INTERNAL MIGRATION IN INDIA

A SCOPING PAPER

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ON OMIDYAR NETWORK INDIA

INDIA MIGRATION NOW
A SEM Foundation Venture

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# 1. Introduction to Internal Migration in India: Key Features and Data Highlights

Internal migration is a crucial part of India's development story. It constitutes a key income generating strategy for migrants and their households and contributes to the overall development trajectories of source and destination regions.[1] Data from the Census and other periodic surveys such as the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), India Human Development Survey (IHDS), and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) are used to piece together a data picture of the phenomenon. Individual policies and initiatives also exist at the national and state levels to promote the inclusion of different kinds of internal migrants. This scoping paper provides a brief overview of internal migration, the typology of internal migrants in India, the latest data sources for each of these, the issues and policy areas relevant to them and their households, and the various different policies and initiatives undertaken by government, civil society, and private sector actors for migrant communities across the country.

1.1 Migration Life Cycle

The migration life cycle comprises a set of stages that migrants and their households follow in their journey. At various steps of the life cycle, migrants encounter different kinds of barriers and can be provided assistance by different kinds of stakeholders. This scoping paper focuses on the first three stages of the life cycle – source, transit, and destination/multiple destinations. Return migration in the internal context is a relatively understudied area although it received a great deal of attention during the COVID lockdown of 2020.

Figure 1: The Migration Life Cycle
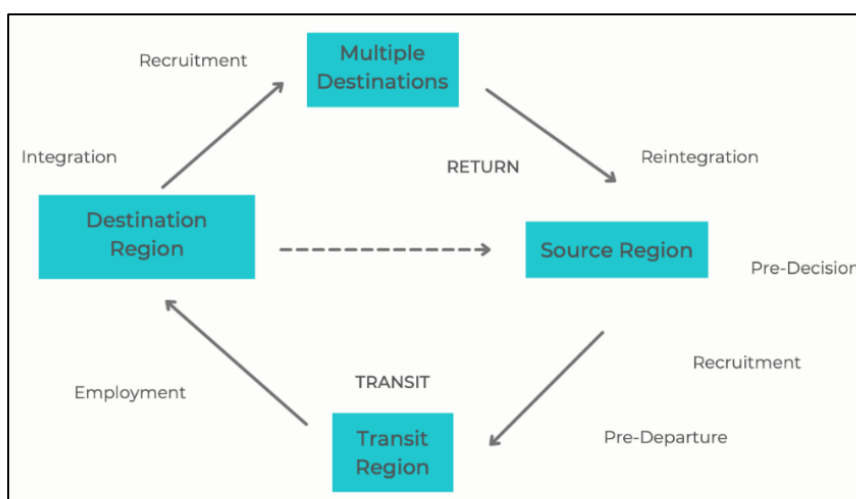

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[1]Aggarwal, V. Solano, G. Singh, P. and Singh, S. (2020). The Integration of Interstate Migrants in India: A 7 State Policy Evaluation. International Migration. Retrieved from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/imig.12701

1.2 Types of Internal Migrants in India

The typology of internal migration in India is both varied and dynamic. Migrants can be classified by duration of their stay in the destination region – as long-term (permanent, semi-permanent) and short-term (seasonal, and/or circular). Migrants can also be classified according to their reason for migration – work, education, family, displacement, etc.

The macro-level data available on internal migration in India is broadly data on migrant **stocks** rather than **migrant flows.** The former refers to the total number of migrants in a particular state *at a particular point in time* (for instance: State B had 50 million internal migrants in 2011). The latter refers to the number of migrants that moved from one place to another *over a particular period of time* (for instance: 50,000 migrants went from State A to State B in 2010-2011).

Figure 2: Typology of Internal Migrants in India
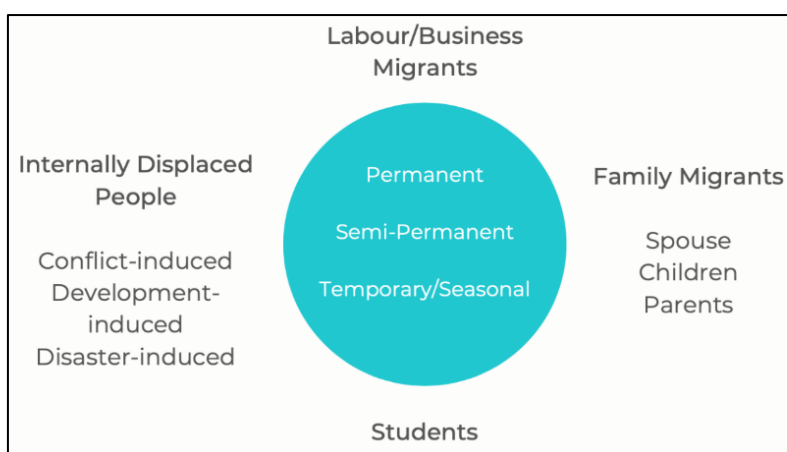
1.2.1 Permanent and Semi-Permanent Internal Migrants

According to the Census of 2011, there were 450 million migrants in India. This has increased from 315 million in 2001 and has doubled over the period of 1991-2011.

Figure 3: Total Migration According to Censuses Between 1991-2011

Total Migrants in India
According to the Census of India

Year	Migrants
1991	232M
2001	315M
2011	450M

Chart: India Migration Now • Source: Census India • Created with Datawrapper
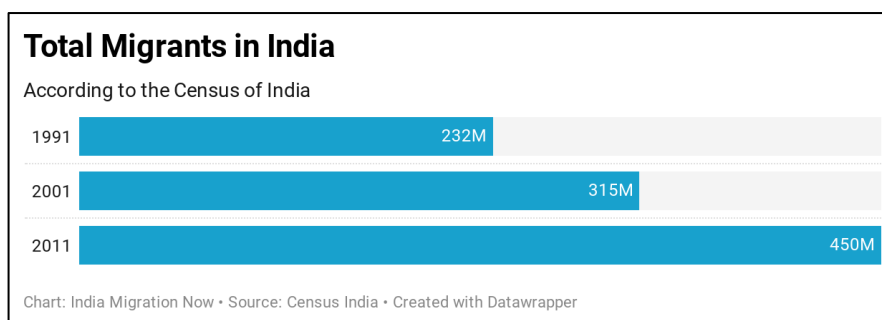
The Census defines a migrant in two ways – by place of birth or by place of last residence. *"Migrants by place of birth are those who are enumerated at a village/town at the time of census other than their place of birth. A person is considered as migrant by place of last residence, if the place in which he is enumerated during the census is other than his place of immediate last residence"*. The Census captures the mobility of permanent/semi-permanent migrants but also those whose duration of stay in a destination region has been less than 1 year – a number which stood at 17,366,706 in 2011 [2]. However, within this larger figure for short term migration (<1 year), a more granular picture on seasonal/circular migrants (who may migrate for less than 6 months and travel to multiple destinations) may be obtained from the National Sample Survey Office.

1.2.2 Short-term Seasonal/Circular Migrants

Short-term migrants in India adopt circular patterns of migration, sometimes corresponding to the cropping season and involving work in multiple destination regions. The NSSO 64th Round of 2007-2008 captures data on this type of migration. The survey defines short term migrants as: *"persons who had stayed away from the village/town for a period of 1 month or more but less than 6 months during the last 365 days for employment or in search of employment[3]."*

Figure 4: Destinations for Short Term Migrants In India (in %)
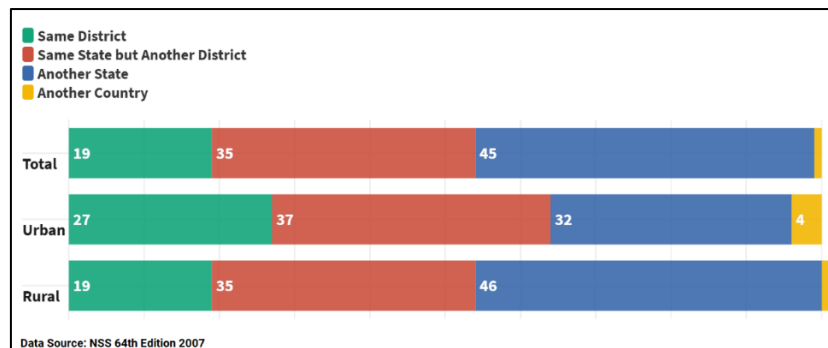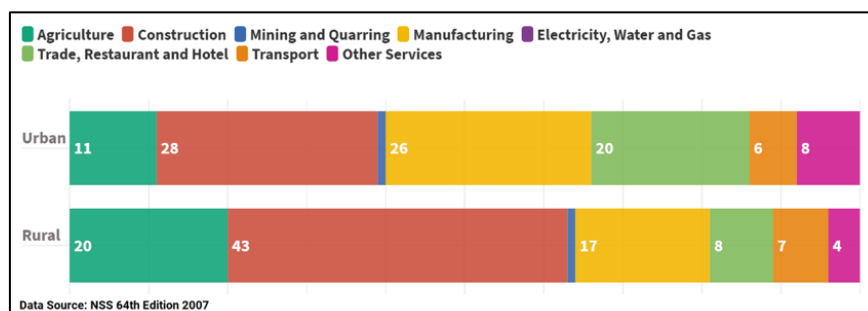

Figure 5: Industries for Short Term Migrants in India (in %)

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[2] Census terms (migration): https://censusindia.gov.in/Ad_Campaign/drop_in_articles/08-Migration.pdf
[3] NSSO terminology: http://www.mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/concepts_golden.pdf

The total number of short-term migrants, according to the NSS 64th Round, was 12.5 million. In terms of industry, construction emerged as the major employer of short-term migrants – with 28% of urban migrants and 43% of rural migrants working in the sector. The second highest employer was agriculture in rural areas and manufacturing in urban areas. In urban areas, migrants work in both formal and informal workplaces and comprise of almost 46% of India's urban population as per Census 2011.[4]

Insights on duration of migration also come from the India Human Development Survey (IHDS) of 2011-12, a nationally representative, multi-topic panel survey of 41,554 households in 1503 villages and 971 urban neighbourhoods. The IHDS found that of the 3289 migration journeys that the returned migrants had undertaken, 11% had a duration of 6 months or less while the remaining 89% had a duration of 7 months or more.

Figure 6: Duration of Migration Journeys, IHDS 2011-12

Duration of Journey of a Returned Migrant

■ More than 6 months (89%)
■ 6 months or less (11%)

6 months or less 11%

More than 6 months 89%
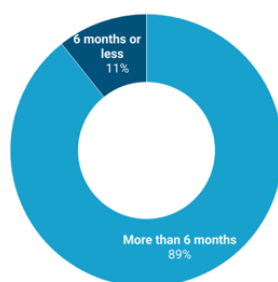
n=3289
Source: IHDS 2011-12 • Created with Datawrapper

1.2.3 Labour Migration

According to the Censuses conducted in the periods of 1981-1990, 1991-2000 and 2001-2010, an estimated 20.4 million, 29.9 million and 41.4 million individuals, respectively, moved on account of work/employment. Data from the National Sample Survey (NSS) in 2007-08 reveals that about 28.3% of the workforce in India are migrants.

The predominant reason for migration, according to the Census, is marriage with nearly three times as many women reporting migration for marriage. However, research has highlighted that the methodological practice of asking for a single reason for migration tends to mask women who may have initially migrated for marriage but are also labour migrants in destination regions[5].

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[4] Rajan, S.I. Bhagat, R.B. (2020). Internal Migration in India: Integrating Migration with Development and Urbanization Policies. Policy Brief 12. KNOMAD
[5] Mazumdar et al (2013): https://www.epw.in/journal/2013/10/special-articles/migration-and-gender-india.html

Figure 7: Reasons for Internal Migration in India (Census 1991-2011)

Reasons for Migration in India

	Work /Employment	Business	Education	Marriage	Moved with household	Moved After Birth	Others
1991	20.4M	5.3M	4.5M	130.3M	35.6M		36M
2001	29.9M	2.8M	3.4M	156.1M	43M	15.8M	63.5M
2011	41.4M	3.6M	5.5M	211.2M	66M	33.9M	94.3M

Chart: India Migration Now • Source: Census India • Created with Datawrapper
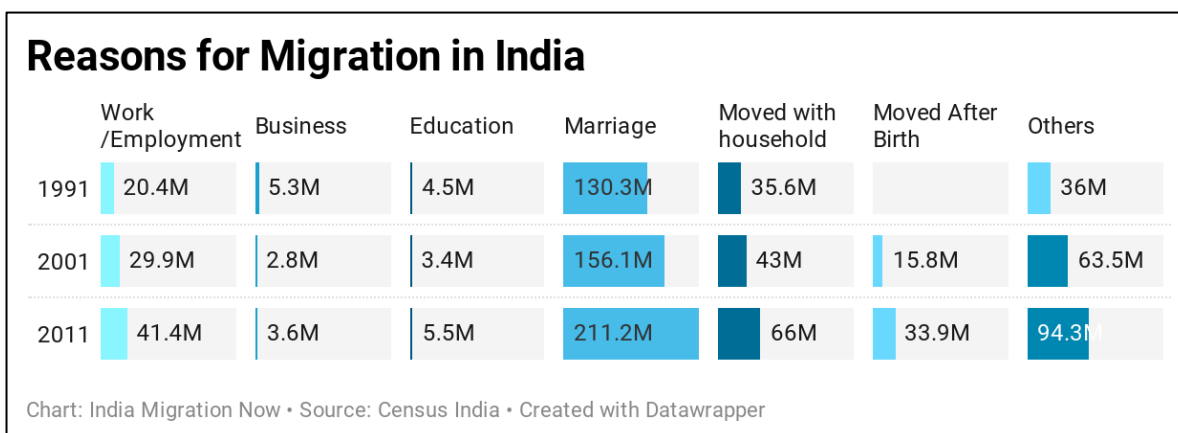
The migration for work segment has historically been dominated by men but over the past decade has also witnessed sizeable female participation, particularly in states such as West Bengal or Kerala for employment in tea/coffee gardens, and states such as Punjab and Haryana which benefited from the Green Revolution, for agri-labour. This worker segment mostly originates from the Central and Eastern parts of the country in the states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, which are characterised by fragmented landholdings, higher densities of population, larger number of small & marginal farmers and a greater dependence on rain-fed crop. The workers typically migrate during the November-December months after the *kharif* harvest season and return in the May-June period before the *kharif* sowing season.

Table 1: Share of Migrant Workers Among Total Workers by Major Sectors and Location

SECTOR	RURAL		URBAN	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Agriculture	4	75	20	65
Manufacturing	13	59	38	51
Public Services	16	69	40	56
Construction	8	73	32	67
Traditional Services	10	65	29	55
Modern Services	16	66	40	52
TOTAL	6	73	33	56

The most vulnerable segment is the seasonal migratory population, who were also the most impacted in the COVID lockdown triggered wave of return migration. It is estimated that that short-term and circular migrants in the informal wage economy could number between 60-65 million, with 40% of these migrants employed in the construction sector and 15% in agriculture. The rest are engaged in manufacturing, transport, and other services. With accompanying family members, their numbers would not be less than 100 million[6]. Migrants are generally preferred at workplaces because of their docility, flexibility, and cheaper labour costs, which makes them an easily exploitable class of workers.[7]

Figure 8: Percentage of Individuals Who Migrate Annually (Long-term and Short-term)[8]

PERMANENT MIGRANTS
160 MILLION

LONG TERM CIRCULAR
85 MILLION

75% PRECARIOUS
70 MILLION

30% INTERSTATE
25 MILLION
SERVICES,
MANUFACTURING
50% LOW SKILLED

SHORT TERM CIRCULAR
55 MILLION

100% PRECARIOUS
55 MILLION

50% INTERSTATE
27 MILLION
CONSTRUCTION,
MANUFACTURING,
SERVICES, AGRICULTURE
80% LOW SKILLED
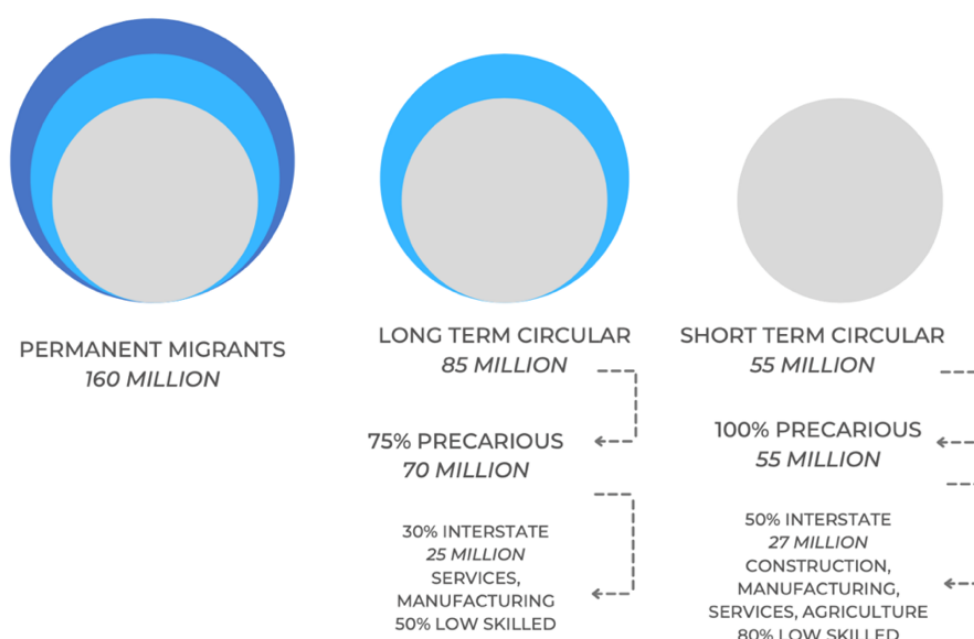
1.3 Migration Corridors

Migration corridors represent an accumulation of migratory movements over time. They provide a snapshot of how migration patterns have evolved into significant migrant populations in destination states[9]. Popular interstate migrant corridors in India include Haryana-Delhi, UP-Delhi, UP-Maharashtra, Bihar-Delhi, Madhya Pradesh-Maharashtra, Rajasthan-Gujarat[10].

[6] Srivastava, R. Growing Precarity, Circular Migration, and the Lockdown in India. Ind. J. Labour Econ. 63, 79–86 (2020). https://doi.org/10.1007/s41027-020-00260-3
[7] Srivastava, R. (2019). Emerging Dynamics of Labour Market Inequality in India: Migration, Informality, Segmentation and Social Discrimination. *Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, *62*(2), 147–171.
[8] Ibid.
[9] World Migration Report, 2020 (International Organisation for Migration) https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2020
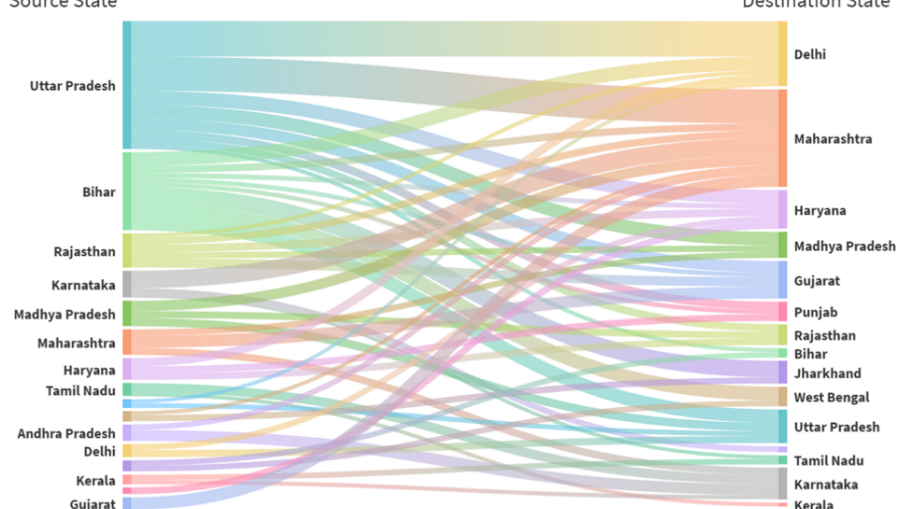[10] Census, 2011

Figure 9: Top Interstate Migrant Corridors in India, Census 2011

Top 50 Interstate Migrant Corridors in India
Each node represents the proportion of migrants from source state to destination state
Source State   Destination State

Source: Census 2011 • Chart: India Migration Now

Migration corridors are crucial to understand in order to collect better data on mobile labour populations, provide critical services such as education, healthcare, and social security, and enable last mile delivery of government schemes and initiatives.

2. Issues Affecting Low Income Labour Migrants & Their Households

Migrants need to secure their livelihood in the destination areas, find a job, access the health system, register with the local municipalities and destination areas need to prioritise conditions that allow migrants to do this and integrate better. Integration is a multidimensional process which includes a variety of areas: employment, education, health, civil rights, social welfare, housing, etc.[11] However in India, internal migrants, particularly interstate migrants, live in precarious conditions and face numerous difficulties in their destination state. They often have unsafe and insanitary working and living conditions, limited access to health and social services, and non-familiarity with the local culture and language – adding to their vulnerabilities. In addition to this there has been a significant increase in informalisation of the workforce in India – the percentage of all employees with any written contract fell from 25.4% in 2004-05 to 20.9% in 2011-12, as per the analysis based on the latest National Sample Survey (NSS) data.[12]

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[11] Aggarwal, V. Solano, G. Singh, P. and Singh, S. (2020). The Integration of Interstate Migrants in India: A 7 State Policy Evaluation. International Migration. Retrieved from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/imig.12701

2.1 Labour Market

In the unorganised sector, employers prefer migrant labourers whose vulnerable status allows them to be allocated to high-risk jobs without pushback. Migrant labourers are also easily available and work at low wages. This makes them additionally vulnerable, since the risk involves severe injuries or loss of life. Tasks at worksites are broken down among several migrants' labourers, which makes the labourer highly replaceable and commoditised. Low wages, high risks and the fear of being replaced are the main constituents of vulnerability for migrants in the informal labour market.

2.2 Social Security

Every state in India has reservations for the state's residents or domiciles in areas such as public sector employment, tertiary education and social welfare schemes such as the public distribution system for food grains. Almost all states are apathetic to the needs of migrants, which stops the latter from accessing jobs, education, welfare entitlements, housing, health benefits and even voting in elections. Often, even if states make provisions for migrants' access to benefits and support, no measures are put in place to make migrants aware of the relevant schemes and policies or to facilitate this access.

Table 2: Interventions undertaken for social security of migrants

Policy Sub Area	Description
Food Safety	**One Nation One Ration Card**: Under this plan, the distribution of highly subsidised food grains is enabled through nation-wide portability of ration cards through the implementation of IT-driven system by installation of ePoS devices at FPSs, seeding of Aadhaar number of beneficiaries with their ration cards and operationalisation of biometrically authenticated ePoS transactions in the State/UTs.
Pension	**Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Mandhan** is a Government of India scheme meant for old age protection and social security of unorganised sector workers.
Social Security	**The Migrant Workers Welfare Scheme of 2010, Kerala:** This scheme has a number of provisions including retirement benefit, accident care, grant in case of death, educational allowance. Measures exist to promote the scheme in migrant languages.

2.3 Education and Skilling

The children of migrants constitute one of the most unrecognised and vulnerable groups among internal migrants. This reflects in the absence of crèches, early childcare services, and other facilities

at workplaces, especially construction sites as well as in the literacy rates of migrant populations. Data from the Census of India 2011 states that 57.8% of female and 25.8% of male migrants are illiterate. NSSO data (2007-08) reveals that 52% short-term migrants were either illiterate or had not completed primary education.

Illiteracy often becomes the reason for the lack of awareness of legal rights amongst migrants. About 80% of seasonal migrant children in major destinations lack access to education near work sites, and 40% work, experiencing abuse and exploitation.[13] At the higher education levels, interstate migrant students face issues of suitable accommodation and accessing educational institutions because of the reservation of seats in state universities for local students. Such regulations are also often extended to private educational institutions, causing migrants to miss out on educational opportunities.[14]

Table 3: Interventions undertaken for education of child migrants

Project Roshni A state level initiative in Kerala	*A pilot project in Ernakulum district for migrant children to learn Malayalam, English, and Hindi through code switching as a learning tool, in 90 minute morning classes before school.*
Project Changathi A state level initiative in Kerala	*Implemented by the Kerala State Literacy Mission, this is a literacy scheme targeted at migrant children for them to learn Malayalam. Special textbook called "Hamari Malayalam" for these students and study centres at schools, libraries, workplaces, and shelters of migrant workers.*

2.4 Housing and Sanitation

Most low-income internal migrants live in slum accommodations, often facing difficulties in accessing basic amenities such as water and sanitation. They also struggle with constant threats of displacement and eviction. Since their demand is largely served by the informal housing market, not enough is known about their housing experiences and preferences. The 2020 Covid-19 lockdown revealed the precarious and insecure nature of housing for migrant workers. Despite repeated government orders, many migrant workers and their families were evicted by landlords because they had either improper or no contracts with poor enforcement mechanisms. Up to 88% migrants reported that they could not pay the rent for the next month, according to a survey conducted with 5000 self-employed, casual, and regular wage workers across 12 states of India in April and May 2020.[15] Another survey conducted with 984 migrant workers in Pune and Ulhas Nagar, Maharashtra found that 68% of the surveyed respondents lived in rented accommodation.[16]

13 United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2019). Global Education Monitoring Report. UNESCO, Paris. Retrieved from https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/
14 Government of India (2017). Report of the Working Group on Migration. Retrieved from http://mohua.gov.in/upload/uploadfiles/files/1566.pdf
15 Azim Premji University (2020). Retrieved from https://cse.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/covid19-analysis-of-impact-and-relief-measures/
16 Habitat for Humanity (2020). Leaving the city behind- A Rapid Assessment with Migrant Workers in Maharashtra. Retrieved form https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/Leaving-the-City-Behind_Rapid-assessment-with-migrant-workers-Maharashtra.pdf

India has a large and diverse set of internal migrants who work in different sectors, have a multitude of source and destination pairings, come from diverse socio-economic migrants and deploy different permutations and combinations of migration strategies (in terms of time, cycles and distance). However, no large-scale work has been undertaken to understand migrant experiences and preferences with respect to housing. There is also a lack of research on how preferences around housing vary among different categories of migrants. An estimated 60–90 per cent of low-income rentals in Asia are in the informal sector and 25 per cent of India's housing stock comprises informal rentals.[17] This, in turn, impacts all the major destination regions particularly metro cities like Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Chennai, Bengaluru and Delhi which hosted 62.6 million migrants as per Census 2011.

2.5 Health

Migrants have inadequate access to health facilities with regard to state-level health schemes, and central government health programmes implemented by state governments--which do not account for incoming migrants. They are disadvantaged relative to the native population at destination regions when it comes to accessing health facilities. Factors such as their patterns of mobility (regular, circular, seasonal, etc.) impact their health conditions. The poor work and living conditions limited access to health and social services; and non-familiarity with the culture and language of the destination adds to their vulnerabilities.[18]

Table 4: Interventions undertaken for health of migrants

Ayushman Bharat Scheme	*Government of India's Ayushman Bharat Scheme launched in 2018 is the world's largest health insurance/ assurance scheme fully financed by the government. The "benefits of the scheme are portable across the country i.e. a beneficiary can visit any empanelled public or private hospital in India to avail cashless treatment."[19]*
Aawaz Health Insurance	*A health insurance scheme for guest workers in Kerala.*

2.6 Political Participation

Although in theory Indian citizens are entitled to vote wherever they want, in practice, interstate migrants are at a disadvantage in terms of exercising this right, since voting is determined by one's

[17] Naik, M. (2015) Informal Rental Housing Typologies and Experiences of Low-income Migrant Renters in Gurgaon, India. Retrieved from https://smartnet.niua.org/sites/default/files/resources/10.1177_0975425315591425.pdf

[18] Borhade, A. (2012). Migrants' (Denied) Access to Health Care in India", National Workshop on Internal Migrationand Human Development in India, Working Paper, UNESCO and UNICEF. Retrieved from https://ruralindiaonline.org/en/library/resource/national-workshop-on-internal-migration-and-human-development-in-india-vol1-workshopreport/#:~:text=Workshop%20Report%2C%202012%20%2D%20UNESCO%2F,%2C%206%E2%80%937%20December%202011%3A&text=In%20particular%2C%20it%20provides%20policy,socially%20and%20politically%20active%20citizens.

[19] Government of India. (2018) Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana. Retrieved from https://pmjay.gov.in/about/pmjay

inclusion in the local constituency's electoral roll. The process of having one's name added is time-consuming and has no relevance for seasonal migrants, for instance, who are not permanent settlers at their destination. The cyclical nature of interstate migration in India contributes further to this vulnerability, since migrants are not accounted for either at source or at destination and often miss out on voting.[20]

2.7 Identity and Registration

Migrants often lack proper personal identification in the destination states. In addition to the national identification system (Aadhar), India provides for a system of state identification known as domicile/residency. This certificate is issued for those born in a state or for migrants who have resided for a stipulated period (which varies from state to state) and have applied for a domicile certificate. The ration card also serves as a proof of identity at the source state because it is issued by state governments. The process of transferring a ration card from one state to another is time consuming. The migrant is first expected to get their name removed from the source state's list. In addition, it requires one to submit a proof of residence of the changed address. The result is difficulty in accessing housing, education, healthcare, and social services associated with this identification card.[21]

3. Notable Civil Society and Private Sector Initiatives

Table 5: Civil society initiatives for migrants and their households

Organisation	Geography	Type	Initiative
Aajeevika Bureau	Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra	Financial services	**Shram Sarathi** *A non-profit incubated by Aajeevika in 2007 which aims at providing financial services to migrant workers including savings instruments, digital wage payments, affordable loans, term life insurance, contributory pensions, and remitting services. Part of a larger ecosystem of services and support mechanisms provided by Aajeevika to migrant communities in these states.*
Jan Sahas Development Society	Madhya Pradesh, Delhi NCR,	Social security	**Migrants Resilience Collaborative** *A grassroots led multi-stakeholder collaborative of non-profit, philanthropic, and private sector actors focused on ensuring safety, security, and mobility for*

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[20] Aggarwal, V. Solano, G. Singh, P. and Singh, S. (2020). The Integration of Interstate Migrants in India: A 7 State Policy Evaluation. International Migration. Retrieved from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/imig.12701
[21] Ibid

	Uttar Pradesh		*vulnerable migrant families across India. MRC will support 10 million migrants and their families in 100 districts and cities over the next 5 years to:* 1. *Deliver social security entitlements* 2. *Provide access to responsible recruitment* 3. *Strengthen tracking, worker protection, welfare, and redressal*
Tata Trusts	Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh	Social security	**Migrant Resource Centres:** *The MRCs serve as a one-stop shop, delivering labour-friendly services that address migrant vulnerabilities. These services include providing linkages to government entitlements and schemes, legal assistance in wage and worksite issues and accident-related cases, along with employment opportunities and banking services.*
CMID	Kerala	Health	*CMID's* **'Bandhu Clinic'** *implemented in collaboration with the National Health Mission in Ernakulum, Kerala is a mobile health van initiative that provides medical screenings and check-ups to migrants at their site of work. Started during the lockdown in March 2020, the screenings also focus on COVID symptoms. The initiative is supported by ESAF Small Finance Bank and has served over 17000 people since it was started.*
LABOUR NET	Pan India	Skilling, education	*Recognition of Existing Skills. Education facilities for construction workers who had dropped out of the formal system under the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) is a new scheme of Government of India.*
Nirman Mazdoor Sangathan	Maharashtra	Skilling, education	*Recognition of Prior Learning Program Skill training and certification program for informal migrant construction workers*
Bandhu Tech	Gujarat	Housing	*Provides potential migrants with competing offers of bundled employment and housing, for similar wage differentials, the Bandhu platform minimizes risks for the worker while still leaving the final choice up to him or her.*
CREDAI	Pan-India	Social Security	*They provide facilities such as creches for children of workers, sanitation facilities, and undertake initiatives for BoCW registration in order to ensure workers*

			have government-provided services like life & disability cover, housing support, etc.
PRATHAM	Mumbai	Skilling, education	*The Ethical Contractor Model empowers entrepreneurs to become ethical micro-contractors through financial assistance, training and mentoring.*
Yuva	Maharashtra	Social Security, skilling	*Skilling workers and educating them about their rights, registration of workers under the BOCW Act, and managing a labour helpline for workers who have been cheated.*
Mumbai Mobile Creches	Mumbai	Education, social security	*Providing day care facilities for children of construction workers at construction sites, training teachers to go on field to teach children, providing mobile van to reach small sites and community outreach to reach more families through interventions.*
Chalo Network	Madhya Pradesh, Delhi NCR	Financial Services	*Deploying Banking Correspondent (BC) agents across all the major migration corridors at both source and destination for delivery of suitable financial solutions to low-income migrant households.*