

General Studies-1; Topic– Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India.

National Policy for Internal Migration

1) Introduction

- The Economic Survey 2017 has brought in new evidence to indicate that Indians are much more mobile than it was generally believed.
- Internal migration – movement within national boundaries – is far greater than movement beyond the shores.
- Migration from rural areas to urban spaces in search of livelihood opportunities has transformed human society, and still continues to drive economic and social development.

2) Internal Migration

- Internal migration can be driven by push and/or pull factors.
- Agrarian distress, natural calamities, and input/output market imperfections (a push factor) and an increase in better-paying jobs in urban areas (a pull factor) have been drivers of internal migration.
- Data show that employment-seeking is the principal reason for migration in regions without conflict.
- More than a third of India's population are internal migrants, while 75% of the youth of the country are migrants.
- Instead of long-term migration, there are large flows of short-term migrant labour.
- China's spectacular economic growth has been fuelled by migration from villages to urban centres of industrial production.
- The Economic Survey 2017 estimates that the magnitude of inter-state migration in India was close to 9 million annually between 2011 and 2016.

3) Benefits of Migration

- Internal migration has resulted in the increased wellbeing of households, especially for people with higher skills, social connections and assets.
- It is expected to enhance consumption and lift families out of absolute poverty at the origin.
- Data show that a circular migrant's earnings account for a higher proportion of household income among the lower castes and tribes.
- This has helped to improve the creditworthiness and can now obtain loans more easily.
- According to 2018 State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) report by FAO, outmigration often leads to improved food security and nutrition for migrants.
- Migration can be an important risk-management strategy for farming households to overcome income uncertainty and food insecurity.
- Large-scale migration of male members leads to greater participation of women in agriculture. This is seen as a feminisation movement in agriculture.
- The rising contribution of cities to India's GDP would not be possible without migration and migrant workers.
- Migrants also take their skills and knowledge back with them, generally called 'social remittances'.
- The backbone of the Green Revolution in Punjab was actually migrant labour.

4) Tackling Rural Migration

- Creation of attractive livelihood opportunities in villages can help stem rural migration.

- In Andhra Pradesh, the Zero Budget Natural Farming initiative, has helped reduce migration to a great extent.
- Creating opportunities in non-farm employment in rural areas is an important element of any rural development strategy.

5) Why a National Policy?

- For reducing distress-induced migration.
- For addressing conditions of work, terms of employment and access to basic necessities.
- Study shows that less than 20% of urban migrants had prearranged jobs
- Access to information on employment availability before migrating tend to reduce the period of unemployment significantly.
- As government interventions are directed towards poverty reduction, there is a dearth of direct interventions targeted and focussed on regions.
- Without social protection networks, migrants find it difficult to move from casual to regular work.
- To receive greater attention from governments, researchers, and international organisations.

6) The Costs of Migration

- At the destination, a migrant's lack of skills presents a major hindrance in entering the labour market.
- The modern formal urban sector has often not been able to absorb the large number of rural workers entering the urban labour market.
- This has led to the growth of the 'urban informal' economy, which is marked by high poverty and vulnerabilities.
- Most jobs in the urban informal sector pay poorly and involve self-employed workers.
- They incur a large cost of migration which includes the 'search cost' and the hazard of being cheated.
- Frequent borrowing forces them to sell assets towards repayment of their loans.
- Access to health insurance, maternal and child health schemes, educational rights, housing benefits, and even food security are often barred to the migrant worker.
- Women migrants are victims of gender-based violence, physical, sexual, or psychological abuse, exploitation, and trafficking
- The contract labour system and a loose monitoring by state apparatus has helped strengthen these unfair models.

7) Way Forward

- India must safeguard the rights of internal migrants.
- Continued dynamic interventions over long periods of time would yield better results compared to single-point static interventions.
- Local bodies and NGOs which bring about structural changes in local regions need to be provided more space.
- Local interventions by NGOs and private entrepreneurs need to consider cultural dimensions while targeting migrants.
- Interventions aimed at enhanced skill development would enable easier entry into the labour market.
- Addressing the needs of household migrants because household migration necessitates access to infrastructure such as housing, sanitation and health care more than individual migration does.

- Government interventions related to employment can be supported by market-led interventions such as microfinance initiatives, which help in tackling seasonality of incomes.
- As remittances from migrants are increasingly becoming the lifeline of rural households, improved financial infrastructure is needed to enable the smooth flow of remittances.
- Social benefits must be made portable to help migrants to leverage work opportunities, especially in urban India.
- The funds collected from the industry under Building and Other Construction Workers Act can be used to support cities in creating quality rental housing and extending basic services to migrant settlements.
- On-the-job training to migrant workers in construction, factory work and hotel sectors helps to raise wages, enables better placements and improves their self-esteem and dignity.
- Local government and NGOs can organise health camps, provide consultation, creches for children of migrant women etc.
- The need of the hour is for the government to consider the needs of this section of the economy and design special assistance for them.

