



Indian Migrants and Challenges

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Why in News

Recently, the **Covid-19** lockdown has led to an exodus of migrant workers from cities to rural areas and threw the spotlight on the vast number of Indians who live outside their home states.

Internal Migrants (Movement of People Within a Country)

Internal migrants in India are a vast and heterogeneous population. They are of three traits (in general):

- they predominantly **migrate from villages to cities**;
- they are **low-income populations** who **work in the informal sector**;
- they have **not permanently relocated their families to the city**. Instead, they circulate between villages and cities several times a year.

Key Points

- **Reasons for Migration**
 - Lakhs of migrant workers were rendered jobless as urban areas were shut due to lockdown.
 - Night shelters run by local authorities began overflowing, and supplies started dwindling.
 - These migrants were left with no choice but to head towards their hometowns.
- Governments are of the view that the **migration crisis** is purely as a consequence of the challenges of Covid-19. However, some experts argue that there are some structural inadequacies in public understanding of **circular rural-urban migrants**.
Circular migration is the temporary and usually repetitive movement of a migrant worker between home and host areas, typically for the purpose of employment.

- **Structural Inadequacies**

- The first is an **inability to recognise the size and importance** of these communities.
 - The second is **inability to correctly count such migrants** because of the **informal conditions** in which they live and work, and **their shuttling between their villages and cities**.
 - These inability have real costs, **rendering governments ill-prepared to anticipate the responses of migrant communities at crucial moments**.
 - It is being said that the **policymakers were unprepared** for the speed and desperation with which these migrants attempted to return home following the lockdown order.
- The Supreme Court has stated that the migrants be treated in a humane manner, including by providing them with enough food, water, beds and supplies as well as psychosocial counselling in shelters that are run by volunteers and not security forces.

Way Forward

- **Recognition of circular migrants** as part of India's urban population.
 - It might compel authorities to at least consider how proposed policies might impact these communities.
 - At present, such ex-ante awareness would have allowed the government to decide whether to target scarce resources towards enabling safe return or keep migrants in destination cities.
- **Relaxing the restrictions** that prevent migrants from accessing vital benefits such as food rations in their destination cities. Reconfiguring the domicile-centric public distribution system can help migrants.
- **Prioritising dedicated transport options for migrants** to prevent overcrowding, especially along high-intensity migration corridors.
- Special Measures should also take into account the **particular situation of migrant women**, who are among those most economically vulnerable and impacted by the situation.

Source: HT