example, Disha Foundation in Maharashtra).
- Develop seasonal hostels to promote retention of children in schools in source areas, set up worksite schools at the destination with systems to transfer enrolment, attendance and credits to formal schools, undertake bridge courses and remedial education for return migrant children (for example, Aide et Action American India Foundation (AIF), Lokadrusti in Orissa, Janarth in Maharashtra, and SETU in Gujarat).
- Establish mobile crèches, early childcare and/or daycare centres at or close to worksites for children in the age group 0–14 years (for example, Mobile Creches, Delhi).
- Conduct targeted health interventions for migrants, including HIV/AIDS interventions for high-risk migrants (for example, NACO strategy on HIV Intervention for Migrants and Red Ribbon Express trains).
- Link migrant workers to financial services through branchless or mobile banking and banking correspondents (for example, FINO Money Transfer and Eko India Financial Services Pvt. Ltd., banking correspondent of State Bank of India, ICICI Bank and Yes Bank).