

IMI Internal Migration in India Initiative

In 2011, as a result of a two-day workshop on *Internal Migration and Human Development in India* (6-7 December 2011), UNESCO and UNICEF launched the Internal Migration in India Initiative (IMI), in order to better respond to the many challenges raised by the internal migration phenomenon in India. Through the IMI, UNESCO and UNICEF wish to support the social inclusion of migrants in the economic, social, political and cultural life of the country using a three-legged approach, combining research, policy and advocacy.

The Internal Migration in India Initiative is now an informal network of 200 researchers, NGO's, policy makers, UN agencies and key partners, such as Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN Women and UN-HABITAT, determined to raise the profile of internal migration in India and to propose policy changes and creative practices.

Given the momentum that is gathering on the issue of internal migration in India, it is crucial that an evidence base informed by research and existing best practices for the improved inclusion of migrants in rural and urban settings is developed. Through launching the Internal Migration in India Initiative (IMI), UNESCO and UNICEF, with other partnering UN agencies, wish to contribute to this process by supporting the development of initiatives advancing the rights of migrants in the economic, social, political and cultural life of the country.

Migration at UNESCO

The aim of the Social Inclusion programme is to promote urban policies and creative practices that respect human rights of migrants, contribute to peaceful integration of migrants in cities and improve the quality of their participation in municipal management. UNESCO contributes with other UN agencies to the creation of more inclusive cities, as a follow-up to the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development of 1995. Our strategy involves strengthening the link between research and policy making, contributing to advocacy and policy dialogue and stimulating innovative thinking to enhance social cohesion and cultural diversity in urban settings.

As part of its ongoing advocacy efforts about migration, from July to December 2011, UNESCO chaired the Global Migration Group (GMG)¹, a United Nations inter-agency group which intends to adopt a coherent, comprehensive and coordinated approach to the issue of international migration.

UNICEF & Migration

UNICEF's mission is to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. Guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the belief that the survival, protection and development of children are universal development imperatives that are integral to human progress, UNICEF is committed to ensuring special protection for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children, including migrant children and those affected indirectly by processes of migration. In this context, UNICEF advocates for the visibility of children in national (and international) migration policy agendas, situating this advocacy within a rights-based framework informed by the principles enshrined in the CRC, which obligate state parties to "recognise the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development,"² and to "...protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse."³

Internal Migration in India: Context & Challenges

The rights of international migrants have been based on a number of legal instruments and conventions such as the UN Declaration on Human Rights, UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948), UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), UN-HABITAT Global Campaign for Good Urban Governance "The Inclusive City" (1999) and the UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (2003).

While the socio-economic factors associated with international (cross-border) migration dynamics have been well documented, processes of internal migration, within developing countries in particular, are not as well understood. In India, internal migration has been accorded very low priority by the government, partly due to a serious knowledge gap on its extent, nature and magnitude. As per the 2001 Census, the total number of internal migrants was 309 million or nearly 30% of the total population⁴. However, due to empirical and conceptual difficulties in measurement, migration flows are often grossly underestimated.

¹ GMG is an inter-agency group bringing together heads of agencies to promote the wider application of all relevant international and regional instruments and norms relating to migration comprising of 14 organizations that are actively involved in international migration and related issues - ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNCTAD, UNDESA, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNITAR, UNODC, UN Regional Commissions and the World Bank.

² The Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 27

³ The Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19

⁴ Figures on internal migration based on place of last residence as cited in Bhagat, R. (2011) "Internal Migration in India: Are the Underclass More Mobile?" in S. Irudaya Rajan (ed) *Migration, Identity and Conflict – India Migration Report 2011* (New Delhi: Routledge)

Migration patterns and dynamics intersect with two further developments in India's current human development context: first, rapid urbanization and the growth of second tier cities and towns, wherein increased levels of migration cause cities to face many socio-economic and environmental challenges that exacerbate urban poverty and intensify inequalities in access to income and services, thereby deepening social exclusion. Second, the expansion of rights based approaches (increasingly enshrined in law) to ensure that basic services are accessible to all citizens is a process in the making, transforming India's social policy landscape from welfarism to rights based development. These two emerging trends suggest the need to focus development of policy frameworks and practical strategies towards ensuring that all migrants have access to services and entitlements as enshrined in policies and law; and that urban settlements become inclusive spaces as they expand in size and diversity.

Moving from Policy to Practice

Ensuring that processes of urban development are socially equitable is the focus of a recently launched network of Indian NGOs, united under the umbrella of the National Coalition of Organizations for the Security of Migrant Workers⁵. Their work complements a range of efforts made by civil society, government and other actors in specific contexts to mitigate the adverse effects and risks of migration, and strengthen the identity and visibility of migrant workers and their families. However, a holistic approach to addressing the challenges associated with internal migration in India that can inform the design and implementation of sustainable policies and creative practices in order to protect the rights of migrants and engender positive human development outcomes is yet to be developed. Local governments need to play a major role, not only in protecting and promoting migrants' access to social services, but also in enabling migrants to become socially and politically active citizens.

By developing inclusive urban policies and rights based service delivery institutions that guarantee economic and social security and safeguard human rights, government authorities can work towards improving the inclusion of migrants in urban and other settings by balancing economic development with a commitment to social inclusion and urban diversity and integration. Through the launching of the Internal Migration in India Initiative, UNESCO and UNICEF, with other partners and stakeholders, wish to support this process, with a three-legged strategy, combining research, advocacy, and capacity building, targeting policy makers and local authorities.

Overall Goal:

- ✓ Advance knowledge on undocumented research areas on internal migration in India in order to support the design of better informed inclusive urban policies;
- ✓ Promote existing urban policies and creative practices that increase inclusion of all sections of the migrant population, particularly children and women, in the life of the city;

⁵ The mission of the Coalition, comprised by close to 30 Civil Society Organizations across the country, is to collaborate and lobby for better services, protection and security for the millions of underserved migrant workers in India. They are currently engaging in a number of initiatives such as drafting a national policy on migration, ensuring extension of social security for migrant workers and increasing state level visibility and recognition of the migration issue and its impacts.

- ✓ Raise awareness on the need to prioritize internal migration in policy-making;
- ✓ Advocate for a better integration of the topic of internal migration in India in the international development agenda;

Specific Objectives:

- ✓ Increase visibility and recognition of internal migration in India, which has thus far remained a neglected government priority, in both policy and practice;
- ✓ Disseminate evidence-based research, experience and practices, as well as initiatives in law and urban planning that can strengthen migrants' rights and responsibilities;
- ✓ Promote understanding of the vulnerabilities faced by children in the context of family migration and independent migration and identify policy gaps and strategies that can address these vulnerabilities;
- ✓ Draw the attention of policy makers towards the urgency to protect and promote migrants' rights and ensure their social inclusion in the cities;

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12.12. 2012