

Immigration of Labour to Kerala :Socio- Economic Impacts

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Objectives

This paper presents immigration of migrant workers from other State to Kerala and the socio-economic impact.

The following aspect are examined

- Process of migration and profile of migrants
- Employment, wages and working conditions
- Remittances
- causes of migration
- Housing and accommodation
- Demographic aspect
- Socio-Economic impact

Data source

- V.Prakash(2011), In-Migration of Workers to Kerala; An enquiry into causes and consequences.
- Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation(GIFT)2013, Domestic Migrant Labour (DML) in Kerala.
 - 1.Total stock in-migrants-10 Lakh
(V.Prakash(2011))
 2. Total stock of in-migrants -25 Lakh
(Estimate of GIFT in 2013)

Source of Data of Table 1 to 11 is GIFT STUDY(2013)

Table 1

Distribution(%) of DML by State of Origin and Age

State	Age class in Years						Percentage Share
	Below 18	18-23	24-29	30-35	36 and above	Not reported	
Uttar Pradesh	00	38.53	38.53	15.60	7.34	0	14.83
Assam	1.57	50.39	34.65	10.24	2.36	0.79	17.28
West Bengal	1.36	46.26	29.25	14.97	7.48	0.68	20.00
Bihar	0.75	34.59	33.08	21.05	9.03	1.50	18.10
Orissa	2.04	34.69	30.61	20.41	10.20	2.04	6.67
Others	1.18	37.65	37.65	14.71	8.82	0	23.13
Total	1.09	40.95	34.29	15.65	7.35	0.68	100

Table 2

Distribution(%) of DML by state of Origin and Religion

State	Religion				Total
	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	Not reported	
Uttar Pradesh	81.65	16.51	0.92	0.92	100
Assam	40.16	45.67	12.60	1.57	100
West Bengal	47.62	48.98	1.36	2.04	100
Bihar	88.72	6.77	1.50	3.01	100
Orissa	73.47	6.12	20.41	0	100
Others	85.29	7.65	2.35	3.53	100*
Total	69.25	23.54	4.76	2.18	100

Table 3

Distribution(%) of DMLs by Channels of Migration and state of Origin

State	Channels of Migration					Total
	Relative	Friend	Contractor	Others	Not reported	
Uttar Pradesh	6.42	65.14	25.69	0.00	2.75	100
Assam	11.81	56.69	24.41	5.51	1.57	100
West Bengal	8.84	46.94	33.33	10.20	0.68	100
Bihar	9.77	54.14	32.33	3.01	0.75	100
Orissa	16.33	51.02	16.33	12.24	4.08	100
Others	12.94	54.71	28.24	2.94	1.18	100
Total	10.61	54.69	28.16	5.03	1.50	100

Table 4

Distribution of DML by Work Arrangement and by State of Origin

	Working with			Total State
	Contractor	Casual Employer	Not reported	
Uttar Pradesh	77.06	21.10	1.83	100
Assam	65.35	28.35	6.30	100
West Bengal	62.59	32.65	4.76	100
Bihar	72.18	23.31	4.51	100
Orissa	38.78	55.10	6.12	100
Others	66.47	27.65	5.88	100
Total	66.26	28.84	4.90	100

Table 5
Distribution of DML by Occupation

Occupation	Total
Carpenter	1.90
Electrician	0.68
Mason/Flooring	3.68
Sales person	0.68
Tailoring	0.41
Skilled work	18.50
Unskilled work	69.52
Others	2.45
Not reported	2.18
Total	100

Table 6

Distribution of DML by Sector of Employment

Sector of Employment	Total
Agriculture	2.31
Construction	60.00
Hotel and Restaurant	6.94
Manufacturing	8.30
Trade	1.77
Others	17.55
Not reported	3.13
Total	100

Table 7

Distribution of DML by number of Days of Employment in a Week

Number of Days of Employment in a Week	Percentage of Labour Reporting
3	0.54
4	1.50
5	10.88
6	57.82
7	28.71
Not reported	0.54
Total	100.00

Table 8
Distribution of DML by Daily Wages

Wages per Day (Rs)	Percentage of Labour Reporting
Not reported	2.45
Below 300	29.12
300-399	35.51
400-499	23.13
500 & above	9.80
Total	100.00

Table 9

Distribution of DML by Periodicity of Remittance

Periodicity of Remittance	Percentage of labour Reporting
Every month	32.38
Once in 2 months	17.82
Occasionally	42.18
Never	7.62
Total	100.00

Table 10

Distribution of DML by Amount of Remittance(Rs)

Remittance Amount (Last Remittance)	Percentage Reporting
Never	7.62
Not Reported	5.31
1000-5000	24.08
5000-10,000	38.50
10,000-20,000	19.73
20,000 & above	4.76
Total	100.00

Table 11

Distribution of DML by Mode of Remittance

Mode of Remittance	Percentage reporting
Own bank account	57.69
Other's bank account	21.50
Post office	1.63
Others known person	6.94
Contractor	0.54
Others	0.68
Not reported	3.40
Never send money home	7.62
Total	100.00

Causes of Migration to Kerala

- Most of them have left home in their teens and have worked in several other Indian towns before coming to Kerala.
- Comparatively low level of wages, lack of employment opportunities, and the increasing unviability of the agriculture sector and its seasonal nature, have prompted most of them to seek employment.
- Some of them have also come upon invitation by their friends/relatives in Kerala.
- In the case of Assamese workers having experience in wood cutting, the first batches came to Kerala in the late 80's and early 90's .
- They began to work in the wood industrial unit in Perumbavur; they came in groups to work here.
- When the construction boom started in the mid-90'S many of them moved to construction, where the wages were much higher.
- In Thiruvanthapuram, the first batches came during the construction of the southern Air Command Campus in Aakulam.

Housing and Accommodation of the DML

- The nature of housing of the DML is largely determined by the sector of employment and level of wages and skill.
- Some of them live at the work site, in temporary shacks in common lands, in single room flats, one-room tenements, or one bed room houses and many of them live in open spaces or common lands in huts made of plastic or tin sheets.
- The DML also stay in many semi-permanent tenement and huts. The lands in these cases belonged to local people, for which paid rent.
- Hutments are either covered with tin or plastic sheets and did not have any facilities such as kitchen, or bathrooms and the toilets. Wherever they had facilities they were the bare minimum.
- Cooking, eating and sleeping are carried out in open spaces, and most of the occupants are unskilled workers with low wages. Most of them ate from a 'mess' nearby which was run by their fellow men.

- In Perumbavur where the DML live in groups and in tenements without kitchen facilities, the more enterprising among them have established a 'mess' for breakfast and dinner.
- In the manufacturing sector, temporary sheds are provided at the manufacturing units where the DML live; these sheds differ from unit to unit.
- Availability of water, access to drinking water and sewage facilities are common problems in most such settlements.
- The daily wages ranged from Rs.200 to 300 per day, and the working hours extended up to 10 hours a day.
- The cooking was common and in some places, different groups of workers, according to their place of origin and nature of work, lived in separate sheds, with separate cooking facilities.
- Only a very few workers have brought their families with them, and so most of the houses are overcrowded with men.
- In one of the one-room houses, we found 12 occupants, and they paid a rent of Rs-400-500 per head per month.

- No antisocial activities were permitted, and it was closely monitored by the local people living in the vicinity. It was found that some workers engaged in gambling, liquor consumption etc.
- Workers earning better wages lived in small flats(one room), and were occupied by an average of 5-6 persons.
- The average rent of such building ranged from Rs-4000 to 5000 apart from water and electricity bills.

Employment of DML

- All the employers of DML-construction firms, labour contractors, manufactures, casual employers, business owners, quarry/brick kiln owners etc- are unanimous about their professional sincerity and work culture.
- They are employed in all sectors-formal and informal, agriculture, industry, trade and services.
- They were employed in unskilled, skilled, trained, apprentices, helpers, experts etc.
- The employers have no complaints about their dedication to work and output.
- The time and quantity of labour put in by an average migrant workers is much more the native worker.
- DML also prepared to work overtime and in some cases they work up to 14 hours per day.

- Some employers expressed apprehensions about DML getting organized or ‘unionized’.
- The local people and traders are happy because the DML spend most of their earning here, and all of us get cheap labour.
- Some sectors like brick kiln bring labourers on a seasonal basis. In this sector, the workers come with their families, settle near the kilns and stay there till the season gets over and work finished.
- Construction workers belong to two categories: One those who work with a contractor on a regular basis and two casual employers.
- Casual Labourers who live in small group in the suburbs. Some live with their families.
- Lack of employment opportunities is the basic cause of migration.
- In Perumbavur, it was reported that many DML were engaged in illegal sand mining operated through local contractors.
- A feature of this category of the labour is its frequent movement from one place to another.

- Most of the DML had no long-term plans of settling in Kerala.
- They wanted to earn enough money and go back to their native places.
- The attempt of the Labour department of the register DML has not succeed.
- Such mobility was also posing problems to the health Department, who are not able to follow up cases of communicable diseases.
- A few AIDS and TB cases were reported in Perumbavur area, and these cases are being followed up with great difficulty.

Wages of DML

- High wage level in Kerala is the main attraction of the DML.
- In Kerala people are friendly, employer are decent, fallow workers are cooperatives and promised wage is paid promptly.
- But wages differ from sector to sector, profession to profession, level of skill, supply of labour, and market demands.

Leisure of DML

- In almost all the sectors, the DML work 6 days in a week, Sunday is a holyday.
- Many Construction Sites, they work 12-14 hours a day, and thus have no time for any relaxation or entertainment.
- Many people do their weekly chores during that day, like washing etc. some people stay in their rooms watching movies on television.
- It is also the day they go for an outing, to the local market to buy provisions, recharge phones, check out VCDs etc
- Parks, city centers, gardens, and open spaces etc are the only spaces available for them as pre-fixed meeting points meet their friends.

The Migrants and the Locals

- One of the most striking characteristics of migrant labour in Kerala is their total insularity from the local population.
- The native people are not accepting them as equals.
- The local community has a lot of apprehensions about them. These fears arise out of the anonymity of these workers.
- They are also accused of dumping food and other waste into common land and river /canals thus polluting the environment.
- They are a shifting population, and the community has no link with them, prevention of such activities are not possible.

Demographic/Gender Dimension

- The vast majority of them are young and able-bodied belonging to the age group of 18 to 30 years
- Almost all of them are male and very small minority has brought their families with them.
- The most obvious and immediate issue such a huge population, that too so predominantly male and young, this raises serious issue relating to emotional and sexual needs.
- Majority of them have not even heard about of HIV or AIDS.
- Another potential area of concern is the stark contrast that is emerging in the demographic profile of the host and migrant population in the state.

The Economics of sub-Contracting

- The DML is large in number, docile and easy to manage, work long hours and are highly mobile, they move frequently from one place to another.
- In the construction sector, they are procured and supplied by labour contractors, who in turn have links with major construction firms.
- In the wood industry, they are brought in batches, almost invariably from the same district/locality and belong to the same community/religion, artisanal group etc.

- The migrant workers are ‘not interested’ in subscribing to many welfare scheme like Employees State Insurance, Provident Fund etc.
- Most of the construction companies here are national or multinational companies who access labour from all over the country based on their skills and demand for labour supply.
- Constant rotation of labourers also works to the advantage of both the labour contractors and the construction company to have at their command a reserve army of labourers who can be accessed and fired at will.
- Universal phenomenon in migration where the host community reserve the ‘right’ to keep the migrants temporary and out of the purview of legal provisions that obligate them.
- A continued supply of cheap labour, while on the other hand, they are unable to organize in the workplace to defend their dignity and decent work conditions, stigmatized and isolated as well from allies and support.

Formalizing Migrant Labour-Emerging challenges

- The DML presence in Kerala is a structural one that is closely and intricately linked to the state's economy and society, and whose presence has percolated into all walks of economy activity.
- The migrant worker are treated alien workers or third class citizens.
- The changing nature of residence helps to keep DML population under constant surveillance and control, at the same time giving the host community the power to oust or redistribute them according to the push and pull of local economy.
- Unless Kerala society and government address the DML question urgently and meaningfully, it is bound to through up social problems and tensions of various kinds.

THANK YOU