Original Article

Causes of Internally Displaced Communities and Migration in India

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Abstract - Since independence, internal migration has proven to be a huge issue for our country. Many provisions have been made for internal migrants, but it still remains a problem experienced by millions of people yearly. When something affects so many people, it is important to bring to the attention of people how important and grave the issue is, such as with internal migration. The research paper aims to provide a basic understanding of internal migration and why it is such a huge issue. Policies have also been recommended to help make internal migration less of a problem for India. This research paper discusses how internal migration has different causes, such as Government projects like the Narmada Valley Development Project, employment opportunities and migration due to work, and natural disasters taking place causing people to relocate, also termed internal displacement. The paper implies that internal migration is an issue that can be fixed by smart administration and allocation of resources to remove internal migration's negative effects. Whether it be preventive measures or necessary compensation, the negative effects of internal migration can be fixed easily.

Keywords - Government projects, Internal displacement, Loss of habitat, Migration, Natural disasters.

1. Introduction

People who move within their own country of their own volition are engaged in internal migration. (Water Portal Org, n.d.). According to the 2011 Census, there were 45.36 crore internal migrants in India (both inter-state and within-state), accounting for 37% of the total population. Nearly 48 lakh people, or 1% of the working population, are net migrants each year. However, migration decreased drastically during COVID-19 times (India's Internal Migrants and the First Wave of COVID-19: The Invisibility of Female Migrants, 2023). In 2020, permanent migration inflows to countries in the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) were estimated to have fallen by more than 30 per cent and 2020 was a historical low for migration to OECD countries since 2003 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020).

Most of the internal migrants of India enter the formal labor market and frequently migrate from one city to another. After the lockdown, people were left penniless and could not afford any food or shelter. They were forced to migrate home, hoping to survive using internal familial networks. Many of these people died from prolonged exposure to heat and road accidents. Some reports said that days after the lockdown was announced in 2020, almost 600,000 people were forced to migrate. Among migrant workers, 20% are salaried workers, 40% are self-employed and 40% are casual workers (Economic Times, 2023).

The major concern for internal migrants in our country is poor living and working conditions and deprivation of basic rights. 2.25 Million people were displaced due to natural disasters 2022 (Bisily, 2023). Internal migration from rural areas to urban areas has begun to increase slowly in the past few decades. Urbanization, a concept which means to make an area more urban, has started to increase. Better job opportunities and living standards in urban regions attract villagers to the big cities (Bhagat, 2021). Another cause of internal migration can be when it is forced migration or internal displacement. This can happen due to natural disasters. In 2021, Internal displacement due to natural disasters was at its peak, with 4.9 Million people displaced (The Hindu, 2022). Floods and cyclones, influenced by the monsoon, have been the leading reason for internal displacement due to natural disasters in 2021. Flooding in Tamil Nadu triggered 3,12,000 displacements in November (Economic Times PTI, 2023). However, the 4.9 Million displaced by natural disasters is not even close to the number displaced by government projects (Shrivastava, n.d.).

Internal migration for the past few decades has been a consequence of government projects such as the Narmada Valley Dam Project or the NVDP and other similar projects. The poorest and most marginalized sections of society are generally hit hardest by displacement, often without enough compensation. Many displaced families have been displaced more than once. In India, 50 million people have been displaced in the last 50 years in the name of 'national' interest. Official figures for the number of displaced people are just underestimates (*The Narmada Valley Development Project: A Never-Ending Controversy - GR*, 2023). This is typically done to demonstrate to funding sources and project clearance agencies a good cost-benefit ratio. According to the World Bank, 63,325 people were made homeless by the Farakka Super Thermal Power Plant in West Bengal, despite claims to the contrary from the Indian Government. (*Land Grabbing and Development Induced Displacement With Special Reference To Singur And Rajarhat In West Bengal*, n.d.).

This Government-sponsored project required large amounts of land surrounding the river, causing thousands of people to migrate away from their homeland to new territories to accommodate the construction of these dams. Political disturbances and inter-ethnic conflicts are also causes of Internal migration (Department of Commerce, 2023).

This study aims to discuss the causes of Internal migration and the government's policies while recommending a solution that would benefit society as a whole. Massive land acquisition has taken place in India since the 1950s. This can be attributed to building projects for irrigation, power, steel and heavy industries. However, we did not have proper legislation to address the rehabilitation and resettlement issues of displaced people suffering from these projects.

After a long struggle by people's organizations and environmental groups, the protest against displacement came to the attention of the country, and a policy and legal framework came into existence in 2007 when the Government of India formulated a national policy for rehabilitation and resettlement by replacing the earlier policy of 2003.

2. Discussion

According to UN principles on Internal Displacement, Internally displaced people are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the consequences of armed conflict, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border (*About Internally Displaced Persons* / *OHCHR*, n.d.). This definition will help us understand why internal displacement may happen due to government projects.

The present paper focuses on three themes: Migration due to Government Projects, Migration due to natural disasters and employment opportunities.

2.1. Migration due to Government Projects

India has invested heavily in industrial projects, dams, roads, mines, power plants and new cities to achieve rapid economic growth. This has been made possible through massive land acquisition and subsequent displacement of people (Salzuflen, n.d.). Development Displacement Population is the single largest category among all Internally Displaced Populations (Ganguly, n.d.).

Development displacement was accelerated by the globalization of India's economy in 1991 (Robinson, 2018). This allowed foreign investors to increase their presence in India, leading to many more collaborations and projects. In the 1950s and 1960s, India aimed to match Western countries' development but overlooked the negative consequences of projects. People initially believed these projects would bring prosperity but later grew skeptical. Protests arose against projects like Sardar Sarovar, Salient Valley, Mangalore Thermal Power, Dabhol Power, Maha Mumbai SEZ, Nandigram SEZ, and Singur Tata Motors, as affected communities felt resentment and displacement (Lama, 2000).

Sardar Sarovar Dam was an example of a project which led to mass Displacement. The construction of the dam began in 1987 on the Narmada River. The dam was first envisioned by Sardar Vallabhai Patel and was meant to provide irrigation and hydroelectric power. Instead, it negatively impacted the surrounding area (Gujarat Tourism, n.d.). It resulted in the displacement of a large number of tribes and local communities. Protests against this dam caught the attention of the national media. (Water Technology Institute, n.d.) The role of the World Bank was important in this settlement. The World Bank authorized a loan to conduct construction, and although they signed off on a resettlement project, they said that the profits significantly outweighed the destruction caused to human life. The Indian Government canceled the loan sanctioned by the World Bank on 31 March 1993 (Nehru, n.d.).

The Silent Valley Hydroelectric Project significantly impacted local communities, leading to discontent (Bahuguna & Devi, 2023). Concerns were raised about the displacement of communities and its adverse effects on their livelihoods. Environmental issues associated with the project also drew criticism. The project's implementation resulted in protests from the affected communities, who expressed their grievances over losing their homes and disrupting their traditional way of life (Patra, 2019).

The Udupi Thermal Power Plant in Mangalore greatly impacted the displaced communities in the region (Economic Times, n.d.). The project resulted in the displacement of local communities, leading to the loss of their homes and disruption of their livelihoods. Concerns were raised regarding pollution, health hazards, and the adverse effects on the local fishing community (Adani Group, n.d.). The affected communities protested against the plant's operations, demanding safeguards for their well-being and the environment. However, it is operational to this day and was established in 2012 (Adani Group, 2018).

Displacement caused by involuntary actions creates a scenario where people are left without land shattered homes, and forced to deal with the consequences of unemployment. Dislocation breaks up living patterns and social continuity. It ruins existing modes of production, disrupts social networks, causes problems along with impoverishment of many of those displaced and increases the risks of epidemics and health problems. Women, children and elderly people are the most impacted by the displacement. Another effect of government projects is the subsequent depletion and pollution of natural resources. Projects like mining, industries, etc., affect the health and living conditions of the people in surrounding areas.

2.2. Migration due to Employment Opportunities

The state's role in internal migration is important to understand how the situation can be improved for migrant workers and internal migrants. There is currently no law against Internal migration. There are no laws which regulate working conditions with more than little impact. There has been a recent shift in focus to create programmes for jobs for internal migrants and the education of the children of these very same migrants. To present a solution to a problem, we first have to identify it and understand it (Ahmed, 2020)

Internal migration driven by employment opportunities is a significant phenomenon in India. As a country characterized by stark regional economic disparities, millions of individuals and families travel to urban areas from rural areas in search of better livelihood prospects. This section aims to explore the patterns and dynamics of internal migration in India, focusing on the factors that drive migration, the disparities between rural and urban job opportunities, and the impact of migration on individuals and communities.

There are huge disparities between the rural and urban sectors, such as:

- Agriculture vs. Non-agriculture Sectors: The majority of rural job opportunities are concentrated in the agriculture sector, which is often characterized by seasonal employment, low wages, and limited scope for skill development. In contrast, urban areas offer a more diverse range of non-agricultural sectors, such as manufacturing, construction, services, and technology, providing better remuneration and opportunities for skill enhancement.
- Formal vs. Informal Employment: Rural areas predominantly rely on informal or unorganized sectors,

while urban areas provide a greater proportion of formal employment opportunities. Formal jobs offer social security benefits, stable income, and potential for career growth, attracting migrants seeking stability and upward mobility.

• Education and Skill Requirements: Urban areas, with their higher concentration of educational institutions and skill development centers, demand a more skilled workforce. This creates a disparity between rural migrants, who often possess limited formal education and skills, and the job requirements of urban markets.

According to the 2011 Census of India, around 139 million individuals were reported to have migrated internally within the country. Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Rajasthan were the top three source states for internal migrants. Delhi, Maharashtra and Gujarat attracted the highest number of migrants due to employment opportunities (Iyer et al., 2020).

For instance, Mumbai, the financial capital of India, is a prime destination for internal migrants. It offers a wide range of job opportunities in sectors like finance, IT, entertainment, and manufacturing. The city's rapid urbanization and high demand for labor have led to the emergence of large slums, such as Dharavi, where migrants often reside.

In contrast, states like Punjab and Kerala witness significant outmigration due to limited agricultural employment opportunities. Migrants from these states often seek work in construction, services, and the hospitality sector in states like Delhi, Maharashtra, and the Gulf countries.

2.3. Migration due to Natural Disasters

Natural disasters have been a recurring challenge for India, causing significant internal displacement and substantially threatening human lives and livelihoods. Over the past two decades, India has experienced a range of natural disasters, including floods, cyclones, earthquakes, and droughts, resulting in widespread displacement. This essay examines the patterns, causes, and impacts of internal displacement due to natural disasters in India over the last twenty years. It will utilize statistical data, case studies, and examples to shed light on this critical issue.

India's extensive river network makes it highly prone to floods. States such as Bihar, Assam and Uttar Pradesh experience frequent flooding, leading to huge internal displacement. For example, in 2019, floods in Assam displaced over 5 million people (Singh, 2022). Coastal regions, like Odisha and West Bengal, face the biggest impact of cyclones. The Super Cyclone in Odisha 1999 displaced approximately 1.5 million people (Mohanty, 2021). Seismic activity is common in India's northern and northeastern regions. An earthquake in Gujarat in 2001 led to the displacement of around a million people (StudyIQ, 2023).

The impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels and changing weather patterns, have increased the frequency and intensity of natural disasters, resulting in an increase in internal displacement. Rapid urbanization, along with population growth, has led to an increased vulnerability to natural disasters. Unplanned urban development and inadequate infrastructure further add to displacement risks. Poor land use and deforestation are also causes of internal displacement. Inappropriate land use practices like encroachment on floodplains and deforestation add to the severity of natural disasters, leading to internal displacement. The state of Kerala experienced unprecedented rainfall in August 2018, leading to severe flooding. The floods resulted in massive internal displacement, with over 1.5 million people losing their homes. Thousands of people were forced to seek shelter in relief camps. The floods caused extensive damage to infrastructure, including bridges, roads and houses, adding to the displacement crisis. Uttarakhand, a state in northern India, witnessed devastating flash floods in June 2013. Heavy rainfall and cloudbursts triggered landslides and flash floods, causing widespread destruction. The disaster resulted in the displacement of around 100,000 people. Many pilgrims and tourists visiting the region were also trapped and had to be rescued. The Uttarakhand flash floods highlighted the vulnerability of mountainous regions to such natural disasters (Relief Web, 2018).

Assam's annual floods displaced millions due to the Brahmaputra River, damaging homes, crops, and infrastructure. In 2019, over 5 million were affected (Government of Assam). In 1999, Odisha's super cyclone displaced 1.5 million, causing destruction and revealing coastal vulnerability (Correspondent).

In September 2014, Jammu and Kashmir faced floods triggered by incessant rainfall. The floods affected both the Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir and the Pakistaniadministered Azad Kashmir (Ray, 2014). The Jammu and Kashmir floods showed the vulnerability of mountainous regions to flash floods and underscored the need for effective disaster management strategies in such areas.

These examples demonstrate the severe consequences of natural disasters on internal displacement in India, emphasizing the urgency of implementing comprehensive disaster management policies and strengthening resilience measures to protect vulnerable communities.

3. Policy Recommendation

Internal migration is still somewhat of an unknown area in India. However, what policies have been set up by the government already regarding this problem? (Bhagat, 2021). There are 44 labor law policies in India, but only one addresses the internal migration problem with laborers. A recent report by the International Labour Organization, Aajeevika Bureau and the Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development urged the Indian Government to formulate a framework of policies to reduce the vulnerabilities of internal migrants in India. (Bisily, 2023)

Another programme set up by the government is the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, a skill-based initiative formulated for the migrant workforce. Interstate Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979 (Ministry of Labour & Employment, 1979) applies to contractors and establishments employing five or more five inter-state employees. Most of these labor laws address safety and employment opportunities. However, none of them addresses or even enables the minimum wage code linked to the basic standard of living. (Rao, 2013)

The main issue with Central Government policies is that they cannot address the issue of inequalities of migrants in India alone. The states must also formulate laws and policies that are not only beneficial to the laborer but also to the employer (Disaster Management Committee, 2023).

The National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP), launched in 2016, is a comprehensive framework that gives organizational structure to disaster management efforts in the country. One of its key focuses is on the needs of internally displaced persons. The plan outlines guidelines for providing shelter, healthcare, and essential services to the displaced population during and after a disaster. It allows local governments to work with the community and the central government to respond to disasters in a coordinated approach (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Organisation, 2023).

Additionally, the government has set up the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), a special agency responsible for conducting search, rescue, and relief operations during disasters. The NDRF plays a crucial role in evacuating and providing quick assistance to those displaced by natural disasters. They work with state disaster response forces to ensure faster responses to limit the amount of damage done (National Disaster Management Authority, 2019).

The 2019 National Policy on Disaster Management (NPDM) emphasizes the importance of building resilience and reducing disaster risks. It encourages states to develop accurate assessments of how prone to disasters certain areas might be and accordingly integrate displacement measures into their development plans. By doing this, the government can minimize the impact of disasters on communities. It allows them not to lose their habitat if they are affected by disasters (Ministry of Corporate Affairs, 2017).

In recognition of the long-term challenges faced by IDPs, the government launched the National Plan for Rehabilitation and Resettlement (NPRR) in 2007. Many people lose their livelihood after natural disasters, especially those working in the primary sector. Thus, natural disasters not only displace them from their home but also prevent them from being able to make their livelihood. Thus, the plan focuses on helping displaced people rebuild their lives and livelihoods. It provides financial aid, shelter, and linguistic training to help affected communities regain their economic independence.

The Indian Government has recognized internal displacement issues due to natural disasters and has taken significant measures to mitigate the effect on affected communities. The government aims to build a nation capable of withstanding and recovering from natural calamities by implementing these policies.

While these policies represent significant steps towards addressing internal displacement due to natural disasters, challenges remain. Implementation at the ground level, especially in remote and vulnerable regions, can be hindered by logistical and bureaucratic issues. The policies regarding internal displacement are incredibly outdated, referring to what traditionally would come under that umbrella. However, the definition of that phrase and what comes under it is constantly changing, with climate change coming into the fray now. Governments must constantly update their displacement policies to accommodate the changing world. (Cernea, 2013)

Policies that the government could develop to mitigate internal displacement problems have been flowing through the forums for many years. To deal with internal migration, the government can provide some sort of safety net for migrant laborers. The main issue for traveling workers is coming into a new environment that they may not have adequate financial resources to adapt to. Thus, the government can provide them with certain financial aid to get them settled and on their feet. Laborers also get exploited by employers due to their lack of education. The government can also provide protection policies to stop employers from exploiting them. They can also set up vocational training for the laborers, allowing them to be more integrated into the society around them.

When it comes to Natural displacement management policies, there seem to be much more obvious solutions to the problems. However, sometimes, these are not easily implemented and can be rather costly. Thus, the government could take the initiative to develop strong networks in areas prone to natural disasters. Certain areas may also be more prone to certain natural disasters, like Odisha, which may be prone to Tsunamis, or Punjab and Rajasthan, which may be prone to droughts. Thus, implementing state-selective policies targeted to the exact problems that certain states have would be beneficial. In Odisha, Tsunami evacuation structures could allow quick and organized evacuation of people from the area. They could also build infrastructure and architecture that could withstand flooding or tsunamis so that it would not require an elaborate rebuilding process.

4. Conclusion

Internal migration in India is a complex phenomenon driven by various factors such as employment opportunities, government projects, and natural disasters. The number of internal migrants in India is huge, making up 37% of the country's population, and their movement within the country plays a crucial role in shaping the social, economic, and political landscape (Drishti IAS, 2023). One of the major challenges faced by internal migrants is the poor living and working conditions, leading to the deprivation of basic rights. Migrant workers often face exploitation, lack of social security, and limited access to essential services. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed their vulnerabilities, leaving many without anything to their name.

Displacement caused by government projects and development activities has been a significant driver of internal migration. Large-scale land acquisitions for infrastructure projects have resulted in the forced migration of minority communities, with inadequate compensation from the government. Natural disasters pose another major challenge, leading to widespread internal displacement. Floods, cyclones, earthquakes, and other calamities disrupt communities and force people to leave their homes in search of safety. Climate change has intensified the frequency and severity of such disasters, making comprehensive disaster management policies crucial.

The Indian Government has implemented various policies and programs to address the issues of internal migration and displacement. However, challenges remain regarding effective implementation, especially in remote and vulnerable regions. Constant updating of policies is necessary to accommodate the changing nature of displacement, including the emerging challenges posed by climate change. To reduce internal displacement problems, the government can focus on providing a safety net for migrant laborers. In managing displacement due to natural disasters, the government can invest in creating robust disaster response networks. Overall, addressing the complexities of internal migration in India requires a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach involving collaboration between the central and state governments, civil society organizations, and the affected communities themselves. By taking these steps, India can create a more

inclusive and resilient society, providing enough support and protection to its internal migrants and displaced peoples.

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