

Challenges Of Migration [UPSC Notes for GS I]

Challenges Of Migration

Context

- Rising migration due to natural disasters, ethnic violence or employment
- There is a rise in violence against migrants accelerated by social media
 - India has a large rural-to-rural migration. A major part of this is female migration after marriage.
 - The number of rural to urban migration is about 14 crore but unofficial figures put it much higher. Even 2017 Economic survey shows that the migrant population in the country is 139 million.
 - Increasing intensity of natural disasters like floods, drought, cyclones etc and distress migration due to the rural agrarian crisis has also increased the number of migrants in India.
 - In cases of distress migration and migration into urban slums, the migrants become more vulnerable due to lack of negotiating power with the potential employers, lack of social capital or lack of political organization and clout.

Issues

- In urban areas, migrants are forced to live in ghettos with no access to amenities like clean drinking water, electricity, safe houses etc.
- They form groups in public places or markets waiting to be recruited as manual labourers.
- This makes them vulnerable to exploitation, which includes physical assaults, lack of a fair wage etc.
- Even though the cheap labour provided by them keeps the prices of commodities and services low, they are often portrayed as anti-social elements and face significant discrimination from other sections of the society. The slums/ghettos where they are forced to live are routinely pictured as “crime infested” and they are harassed by law enforcement authorities.
- Because of the unstable nature of their jobs and residence, they are frequently declared illegal residents and are evicted or arrested.
- Social media has added to their misery. Migrants are often portrayed as criminals and this barrage of social media messages escalates into targeted violence against them. For example, a migrant allegedly raped a minor girl in Gujarat. Even though the accused was arrested the same day, there were attacks against migrant workers on a continuous basis. This was fuelled by incessant fearmongering and spread of hateful messages on social media.
- Similar fake messages also triggered a mass exodus of labourers from North-east in Bangalore as well.
- An increase in extreme climate events also triggers mass migration. These migrants are at an added disadvantage because in most cases they have lost their relevant documents and any capital/asset that could facilitate an easy translocation.
- Another factor that contributes to an upward trend in internal migration is rural distress.

Way forward

- There is a public perception that public funds are only for the “legitimate residents” of an area. Political class engaged in narrow ‘vote bank’ politics also tend to overlook the genuine concern of migrants.
- These issues have to be tackled through long term awareness campaigns.
- Literacy campaigns specifically targeting migrant population also needs to be implemented. The “Changathi” campaign by Kerala government can be used as a model.
- Every major city has to start a specific budget just for the development of migrant population. Central government also has to look at distress migration as a disaster-related issue and allocate necessary funds for the same.
- Smart city campaign needs to address the issue of large scale affordable and safe housing for migrants.

- Law enforcement agencies need to sensitise to the special needs of this vulnerable section. They also need to evolve special strategies to curb hate speech in social media.

