

Reverse Migration: Challenges and Opportunities

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People have been continuously on the move since the time immemorial in search of prosperity and well-being. As the civilizations developed, people started migrating in search of employment and livelihood and they came to be known as migrant workers. Migrant workers contribute to growth and development in their countries of destination, while countries of origin greatly benefit from their remittances and the skills acquired during their migration experience. The number of international migrants is estimated to be almost 272 million globally, with nearly two-thirds being labour migrants. The data on migration by last residence in India as per Census 2011 shows that the total number of migrants has been 450 million. Recently in the background of COVID-19 pandemic, India witnessed rapid reverse migration where thousands of people started moving from urban places to their native places. An estimation of 3 crore or 30 million migrants returned to their natives through shramik trains, buses and even by walk. Migrant workers faced many obstacles along their way to home, the government also faced many challenges due to this reverse migration. Reverse migration not only gave challenges but also many opportunities for both migrants and the government.

Objectives

1. To know the concept of migration
2. To study the concept of reverse migration
3. To elicit challenges and opportunities of reverse migration
4. To review related research studies

What is migration?

Migration is defined as the movement of persons from their home state to another state for the purpose of employment.

Types of migration

1. Internal migration
2. External migration
3. Emigration
4. Immigration
5. Return/ Reverse migration
6. Seasonal migration

What is reverse migration?

Reverse Migration refers to the situation when labourers, workers and people start migrating back to their native place in the backdrop of non-availability of livelihood and job opportunities.

Challenges for migrants and the government

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| 1. Unemployment | 1. Spread of disease |
| 2. Transportation to their natives | 2. Management of quarantine centres |

3. Food shortage
4. Rejection from the community
5. Harassment from money lenders

3. Transportation of migrants
4. Food security

Opportunities for migrants and the government

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| 1. Back to agriculture | 1. Public-private partnership |
| 2. Entrepreneurship | 2. Entrepreneurship development |
| 3. Skill development | 3. Developing rural economy |
| 4. Relocation of labour intensive industries | 4. Creation of data base for migrant workers |

Research Studies

Pinak Sarkar and Nutan Shahsi Tigga (2020) conducted a study on economic consequences of reverse migration in COVID-19 period in the state of Bihar. They examined the economic consequences of reverse migration in the state with particular focus on employment situation, labour market, revenue loss and gave suggestion measures that can benefit the migrant workers and stabilize the economy of Bihar. Rajani Suresh, Justine James, and Balraju R. S. J (2020) conducted a study on migrant workers and their experience during the pandemic. They analyzed the specific ways in which Indian migrant workers have been affected by the pandemic and examined the response of the government and its impact in mitigating and addressing the crisis. They concluded insights for more comprehensive, inclusive, and effective migrant policies and operations involving multiple stakeholders at all levels.

Conclusion

Reverse migration started after the imposition of the lockdown, labourers were stranded in urban areas with no source of income, work or food. This uncertainty thus caused exploitation of the workers; unemployment and poverty created desperation of going back to their villages. Migrant workers faced challenges while on their journey back to home and even after reaching their native, but despite those hardships, many were able to find opportunities which helped them to overcome those challenges. The government also faced challenges due to reverse migration of labourers but it utilized the opportunities created by reverse migration and was able to mitigate the problems that were before them.

References

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