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HEALTH AND EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS OF CHILDREN OF MIGRANT LABOURERS IN CHANDIGARH: A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Migration is not a new phenomenon in India but it has shaped the country's social history and patterns of development. The landless poor who mostly belong to lower castes, indigenous communities and economically backward regions constitute the major portion of migrants. Labour migration is characterised by temporary tenure, poor working condition, and at times physical and verbal abuses and human rights violation. Rural-Urban migration is generally a household-level event in which children also migrate with their parents to the destination place. When people migrate to urban areas in search of better opportunities they work hard and endure harsh living and working condition. The impact of migration on children and adolescents must be seen in the broader context of poverty, deprivation, social exclusion and violation of child rights. This paper focuses on the problems faced by migrant labourers and their children especially in the context of their health and education. The study is basically based on primary data collected directly from the respondents but the secondary data is also used for analyzing the information. The paper is an attempt to throw light on the obstacles endured by migrant labourers to provide better living to their children and suggestions have also been recommended to help migrant labourers and their children for having a socially inclusive life.

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INTRODUCTION

Migration from one place to another in search of adequate livelihood is a key feature of human migration. Our 70% of Indian population lives in rural areas and their main source of livelihood is agriculture. The landless poor people who mostly belong to lower castes, indigenous communities and economically backward constitute the major portion of migrants. In recent years, due to the changes caused by globalization and industrialization have impacted the pace and pattern of migration in India. The pattern of growth in last two decades has steadily widened the gap between agriculture and non-agriculture and between rural and urban areas, and it has steadily concentrated in a few areas and few states.

India's total population, as recorded in the recently concluded Census 2011, stands at 1.21 billion. Internal migrants in India constitute a large population which is 309 million internal migrants or 30% of the population (Census of India, 2001). Lead source states of internal migrants include Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Uttrakhand and Tamil Nadu whereas key destination areas are Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat,

Haryana, Punjab and Karnataka. Despite the fact that approximately three out of every ten Indians are internal migrants still it has been accorded a very low priority by the government. The existing government welfare policies have also failed in providing legal or social protection to this vulnerable group in India. One of the main reasons for this is lack of data on the extent, nature and magnitude of internal migration.

Chandigarh is the city of opportunities and it attracts large scale of unskilled population from the most backward and rural states of the country especially Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. These migrants reach Chandigarh with and without the help of contractors but most of the times their move is on the basis of family relations. According to newspaper (Hindustan Times, December, 2016), more than six out of 10 people in Chandigarh are migrants based on their previous place of residence, according to the 2011 census. According to the figures, 67.1% of the city's population are migrants. People migrate to Chandigarh for varied reasons like work, education, business, marriage etc. but 30% of the population migrate for work.

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¹ Srivastava.R and Sasikumar.S.K. 2003. An Overview of Migration in India. Its Impacts and Key Issues. Migration Development Pro-Poor Policy Choices in Asia, Bangladesh. 63 pp.

Migrant Labourers

People move across the country for political, economic and social reasons. Both the developed and developing areas have created the demand of labourers and the backward and rural areas have become the main source of labour force. ²Today, labour migration is characterised by temporary tenure, poor working condition, and at times physical and verbal abuses and human rights violation. Migrants are often considered as 2nd class citizen, and often relegated to 3 Ds (Dirty, Dangerous and Difficult) jobs.

The landless poor who mostly belong to lower castes, indigenous communities and economically backward regions constitute the major portion of Migrants. The migrant labourers are mostly employed in the informal economy, often working as construction workers, agricultural labourers, hawkers and vendors, domestic servants, rickshaw pullers, electricians, plumbers, masons and security personnel. Devoid of social security and legal protection, they work in very poor working conditions. In the World Migration Report (2005), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) wrote about the concerns that surround migration - such as loss of jobs, lower wages, increased welfare costs and the belief that migration is spiralling out of control etc. Earlier studies have shown that poor households participate extensively in migration (Connell et al, 1976). Poverty and unemployment are the main obstacles faced by developing countries. There is a grave concern where a section of society is unable to fulfill the basic necessities of people like food, cloth, house and education.

Children of Migrant Labourers

"... cities should be able to provide basic services to migrant workers, their families and other vulnerable sections of society including women and children."

Draft Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012–2017)

Rural-Urban migration is generally a household-level event in which children also migrate with their parents to the destination place. During this process, the education and health of the children suffer due to the disruption caused to their family life and schooling. ³The children who move to the cities with their parents are called migrant children, while those who remain behind in the countryside are called 'leftbehind children' who are generally looked after by a single parent or grandparents or by their other family members.

The lives of migrant children are severely affected by the migration of their parents especially their health and education. When people migrate to urban areas in search of better opportunities they work hard and endure harsh living and working condition. This causes a greater risk of dropping out of school, juvenile crime, difficult access to social services and danger of social exclusion. There are hardly any policies and programmes promulgated by government to safeguard the interest of children of migrant labourers.

Migration is an international issue and moved up in the international policy agenda but its wide-ranging implications for children have received little attention. Children are affected

² Faith Healthcare Private Limited.2009. A Study on the Problems of Migrant Labour in Punjab. Economic and Statistical Organisation, Department of Planning, Government of Punjab.New Delhi 126 pp.

by migration when they migrate with their parents as this process often reduces the standard of living. The impact of migration on children and adolescents must be seen in the broader context of poverty, deprivation, social exclusion and violation of child rights.

Problems Faced by Children Migrating with Family

- Effect on children's well-being; health and education
- Socio-economic issues; migrant labourers are often located in the places which are cheap and away from the main areas of the city. They struggle hard to earn their livelihood and their main focus is only to fulfill the basic needs of the family. In that case, children are forced to live in an environment which is not healthy for their childhood and overall development.
- Children as family labourers; they start working in poor and hazardous conditions along with their parents and face the problem of social exclusion.
- Children seek informal employment; as children become independent enough to leave their houses without parents who are struggling to earn livelihood, children start working which attributes to painful and difficult childhood.

Background and Rationale

The migrant labourers are mostly located in informal settlements where they compromise with the standard of living. In India as a whole, every fifth urban resident lived in slums according to the 2011 census. Migrant workers are found negligent about the child health and education as their main focus is to work hard for their survival which is the main cause for their migration. Some migrant workers intend to avoid these challenges for their children by leaving them at native place with their families who are called left behind children. But they are also disadvantaged with regard to their nutrition intake, health outcomes and social performances if their caretaker fails to pay attention to their day-to-day needs. Therefore, the children of migrant labourers are at greater risk of development, completing education and good mental and physical health. They face challenges whether they accompany their parents to the destination place or left behind with family members at native place.

The present study emphasizes on the living condition of migrant labourers and their children in the city of Chandigarh. The city is known for the cleanliness and its planned structure but the migrant workers are often deprived of the basic amenities. The migrant labourers often face discrimination especially when they move from rural to urban areas. The demand for unskilled labor constantly increases in cities due to the market oriented economic reforms. In particular, migrant workers are restricted in the type of job they can obtain and in access to urban social welfare and social services, such as education, health care, unemployment benefits, and pensions (Meng and Manning, 2010).

Education is easily accessible in the city as the study revealed that maximum number of children was attending school but they face lot of challenges as far as the health of the children is concerned. They spend half of their income only on maintaining the health of their children. These unskilled workers are also deprived of many privileges given by government for their welfare as compared to the non migrants. There are few studies conducted in Chandigarh especially to

³ Kong.T and Meng. X. 2010. The Educational and Health Outcomes of the Children of The Great Migration; Rural-Urban Migration in China and Indonesia. Monograph Book. China. 97-120 pp.

find out the health and educational status of children of migrant laourers in Chandigarh. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to focus on the living condition and various problems faced by migrant labourers for giving a better life for their children.

Research Methodology

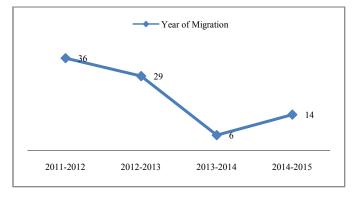
The result of this study is based on both primary and secondary research, the fieldwork was carried out in various locations across Chandigarh like Dadu Majra, Sector - 25, Bappu Dham Colony, Dhanas, Palsora and Manimajra. The descriptive methodology was employed in which participant observation in the field and structured interview guide were used as research tools. The sample consists of internal migrants working in unorganized sector and residing in informal settlement who migrated to Chandigarh within past five years. A total of 200 interviews were carried out which includes 100 children and 100 parents (migrant labourers). The age group of children is divided into three categories i.e. 6-9 years, 10-14 years and 11-18 years but maximum respondents were taken between the age 10 and 18 years who can respond and understand better than children between the age 6 and 9 years. To have the better understanding of the problem the parents were also interviewed along with their children. There is an equal representation of both male and female respondents. The study also provides inputs from interactions with a number of parents migrated to Chandigarh for providing better future to their children.

Objective

The main objective of the study is to ascertain the educational and health outcomes of the children of migrant labourers. The attempt is made to study the socio-economic profile of the migrant labourers and the impact caused on their children due to the migration. The study also provides the suitable suggestions and measures for the government to ensure decent living conditions, working condition of migrant population, providing proper health care and educational opportunities to the children of migrant families.

Socio-economic condition of migrant labourers in Chandigarh

Chandigarh provides better employment opportunities to the migrants hailing from neighboring states like UP, Bihar, Rajasthan, Haryana etc. The study found that maximum migrant labourers in Chandigarh belong to Uttar Pradesh and they work as labourers and as daily wagers in the city. They find Chandigarh one of the most suitable places to work as compared to other places like Himachal and J&K due to the geographical and climatic conditions.



Most of the migrant labourers came to Chandigarh between 2011 and 2012. A less number of migrant labourers moved to Chandigarh between 2013 and 2014 due to various social, economic and political reasons. The number was slightly increased again during 2014 and 2015. It was observed that only those people prefer to migrate who already have family or relatives in Chandigarh. Migrant labourers rarely migrate to the new place without having any contact at the place they are planning to shift. This gives them a sense of belongingness in new place.

Poverty is one of the major reasons for labourers migrating to different places. They move from one place to another in search of better employment to support their families. 60% respondents claimed that they moved to Chandigarh because they had no source of income in their native places and few said that they migrated in search of employment. Globally, poverty and unemployment are two major reasons for migration. The migrant labourers are subjected to poor living standard and degrading working conditions.

Living Condition of Migrant Labourers

Migrant labourers, whether agricultural or non-agricultural, live in deplorable conditions. There is no provision of safe drinking water or hygienic sanitation. Most of the migrant labour population is settled in slums and periphery of Chandigarh. The city is known as 'City Beautiful' but the condition is miserable at the places occupied by labour migrants. Only 2% of the migrants who were engaged in labour work were found in urban areas. These migrants have mostly build their own 'jhuggis' and concentrated in slums. The housing pattern of migrant labourers was very poor and it was observed that majority of migrants were in 'jhuggis' which was mostly seen in the periphery of the city and the living condition of the migrants was deplorable. Only 31% of migrants were living in rented pucca house and 17% of the respondents were living in their own houses which were semi puccahouses. The labourers who were living in city for more than three years had built the one room house out of bricks and cement. They have no plans to shift for few years so they prefer to build semi pucca house than to stay in 'jhuggis'. The migrant labourers live in a poor condition so that they can save and could send money to their families in native place. When they were asked about the toilet facility only 42% of respondents claimed to have this facility whereas 57% of respondents go for open defecation. There were open drains and leakages which make them prone to serious infections and diseases.

Half of the respondents were illiterate and this is the root cause of all the problems faced by migrant labourers and it is the main reason for their migration in search of improved livelihood. Due to the illiteracy they were ignorant of many benefits and welfare schemes run by government for the welfare of migrant labourers. Only 27% claimed that they have completed the primary education and 10% claimed to complete matriculation and secondary education. Parent's illiteracy also affects the children's education as they are unable to understand the importance of sending their children to school regularly.

The migrant labourers do not have fixed income because it is completely dependent on the availability of the work. 60% of the migrant labourers interviewed were earning between Rs 4000-6000 per month. Most of them revealed that even though

they leave their native places only to earn money but still they live from hand to mouth because their income is not stable. They struggle very hard to earn money and some also have responsibility to send money back home which becomes very difficult for them. They said that every month they struggle for their living and their earnings are only hand to mouth.

Migration and Educational Outcome

Problems in Seeking Admission

The migrant labourers face many problems while seeking admission of their cildren in school. Many parents were disappointed when this question was asked as 78% of respondents shared that they find it very difficult to enroll their child in school especially when they migrate to the new place. Majority of them are illiterate and they find the admission process very complicated. Many of the times they are harassed by school teachers for not having accurate documents with them. Some respondents shared that even if they have the documents the school teachers are very reluctant to enroll their children in school.

When the parents were asked about the reason 79% of them said that incomplete document is the main hassle for seeking children's admission in school. Some said that most of the times teachers do not help them during admission because due to migration they seek admission in mid-session when half of the year is already gone by. They exactly don't know which documents are required and lack of cooperation from school compels them to quit trying to get admission. This is one of the main reasons for drop outs among migrant labourers.

Parent's Perception on Quality Education

The migrant labourers were asked certain questions to understand their views on children's education. Majority of the respondents whose children were going to school shared that they are satisfied with the quality of education. They said they are happy that atleast their children are able to receive education. Some of them revealed that they are working hard only for their children so that like them their children don't have to work as labourers in future. Parents meet the teachers only when they are called by the teachers otherwise they never go and ask about their children's progress in school. Almost 88% of the respondents revealed that they are bothered about their children's future and education which is often effected by continuous migration. Some respondents also shared that they don't bring their families along to the destination area because they don't want to spoil their children's education who are attending school regularly in their native places.

Children Enrollment in School

Education is not an issue in Chandigarh as government schools are accessible and running in large number. Children mostly go by foot to attend school as it is found in very close vicinity. Majority of the migrant children were enrolled and attending school regularly. It was observed that most of the children were not very keen in attending school as their parents don't give much importance to their education. Due to the continuous shifting from one place to the another they face adjustment problems in new places and children are the ones who suffer a lot in this entire process of migration.

Educational Problems

Half of the children interviewed agreed that they face many difficulties while attending school in the new destination place. Firstly, getting admission is difficult during mid of the session when half of the school curriculum is already done. Secondly, the teachers also don't pay enough attention to them due to which they often have to repeat their classes. Many expressed that adjustment in new place is also one of the main obstacles while attending school. It takes time for them to settle down and get familiar with the language and lifestyle of the people of new place. 68% of the respondents don't seek tuition after school hours because neither they have money to pay tuition fees nor they find anyone who is capable and willing to give them tuition after school. Some said that they don't feel necessary to seek tuition after school hours and going to school is sufficient.

Drop-Out-Due to Migration

In total, 35% of the respondents claimed that they dropped school due to the continuous migration from one place to another. Majority of the children were enrolled in school but they were not very regular in attending school. Children of migrant labourers were found very keen to work and start earning money than to complete their education.

Parent's Awareness on RTE Act

The children and their parents were enquired about their awareness on RTE Act and around 85% of respondents agreed that they are aware of the free and compulsory education given under RTE act. The parents appreciated this scheme run by the government as they said that through this scheme they save lot of money being spent on their children's education, books, uniform etc. They also said that they don't have any complaints with regard to the free education as everything is well provided to them on time.

The researcher also asked children if they are willing to pursue education after 8th standard when it won't be free anymore. 73% of children said that they want to continue their education after 8th standard and many of them were already pursuing. It was observed by researcher that the children of migrant labourers were not very ambitious and most of them wanted to study till secondary education. There were very rare children who said they want to go to college and university for their higher education. They were not very clear about their goals and very few expressed their aspirations to do better in life. These children are always surrounded by poverty and hardships of their parents, they don't have anyone to look upon which leaves them aimless in life.

Migration and Health Outcomes

Migrants don't have proper access to various health and family care programs due to their temporary status. Free public care facilities and programmes are not accessible to them. Working conditions are harsher to the female workers as there is no provision of maternity leave and they have to start work immediately after the childbirth. Children are also exposed to the unhygienic living condition due to which they are vulnerable to diseases.

Problems in Accessing Health Care Facilities

Migrants don't have easy access to the public healthcare facilities especially the labourers. 72% of the respondents said

that they don't have enough money to consult doctor and buy medicines. They said that even if they don't need to pay the consultancy fee in government hospitals they have to pay for the medicines. Some of them revealed that every month half of their earnings are being spent only on visiting hospitals and getting treatment. Long distance to the government hospital is also one of the main constraints in their access to health care facilities especially those who were living little far from the main city. In that case they visit hospitals only on emergencies else they take medicine from local pharmacist or private general physician. Despite all problems migrant labourers prefer to visit government hospital for minor or major problems as it is economic for them.

Health Problems in Children

Half of the children were reported sick during the last week from the day of taking survey. Most of them (50%) were suffering from skin disorder which was due to the hot temperature, contaminated drinking water and unhealthy living condition. There was a major problem of waste management and people dump their garbage in open areas and they get rid of it only by burning it. Diarrhea, dental problems and eye and nasal allergies were mostly prevalent in children. In many areas there was no proper source of clean water due to which the health problems increase among the children of migrant labourers.

Awareness on Health Programs

Migrant labourers were aware about the free vaccination facility provided in government hospitals yet 42% of them were not maintaining the immunization cards of their children and some of them were never immunized. This was a serious problem among the migrants as they were not aware about its negative consequences. Few claimed that they are benefitted from mobile health unit which is launched in slum areas to provide an access to health care to the slum dwellers. In 2008, the central government has introduced RashtriyaSwasthyaBimaYojana (RSBY) a Health Insurance Scheme targeting only the Below Poverty Line households, but has been expanded to cover other defined categories of unorganised workers, covering construction workers, street workers, rikshaw pullers etc. with the objective to reduce Out of Pocket expenditure on health and increase access to health care. None of the respondents who were interviewed were either aware or benefitted through this scheme. Some of them have TV at home but they hardly get to watch any health related or other awareness programs and nor were they informed that such programs are also broadcasted on television.

Health and Debt

The migrant labourers revealed they are in debt due to many reasons as they could never earn sufficient money to support their families. Sometimes they borrow money from their relatives when they move to new places and sometimes from the contractor. They often end up paying their debts and this continues whole of their lives. Majority of labourers revealed that they spend most of their earnings only on their health. These people are prone to diseases because of their unhygienic living condition and which costs them quite a lot of their earnings. The migrant labourers work very hard to earn money but they still manage to live from hand to mouth.

Recommendations

In India, all migrants are not equally vulnerable. Permanent and semi-permanent migrants with higher education and skills can withstand the challenges and succeed in becoming members of the urban citizenship. On the other hand, migrants with low education and skills, together with the seasonal and temporary nature of their employment, are more vulnerable and subject to various kinds of exclusions in urban areas. These categories of migrants are excluded from social security programmes such as public distribution of food, access to education and health care and, most importantly, entitlement to housing at the place of destination owing to the absence of identity and residential proof. Social security programmes are place-bound and the implementation of the programmes fall under the purview of the state governments. The inter-state migrants incur more hardships as the portability of social security programmes is not possible; they also face hostility from native residents instilled with the ideology of the sons of the soil.

The migrant workers in informal settlement are subject to hardships and social exclusion which further impact the lives of their children. Poverty is the main cause of migration for the people in informal sector which drives them out from their own native places. The most affected population is migrant children whose future is completely dependent upon the lives of their parents. There are few policy recommendations for the inclusion of migrant children with their parents in urban areas.

Registration and Identity: The internal migrants especially those who work in unorganized sector should be issued universally recognized and portable proof of identity that can enable them to access social security programmes anywhere in India.

Special Protection for Migrant Children, Adolescents and Women: The migrant children adolescents and women affected by migration are particularly vulnerable and should receive special protection by government. In that case special provisions and welfare programmes should be framed exclusively for the upliftment and safety of migrant children and women.

Social Inclusion of Migrant Children: The migrant children are at greater risk of social exclusion from the local people. The measures should be adopted to ensure access to decent housing for migrants. Half of the respondents revealed that they are often discriminated when they move to the new places because neither they belong to that place nor they have proper place or house to live. Efforts should be made to promote awareness among people to host the societies so that discrimination and social exclusion be reduced. This would help the children to feel equal and important part of the society.

Monitoring the Database of Migrant Children: The biggest hurdle in providing protection to the migrant children is unavailability of database. There is hardly any mechanism for maintaining the record of migrant children which is one of the main causes for their social exclusion. It is important to gather and monitor the information on the well being of children in migrant communities.

Protection of Rights of Children: The policies must be strengthened in order to secure children's basic social and economic rights. The rights of children are greatly affected

during this process of migration and they are deprived of education, proper shelter, healthy childhood and healthy environment for their wholesome development. The government, international organizations and civil society stakeholders should advocate the right of children and women affected by migration.

- Educational Provisions: The special provisions should be made where the migrant children should be given relaxation in joining school at any point of time during the session. During the field work we found that most of the migrant children left school because they were not allowed to take admission in school during the mid session.
- 2. **Health Benefit Cards:** We found that majority of workers spend half of their income only in paying their health expenses. They should be issued special health benefit cards which would help them to avail the subsidized and quality treatment. Such cards will solve their half of the problems and help them to raise their standard of living.
- 3. *Free Health Checkup Camps:* The migrant population should be facilitated by holding free health chekup camps in the areas they are residing. In such camps efforts should be made to promote awareness on basic health and hygiene issues. This would be one of the best ways to educate migrant population and protect their children from deadly infections.
- 4. **Role of NGO's:** The parents of migrant children should be given proper education at the place of destination about raising their children in a healthy environment. The NGOs and voluntary organizations should be encouraged to work for the welfare of migrants and educate them to ensure better education and good health of their children.
- 5. **Promote Research on Migrant Children:** To increase the visibility of children in policy agendas, more research and comparable global data on how children are affected by migration are needed. More academic research and data analysis is needed to understand the impact of migration on the lives of children.
- 6. **Proper Housing and Slum Upgrading:** The study revealed that more than 60% of migrant labourers were living in informal settlements which are called slums. Living in such unhygienic condition cause maximum threat to the health of their children. The government should take an initiative to provide basic infrastructure and housing services to the migrants.
- 7. Financial Aid: The migrants should be given banking facilities to promote savings and secure transfer of remittances in the source and destination areas. The financial aid to the migrant population will solve half of their problems.

CONCLUSION

The present study emphasizes on the health and educational outcomes of the migrant children and the analysis makes it clear that children of migrant labourers are deprived of their basic economic and social rights. The migrant labourers in Chandigarh are mostly hailed from the neighboring northern states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Uttrakhand, Haryana and Punjab. Poverty is the main factor responsible for their migration to Chandigarh. Firstly, the migrant population is

always settled in places which are temporary and cheap. Secondly, migrant labourers are often engaged in informal sector and their jobs are temporary and seasonal in nature. The casual workers and self-employed seasonal and temporary migrants seem to be quite vulnerable to the vagaries of the labour market as they lack any social protection (NSSO, 2010).

Migrants are not only employed largely in informal sectors but are also housed in informal settlements, generally known as slums. The present study revealed that around 60% of the migrant population was settled in slums. The children of migrant labourers are raised in very unhealthy and unsafe environment and the constant migration effects the education of their children. Majority of parents and children revealed that they find difficulty in getting enrollment in school due to incomplete documents and also due to trying admissions during the mid-session in year. Due to the accessibility and availability of schools in Chandigarh they don't find much difficulty in attending schools. More than half of the parents of migrant were illiterate who earn Rs 4000-6000 per month. The illiteracy of parents is also an important factor for keeping children away from education but many parents said that they often face harassment while seeking admission in school. The migrant children who were not attending school revealed that they don't have any interest in studies as there is nobody at home who would motivate them for getting education. The children of migrant laborers are not protected by the government as most of the policies do not cover the welfare of migrant children exclusively.

The migrant children are often deprived of routine immunization as parents fail to maintain the immunization card of their children due to consistent migration. The children of the migrant labourers are always at higher health risk due to the unhygienic living condition. They neglect the basic health and hygiene as half of the girls denied the usage of sanitary pads during menstruation and use old cloth which is also used by other ladies at home. The migrant children are also prone to many health problems like skin allergies, dental, viral fever, diarrhea etc which is mainly the result of contaminated water as they do not have proper source of water. The migrants are often ignorant of their rights and privileges. The migrant labourers leave their native place in search of better livelihood but they are often subject to neglect and social exclusion. Due to the poverty and their occupation as labourers they are forced to spend their whole life like refugees in their own country.

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