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NITI Aayog and Labour Migration in India: A Review

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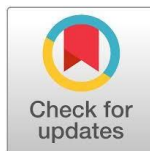
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Abstract: *The great exodus of migrant workers during covid19 lock down in India showed insecurity of their lives. The lock downs also underlined the need for recognising the role of migrant workers in driving our economy. There is no institutional grievance support mechanism. Since Indian economy is largely informal, ensuring decent work remains a challenge and migration continues to be a key strategy for livelihood security. To address the migrant workers' concerns, the NITI Aayog's policy envisages that "migration should be acknowledged as an integral part of development and government policies should not hinder but seek to facilitate internal migration".*

Keywords: *Migrant workers, NITI Aayog, Rights based approach, eShram-Portal, Samadhan-Portal*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The great exodus of migrant workers during covid19 lock down in India showed insecurity of their lives. The sufferings, caused by lock downs, ranging from exploitation, denial of labour rights, lack of social protection in terms of health, education and housing. The lock downs also underlined the need for recognising the role of migrant workers in driving our economy and forced the governments both centre and state to provide welfare measures to the deprived migrant workers.

Labour The term "migration" describes the movement of labourers seeking employment from their place of origin to a different city, state, or country. With Sustainable Development Goal 8 calling for equitable and sustainable economic growth, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development places a strong emphasis on the role that migration plays in attaining sustainable development. However, finding respectable jobs remains challenging due to the unorganized nature of the Indian economy. Interstate migrants face difficulties such as low pay, unfavorable working conditions, subpar housing, redundant paperwork, extended work hours, abuse, and lack of social protection. The construction industry also faces high rates of workplace accidents and fatalities due to inadequate safety protocols. Nearly half of all interstate migrants come from economically less developed states, such as the states with the highest rates of poverty and disparities in human development are Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh. Approximately 74% of interstate migrants originated from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, according to the post-Covid KNOMAD Survey on Internal Migration and Labour Markets in Delhi and Mumbai. Migrants forced to work in the unorganized sector often become victims of economic exploitation and require protection. Not all provisions of the Inter-state Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act of 1979 have been fully implemented. These provisions included a journey allowance, adequate lodging, equal remuneration, minimum wages, and free medical facilities. The Inter-State Migrant Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill-2011, as reported by the Standing Committee, recognised the exploitation of interstate migrant labourers and highlighted the need for further action.

The government agencies have performed occasional surveys, but systematic data on unorganised workers is still missing. These surveys exclude the migrant workers working in the construction sector where they are paid low wages and low social security but workers surge continuously in construction sector due to the non-availability of non-farm employment.

Up to 140 million impoverished rural Indians migrate to cities, factories, and farms to find employment in various sectors, including manufacturing, services, construction, and agriculture. These migrants are part of the estimated 350 million unorganised, informal workers in India who are denied access to services and rights as citizens and workers. Migrant workers face low pay, unstable employment, dangerous working conditions, and a lack of basic amenities.

They are unlikely to have proof of residency, making it difficult for them to access public entitlements, such as subsidised housing, healthcare, and food grains. Migrants often live in contaminated manufacturing areas, brick kilns, or building sites on the edges of cities. When they do live in the city, they are usually in unofficial settlements considered illegal by local officials. Solutions are needed to make migration a more respectable and fruitful endeavor, as achieving inclusive or sustainable growth would remain a pipe dream.

In response to migrant workers' concerns, the Central Government policy think tank NITI Aayog developed a national strategy on migrant labour. The policy stipulates that "government policies should not hinder but seek to facilitate internal migration" and that "migration should be acknowledged as an integral part of development." NITI Aayog distinguished between two methods for creating policies. The hand-out approach, which emphasises financial transfers, special quotas, and reservations, entails using all of the resources the Indian government makes available to migrants. The rights-based approach "removes aspects that impede an individual's natural ability to thrive and enhances the agency and capability of the community." This strategy implies that every state must protect the rights. The draft stressed the importance of having specifics on the safety net for food, shelter, livelihood, and health, particularly following the lockdown. The topics addressed in the draft include minimum salaries, employment in rural areas, workplace safety and security, shelter, and a database of workers in the informal sector. According to the draft, The Right to Education Act, 2009 should be implemented by the Ministry of Education through the assignment of local language instructors to migrant destinations, the mainstreaming of migrant children's education, and the mapping of migrant children's educational experiences. The suggested course of action urged the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to intervene and offer migrants temporary housing, night shelters, and seasonal lodging living in cities. There have been proposals for grievance handling cells that would expedite legal remedies for migrant worker accidents, workplace abuses, minimum wage breaches, and human trafficking. The National Food Security Act (NFSA) and other welfare recipients, particularly migratory workers and their families, can obtain rations at any Fair Price Shop (FPS) in the nation thanks to the One Nation, One Ration Card System. For the welfare of migrants, work norms outlined in international labour agreements must be strictly adhered to. India should take note of the inclusion-based policy approach of European nations in this regard. Their policy, which offers migrant support measures to help people integrate into the labour, promotes social cohesiveness whereby each person is united as an engaged member of a society.

In an attempt to strengthen the database of unorganised workers, the Government of India launched the eShram-Portal in 2021 as the first-ever national database of unorganised workers, including migrant workers. States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh are the ones that outmigrate other states and have registered on eShram-Portal, whereas Maharashtra is the state that receives the most number of interstate migrants. To address worker issues, such as unlawful

termination, delayed payments and unauthorised deductions, gender discrimination, equal and minimum wages, overtime allowance, gratuity, and bonus, the government not only created a database but also developed the "Samadhan-Portal." It would be prudent to include the Inter-state Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979 under the Samadhan Portal. The Working Group on Migration's analysis of the Inter State Migrant Workers Act of 1979 found that it only protected labourers who went through a contractor, excluding independent migrants' 2017 Report. The 1979 Act should be amended for effective use in protecting migrants, according to the NITI Aayog's policy draft. The draft stressed the need for coordination between Ministries, states, and local authorities and named the Ministry of Labour and Employment as the nodal Ministry responsible for carrying out policy. A national labour helpline, an interstate migration management organisation, connections between worker households and government programs, and a particular organisation to administer migration resource centres in high movement zones were all suggested in the draft. The document recommended that different Ministries establish focus points for migration. The migratory worker cells should facilitate collaboration between the labour departments of the source and destination states. The proposal changes things by suggesting actions to stop migration. To stop migration, it requests that states increase the minimum wage. Specifically, it is to stop tribal migration.

Issues still unaddressed

- Gender differences in employment was not much discussed in the draft.
- Domestic workers are one of the most important occupations for migrant women. They have been ignored.
- The policy failed to analyse the causes for the poor implementation of labour laws.
- Controlling tribal migration may limit their access to opportunities offered by migration.

The following initiatives may bring integration of migrant labour force into formal economic framework.

- Provision of safety net in form of monthly allowance by direct benefit transfer.
- Low priced insurance policies
- Ensuring occupational safety
- Implementing skill enhancement schemes
- Setting up a National Migrant Workers Commission
- Labour laws to be brought under the Central List.
- Coordination between Centre and State governments for regulation of labour laws.

The district administration in Bihar is actively working to support returning migrant workers by identifying industries, providing financial assistance, and developing livelihood projects. Notable initiatives include the provision of loans to street vendors and skill mapping of migrants through mobile apps. The establishment of the Jeevika Yuva Paramarsh Sah Sansadhan Kendra (JYPSSK) in Katihar aims to empower youth by offering employment resources and counseling. Various districts, including Jamui, are focusing on creating sustainable job opportunities aligned with the Prime Minister's vision of an Aatmanirbhar Bharat, encouraging the growth of small and medium enterprises. The overall goal is to enhance local economies and reduce dependency on migration through skill development and job creation.

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

Lucas (2015) emphasized the importance of addressing temporary and seasonal migration in a global context, as it can have detrimental effects on a nation's prosperity and progress. Migrants who have lived in cities for extended periods are typically fully integrated urbanites or semi-permanently disconnected from their rural origins. The lack of opportunities for livelihood in their home areas drives the migration of individuals at the bottom of the workforce, who are less driven by choice or the pursuit of better opportunities.

Tilak Sanyal and Kingsuk Maity (2018) studied Labour Migration in India: Trends, Causes and Impacts. The study explores worker migration in India, a significant socioeconomic and political concern. It highlights the decline in migration rates between 1971 and 1991 for both genders, but a rise in the final decade of the 1990s due to the rapid development of the unorganized sector. This suggests that workers were made casual, with a decrease in men's work-related migration and an increase for females. The majority of temporary migrants were from rural regions, with men making up the bulk. The study reveals that women typically travel a few distances and go from rural to rural in nature, primarily due to migration. The inconsistent growth has been the primary motivating factor for labor migration, along with differences in socioeconomic circumstances, pay, and development policies. The study also discusses two variables: "push" and "pull" factors, which can act independently or concurrently to produce migration flow. Movement refers to people moving for higher standards of living, while push factors involve people moving to pay off previous debts at their source region. The study concludes that the effects of migration are miserable on the level of living for migrants and their families, as they lack access to healthcare, education, public services, and basic facilities like drinking water and hygiene conditions. Remittances sent home by immigrants are often used to cover unpaid bills and provide support for increased intake.

Labour Migration, Vulnerability, and Development Policy: The Pandemic as Inflexion Point? was questioned by Ravi Srivastava (2020). This issue looks at India's migration patterns with a particular emphasis on labour migrants working in the unorganised sector—particularly those impacted by the ongoing pandemic. Uneven development, population changes, wars, and conflicts all have an impact on migration, but it has also contributed to greater prosperity and well-being. The qualities of migrants vary; some are wealthy and well-off, while others are at the bottom end of the labour market and struggle to obtain basic rights. Foreign migrant workers have suffered greatly as a result of the epidemic, especially low-skilled, undocumented migrant labourers employed on temporary contracts in the informal economy. The World Bank predicts a 7.2% fall in foreign remittances in 2020, followed by a further decline in 2021. Over two million migrants from Kerala, a state in the South, are still living overseas, mostly in the Gulf states. The study examines the long-term options available to return migrants impacted by the current economic crisis and unemployment. The study concludes that most migrants do not experience upward occupational mobility due to their international movement, and their foreign work experience does not significantly enhance their skill set. The primary states of destination are Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala, while the primary source states are Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Odisha, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. Remittances can boost consumption and reduce poverty, but the impacts depend on the migrant's starting income and place in the labor market at the time of the transfer. Footloose, short-term, and seasonal migrants are among the lowest strata of workers, severely exploited, and denied even minimal labor rights. Labor regulation changes have led to an increase in non-standard employment and labor flexibility without addressing concerns about worker rights and dignity or the proper balance between capital and labor.

Asma Khan and H. Arokkiaraj (2021) examined Problems with reverse migration in India: a comparison of migrant workers from within and outside the country in the post-COVID era economy. Because of the sudden lockdown, the government's lack of planning and preparedness, the employers' reckless behaviour, and the public's hostility towards the migrants, the investigation revealed the coerced and involuntary nature of reverse migration. Because of their incomplete immigration records and welfare program enrolment, the majority of them were ineligible for benefits from the assistance package. The COVID-19 pandemic has made pre-existing problems more severe for migratory populations, leading to forced and involuntary reverse migration. The crisis presents an opportunity to introduce constructive changes, requiring strong political will. Reintegrating both domestic and foreign migrants into the post-COVID economy requires gathering up-to-date data, creating jobs that match their skill set, incorporating them into welfare programs, and allowing social security benefits to be transferred. The Indian Community Welfare Fund should be used during emergency situations and to lower the cost of migration for foreign workers.

Government cooperation with civil society is necessary for improved policy making, as it has strong grassroots outreach to immigrant populations. The Indian Community Welfare Fund should also be used to lower the cost of migration for foreign workers.

Aswani T. D. and Shivashankar Bhat (2022) conducted a review of the book *Labour Migration: Types, Causes, and Interactions*. Economics of migration have been a prominent subject of research for a considerable period of time. The impact of worker migration on several domains such as employment, the labour market, social welfare, rural development, labour management, and migrant networks is undeniable. An in-depth knowledge of the labour force is necessary for developing inclusive economic growth strategies and appropriate labour market policies. An analysis of the extent and orientation of labour migration policies and their impact on a country's job market and economic development. Trait This study, which centres on secondary data sources, employed research methodologies. Secondary data is collected from publications such as literary works, newspapers, scholarly journals, articles, and official websites. An exhaustive examination of the literature demonstrates that migration has consistently exerted a substantial influence on both population expansion and economic progress. In the quest for improved living conditions, individuals have traversed both national and international boundaries.

Bernard Attah-Otu et al (2024) examined This study investigates the dynamics of temporary labour migration among internal migrants in India, focusing on factors such as conditions for migration, reasons for migrating, plans for migration, coping mechanisms, and length of stay factors. It discovered that decisions about migration are made collaboratively at the household level, taking into account socioeconomic factors. Social networks and contractors help make relocation plans and job connections, and migrants use various strategies to save costs and manage living expenses in cities. However, migratory destinations often fall short of migrants' aspirations, leading to low-paying jobs, precarious housing, and unhealthy work conditions. The study used a phenomenological method to examine key components like migration decisions, arrangements, coping strategies, and reasons for the transient nature of migration. It also highlighted the role of household members who are not migrating but are implicated in the migration process, as well as men and women who travel for work on agricultural and construction plantations. The study found that gender differences in migration preferences were evident, with male offspring being preferred for longer stays in the destination. Contractors and social networks played a crucial role in setting up employment connections and migration plans for labour migrants.

The study by **Monalisha Chakraborty et al. in 2022** investigated the earnings and struggles of Bengali migrant workers in South India during the Covid pandemic. The research involved a survey of 111 Bengali-speaking migrant workers, interviews, and focus group discussions.

The majority of these workers came to South India after working in northern or western Indian cities, such as Kolkata, due to dismal salary rates and lack of regular work prospects. Migrant workers are drawn to South India due to its better earnings, friendlier social environment, and growing financial uncertainties in northern and western Indian cities. The study found that migrant workers in South India, except for rag pickers in Bengaluru, live alone at their destination, with poor living conditions. The pandemic and frequent lockdowns have made their lives uneasy, making it harder for them to find employment and relocate to new regions. Many unskilled and semi-skilled Bengali workers have been forced to migrate to South India due to a lack of regular jobs and inexpensive wages. Kerala has better salaries on average than West Bengal, with the majority of migrant workers employed by contractors. Remittances from migrant laborers often make up two-thirds of their pay. Most migrant workers do not have the opportunity to bring their families to their current work, and they live in unclean and unsafe settings. The study highlights the need for more migratory-inclusive social protection measures that cover food, health, monetary transfers, and public job programs. Kerala is one of the few states with proactive policies for migrant labourers, some dating back to 2008.

Priya Deshingkar et al. (2022) explored the effects of structural violence on labour migration. During the COVID-19 pandemic in India, millions of migrant workers were forced to leave their homes, face unemployment benefits, and return to their villages due to the government's unexpected lockdown. Most of these migrants were circular, interstate labor migrants from northern and eastern states, engaged in major cities like Kochi, Delhi, Mumbai, and Surat. Many individuals belonged to marginalized groups like Adivasis, minorities, and lower castes. The state's inclusion criteria and rule-obsessed procedures often reject considerable portions of the impoverished and vulnerable migrant workers, normalizing their misery. Structural violence is rooted in society institutions that restrict individuals from reaching their maximum potential. The deprivation patterns identified in the experiences of migrants display numerous aspects of structural violence. The state's incapacity to acquire thorough information on migration and employment of the poorer classes has led to misrepresentation of migratory patterns and the neglect of the most disadvantaged parts of the migrant labor. Migrant workers in small, insecure enterprises are fighting for their survival, and the lack of visibility is particularly severe for migrant women who work in chains of production in garment and other industries as "home-based" subcontractors. The state's reliance on unduly bureaucratic procedures of beneficiary selection has hindered relief efforts; payments are only made to those who are registered under the Interstate Migrant Workmen Act of 1979 (ISMWA) or the Building and Other Construction Workers Act of 1996 (BOCWA). Migration's effects on the economy were investigated by Md. Imran Khan et al. (2024), with a particular emphasis on the financial costs associated with migrating and the strategies used by Gulf migrant workers from Bihar for fundraising.

A three-stage cluster sampling technique was utilised to obtain a sample of 400 participants for the study. The participants were migrant workers from the Gulf who were originally from the Bihar districts of Siwan and Gopalganj. The results of the chi-square test show that lowering migration costs is significantly impacted by both technical education and prior work experience. Even though the majority of migrant workers depend on the services of agents, it is important to remember that the process of obtaining visas through agents is expensive. The average total cost of Gulf migration is more than three times the amount of money earned in the country of destination. The results of the regression analysis showed that a number of variables had a statistically significant impact on the cost of migration, including the migrant workers' age, technical education, visa source, degree of education, and previous work experience. Migrant workers mostly rely on their parents and social networks for the fund-raising method. Among migrants, getting money from moneylenders is still a common practice. The study highlights the critical role that social networks and family support play in facilitating migration and throws light on the main factors that determine migration costs for workers. This report also suggests policies to lessen the financial burden of migration. Specifically, it suggests that the government collaborate with financial institutions to create specialised lending programs for migrant labourers, or "migration loans."

The socio-legal analysis by **Munjal and Bamba (2024)** examined India's evolving labour laws, focusing on the precarious situation of migrant workers and the potential legal exclusion from updated regulations due to COVID-19 lockdowns. The revised regulations weaken measures for holding contractors and employers accountable and reduce the number of businesses subject to regulation, increasing labor exploitation and affecting migrant rights. The changes have benefited capital and increased informality across various industries. Migrant workers from different states may not have access to protections that make employers responsible for their treatment, leaving them more exposed in the unofficial economy. The article suggests that the state's efforts to increase "ease of doing business" by promoting precarious employment and reducing safeguards may be more harmful than initially thought.

Rajan, S. Irudaya, and others (2020) India's Internal Labour Migration and the COVID-19 Pandemic: A "Crisis of Mobility" the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on migration were investigated. Countries all throughout the world were unprepared for the pandemic's quick spread, which led to widespread lockdowns that restricted travel, business, and social interactions. A severe "crisis of mobility" was brought on by the pandemic in India, as migrant labourers in many of the country's main cities were attempting to return to their hometowns. The lockout was ineffectual because of their desperate attempts to leave by any means imaginable a number of locations, which led to conflicts with the police, last-minute policy changes, and ultimately the planning of transportation measures.

By analysing the state of internal migrant labourers in terms of gender, mental health, and social security benefits, the study shed light on the current migrant issue brought on by COVID-19. Accurate data on internal migrants is necessary for any successful response to the current migration problem, since it would give visibility to the labourers who are invisible yet ubiquitous. Because they are "neither here, nor there," many migrants continue to be denied access to a variety of government programs. This needs to be carried out in accordance with the schemes' intent-impact gap analysis. It is imperative that NCEUS suggestions be reviewed at this point and implemented successfully without losing any of their specificity. In order to provide migrants a stronger voice and more political agency, a migrant collective must be formed.

Deepak K. Mishra et al (2021) analysed the the political-economic suffering of migrant labourers in India as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak. It is thought that migrant workers' vulnerabilities are reinforced notwithstanding the disruptions and uncertainties produced by the sudden announcement of a severe lockdown. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on migrant labourers because of their vulnerability resulting from long-term shifts in India's political economy of growth. The official support for the working classes has been undermined as a result of these shifts, and "cheap labour" is now seen as a legitimate goal of neoliberal capitalist development. The conditions of the working classes under neoliberal globalisation, which progressively weakens the working classes and its representatives, gave rise to the immigration problem. Modern global capitalism relies on migrant informal labourers to supply inexpensive labour at the lower end of value and commodity chains, frequently with poor skill levels. Via tiers of contractors, multinational companies, large corporations, and those working with cutting-edge technology employ informal labour. There is ample evidence linking capitalist accumulation to the precarity of informal workers. Long-term shifts in India's political economy of growth have given rise to the migrant problem by normalising "Discount labour" as a justifiable objective of the growth of neoliberal capitalism. As a result of political, social, and economic problems, migrant workers face numerous risks. As 'outsiders' who contribute to unclean, congested, and violent cities, they are typically portrayed by nativist politicians as 'encroachers' and are the target of their attacks. During the pandemic, state and federal organizations played vital roles in providing relief and transit to stranded migrant workers. However, decisions were taken against the interests of labour, such as reducing existing labor regulations and implementing labor norms and standards. These changes worsen the position of vulnerable migrant workers, as they are the unacknowledged roots of India's incorporation into global capitalism.

Joshy Jesline et al.'s 2021 study evaluated the economic, social, and health conditions of migrants during the COVID-19 crisis in India. The study highlighted the challenges, vulnerabilities, and discrimination faced by migrants due to the pandemic's onslaught and the cyclical movement.

Migrants faced challenges such as being left behind in their new country due to lockdown, living in subpar aid camps, and facing a wide range of medical conditions. The government provided little medical care, and they faced societal problems like prejudice and harassment. The pandemic's unpredictable nature left migrants without any relief. The government launched programs to ensure the welfare of immigrants, such as "Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan" and "Affordable Rental Housing Complexes for Migrant Workers and Urban Poor." However, most of these projects were poorly executed, rendering them ineffective and unable to serve the full migrant community. The authors concluded that quick interventions are necessary to ensure the welfare of migrants after evaluating the factors influencing them. The study highlights the need for quick interventions to address the challenges faced by migrants during the pandemic.

Neha Nimble et al (2024) studied the drivers of migrant vulnerability in Andhra Pradesh, India, are labour migration and human trafficking. Using the Determinants of Vulnerability Framework developed by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), this study investigated the relationship between migration and human trafficking in Andhra Pradesh, India. A mixed-methods approach is used in this study, which includes 5888 surveys, focus groups, interviews, and case studies. It demonstrates that migration does not automatically lead to human trafficking, but rather, various factors at individual, home, community, and structural levels either increase the risk or shield migrant from it. The paper suggests that migration is a continuum that includes trafficking, dangerous migration, and vulnerability. The study contributes to understanding vulnerability factors linking migration and trafficking by analyzing social exclusion, economic vulnerability, and disempowerment in Andhra Pradesh. It also enables interventionists to work consistently and comparably in combating human trafficking, particularly in Andhra Pradesh. Future research should focus on risk and protective factors and anti-trafficking measures that consider sociocultural and structural aspects of migrant experiences and lives.

Sandhya Rani Mahapatro (2018) explored the changing migration trends in India, focusing on urbanization, globalisation, and socioeconomic changes. The recent migration statistics from the National Survey of Surveys (NSS) show a divergent trend of recent immigrants arriving earlier than five years ago. Migration is dominated by areas of poverty, as seen by the increase in urban migrants from lower socioeconomic groups. The interstate migration rate and per capita income have a negative association, further validating the trend. The diverse migratory trend in just ten years is due to differences between rural and urban socioeconomic growth and the acceleration of urbanisation. Migration to urban areas is likely to intensify the effects of urbanization and growing regional inequality due to the shifting economic landscape. An investigation of evolving migration patterns is essential for investigating new concerns, identifying obstacles, and determining the primary priority for urban development at the policy level.

The main challenge at the policy level is creating immigration policies that are connected to jobs and social services to improve the welfare of migrant residents in cities.

Pronoy Rai's 2018 study on seasonal labour migration in rural western India explored the connection between the movement and the social transformation of workers' home villages. However, there is a lack of research on how marginalized people challenge historical power dynamics in their home villages using their unique experiences and sensitivities. The study, conducted in the Yavatmal district of Maharashtra, focuses on Gramscian concepts of counter-hegemony and highlights the impact of seasonal migration on landowner farmers, landless laborers, and production relations. The research highlights the emergence of new subjectivities among farmers and laborers, challenges to conventional social norms, and migrant politics of resistance. The integration of internal migrants at their destinations has been the focus of migration and development policy in India and around the world, but little attention has been paid to the daily political disputes that arise in the home communities of these internal, circular migrants. The paper urges policy analysts to view migration as a social phenomenon and examine it as a social phenomenon.

III. NITI AYOOG AND LABOR MIGRATION POLICY

The draft National Migrant Labour Policy, developed by NITI Aayog in collaboration with civil society, aims to address the complex issues faced by migrant workers in India. Following the 2020 decision to create a database of migrant workers, the policy highlights the significant rise in migration, as reflected in the 2011 Census data. It identifies key challenges such as the exclusion of independent migrants from existing labor laws, insufficient community organization, and the exploitation by middlemen. The draft proposes several recommendations, including facilitating migration as a development strategy, raising minimum wages, creating a central database for better labor market coordination, establishing migration resource centers, and ensuring educational support for migrant children. It emphasizes a rights-based approach to welfare, advocating for the integration of migrant workers into the formal workforce to enhance their socio-economic conditions.

Key Insights

- Migration is a significant phenomenon in India, with 45.6 crore migrants identified in the 2011 Census.
- The current legal framework inadequately protects independent migrants, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation.
- There is a critical need for community building organizations to enhance access to development programs for migrant workers.
- Recommendations include raising minimum wages and creating migration resource centers to support migrant workers and their families.

- A rights-based approach is essential for integrating migrants into the formal workforce, ensuring their welfare and representation.
- The district administration is providing financial support to returning migrants through loans to help them start small businesses.
- Skill mapping initiatives aim to connect migrants with suitable job opportunities within their communities.
- The establishment of JYPSSK in Katihar emphasizes youth empowerment and the creation of income-generating activities.
- Efforts are being made to promote innovative start-ups and small businesses as part of a broader strategy for economic growth.
- Multiple districts are collaborating on initiatives to develop sustainable livelihoods, thereby reducing the need for migration.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Covid-19 pandemic exposed the flaws in the current interstate migration framework. To guarantee that interstate migrant workers have a respectable working environment, labour policy should place a strong emphasis on migrant care and protection. Without a question, migration is a process and a necessary component of growth. Thus, government measures ought to encourage rather than obstruct internal migration. Financial assistance, skill mapping, and resources for starting small businesses are provided to returning migrant workers. Skill mapping involves assessing the skills of returning migrants, which is then recorded in mobile applications to match them with local job opportunities. JYPSSK provides counseling, employment resources, and support for income-generating activities tailored for youth, particularly returning migrants. The initiatives support the Prime Minister's vision of an Aatmanirbhar Bharat by fostering local entrepreneurship and reducing reliance on migration for employment.

The draft of NITI Ayog aims to address the challenges faced by migrant workers in India and propose measures to enhance their welfare and integration into the formal workforce. The policy recognizes the exclusion of independent migrants from existing labor laws and seeks to create frameworks that provide them with better protection and support. Key recommendations include the establishment of a central database for migrants, raising minimum wages, and creating resource centers to assist migrants in high migration zones. A rights-based approach ensures that migrant workers have agency and representation, enabling them to access welfare schemes and protections necessary for their socio-economic development.

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