

The Hindu Editorial Analysis

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Support for lives on the move

A national policy for internal migration is needed to improve earnings and enable an exit from poverty

Though migration is expected to enhance consumption and lift families out of absolute poverty at the origin, it is not free from distress — distress due to unemployment or underemployment in agriculture, natural calamities, and input/output market imperfections.

Internal migration can be driven by push and/or pull factors.

In India, over the recent decades, agrarian distress (a push factor) and an increase in better-paying jobs in urban areas (a pull factor) have been drivers of internal migration.

The costs of migration

However, at the destination, a migrant's lack of skills presents a major hindrance in entering the labour market. Further, the modern formal urban sector has often not been able to absorb the large number of rural workers entering the urban labour market. This has led to the growth of the 'urban informal' economy, which is marked by high poverty and vulnerabilities.

There are various forms of discrimination which do not allow migrants to graduate to better-paying jobs. Migrant workers earn only two-thirds of what is earned by non-migrant workers, according to 2014 data.

Further, they have to incur a large cost of migration which includes the 'search cost' and the hazard of being cheated. Often these costs escalate as they are outside the state-provided health care and education system; this forces them to borrow from employers in order to meet these expenses. And frequent borrowing forces them to sell assets towards repayment of their loans.

The benefits of migration

Despite these issues, internal migration has resulted in the increased well being of households, especially for people with higher skills, social connections and assets. Migrants belonging to lower castes and tribes have also brought in enough income to improve the economic condition of their households in rural areas and lift them out of poverty.

Why a national policy?

The need for a national policy towards internal migration is underscored by the fact that less than 20% of urban migrants had prearranged jobs and nearly two-thirds managed to find jobs within a week of their entry into the city, as a study in the early '90s showed and that we verified through field work in Tamil Nadu in 2015.

The probability of moving to an urban area with a prearranged job increases with an increase in education levels.

Access to information on employment availability before migrating along with social networks tend to reduce the period of unemployment significantly.

Social networks in the source region not only provide migrants with information on employment opportunities, but are also critical as social capital in that they provide a degree of trust.

Narrowly defined migrant-focussed interventions will not enhance the capabilities of migrants that could lead to increased earnings and an eventual exit from poverty.

There is also a need to distinguish between policy interventions aimed at 'migrants for survival' and 'migrants for employment'.

Continued dynamic interventions over long periods of time would yield better results compared to single-point static interventions, especially in the context of seasonal migrants.

Local bodies and NGOs which bring about structural changes in local regions need to be provided more space.

There is a lack of focussed intervention aimed at migrants. Interventions aimed at enhanced skill development would enable easier entry into the labour market. We also need independent interventions aimed specifically at addressing the needs of individual and household migrants because household migration necessitates access to infrastructure such as housing, sanitation and health care more than individual migration does. Various interventions must complement each other.

Mapping Brazil's far-right shift

The drift into the orbit of the U.S. will weaken global multi-polarity

Jair Bolsonaro, who will become the new President of Brazil early next year, will be the most extreme far right leader to govern a democratic nation. Brazil, the largest country in South America, has decided to go the way of the Philippines, the U.S., and Hungary.

Some have called Mr. Bolsonaro 'Brazil's Trump', and there is truth in that statement.

Like U.S. President Donald Trump and Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines, Mr. Bolsonaro believes that violence is a solvent for social problems.

Three pillars won Mr. Bolsonaro the Brazilian presidency — of 'Beef, the Bible and the Bullet'.

The first pillar, of 'Beef', includes various commercial sectors such as the agricultural, livestock, mining, energy and logging industries.

These businesses have chafed at environmental and labour regulations that prevent easy access to the 1.6-billion-acre Amazon rainforest and other protected areas.

Mr. Bolsonaro has spoken of these regulations as restrictions on the sovereignty of Brazil placed by the United Nations. But his proposals will not give sovereignty back to Brazilians.

A social shift

One of the great social shifts in Brazil has been the weakening of Liberation Theology, a form of Catholic socialism. "The Church opted for the poor," goes a popular saying, "and the poor opted for the Evangelicals." U.S.-inspired evangelical Christianity — such as Pentecostalism — has made inroads into Brazilian society, notably among the poor.

The growth of evangelicalism made an impact even in Catholicism through the emergence of the Charismatic Renewal movement. One of Brazil's largest churches, the Universal Church of the Kingdom

of God, has about 10 million members across the world. Its leader, Edir Macedo, owns the second largest television network in Brazil, RecordTV.

The third pillar refers not only to the military and the police — both of which saw Mr. Bolsonaro as their champion — but also to sections of the middle class who have been angered by rising crime rates (175 people killed per day in 2017). Mr. Bolsonaro was able to win over middle-class sentiment by his acidic rhetoric calling for more police violence against the poor. The language, laced with racism, was harsh against the poor who are actually the main victims of crime. The prejudices of the middle class defined Mr. Bolsonaro's campaign, which will define his presidency.

Right after his election, Steve Bannon — who had helped Mr. Trump win the U.S. Presidency — said that Mr. Bolsonaro had run the most effective social media campaign. What this means is that his team had used illegally funded WhatsApp groups very cleverly to spread fake news stories (such as that his opponents in the Workers' Party were indoctrinating children on sex).

Drifting towards the U.S.

Mr. Trump, who was jubilant at the electoral result, spoke on the phone with Mr. Bolsonaro, making it clear again that he was eager for a close link with the U.S. BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) is now fundamentally in jeopardy, as Mr. Bolsonaro will likely pull Brazil out of it, or at least minimise its role in the BRICS process. Brazil will return to its position of subordinate ally to the U.S. This is what Brazilian business interests want and the U.S. seeks. Brazil's drift into the orbit of the U.S. spells doom for the independent regional process in Latin America and is a serious blow against global multipolarity.