



Mains Practice Question

Q. The phenomenon of reverse-migration poses various challenges in front of the administration. Discuss its overall impact on the economy and society. (250 words)

04 May, 2020 GS Paper 1 Indian Society

Approach

- Discuss the concept of migration and the context of reverse-migration.
- Statistics of migrant workers in India.
- Impact of reverse migration
- Challenges associated in front of the administration.
- Conclude suitably with the suggestion.

Introduction

- The International Organization for Migration defines a migrant as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a state away from his/her habitual place of residence.
- The lockdown since the Covid-19 outbreak has caused the mass exodus of migrant workers from industrial hubs towards their native places with the fear of livelihood loss. This has been termed as reverse migration.

Body

Statistics of migrant workers

- The **Economic Survey of India 2017** estimates that the magnitude of inter-state migration in India was close to 9 million annually between 2011 and 2016.
- According to the **Census 2011** the total number of internal migrants in the country (inter- and intra-state movement) at a staggering 139 million.
 - The Hindi belt is the main source of migrants as four states, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh accounted for 50% of India's total inter-state migrants.
 - Delhi and Mumbai are widely considered migrant magnets.

Impact of reverse migration

- **Lack of employment:** It is one of the biggest drivers of migration.
 - According to the **Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE)** unemployment rate in rural areas is 23.7% and in states like Bihar and Jharkhand, it is highest in the country.
 - Workers are returning home after 40 days of joblessness with drained pockets. At such a time, the state's unprecedented rate of unemployment will certainly not help.
- **Rise in disguised unemployment:** The returned workforce from cities will engage in agricultural work in villages. The agriculture sector is already stressed and the dependence of a large population will enhance the problem.
 - The migration is highest for landless households or has less than an acre of land.

Challenge for administration

- **Health emergency:** This has opened up the serious threat of the rural spread of Covid-19, which can result in medical emergencies.
 - Villages have only rudimentary health infrastructure and lack proper hospitals with ventilators which are needed to fight the virus. There is less than one doctor per 1,000 population.
- **Social stigma:** Due to lack of understanding of the disease the migrants are facing stigma and that is causing social tension in rural areas.
- **Availability of essential goods:** The sudden spike of the dependent population in rural areas will put an extra burden on the state treasury.
- **Hindrance in economic recovery:** With basic sustenance support from the government for three months, many interstate migrants may not return to work soon. Labour shortage, it is being feared, can hinder economic recovery.

Conclusion

- The families of migrant workers from under-developed states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand etc depend on the remittances they receive every month. The sudden imposition of the national lockdown has rendered workers jobless and thus drying up the source of remittances.
 - It is important for the government to engage those migrant workers in employment generated in the local area.
- The **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)** scheme can act as a cushion for the state government to tackle the huge flow of migrant labourers in rural areas. The government should increase the scope of work done under the MGNREGA scheme.