

## Circular Migration

### Why in News?

Recently India and Israel have signed a circular migration labour agreement.

### What is Circular Migration?

- **Circular Migration** - It is a repetitive form of migration wherein people move to another place (the destination country) and back (country of origin) according to the availability of employment.
- It means that people move to different locations for a brief period of time when work is available.
- It is a phenomenon mostly among low-income groups who migrate to avail of seasonally available jobs in another country, city, place etc.
- **Circular Migrant** - As per the report on measuring circular migration by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Task Force, one is called a circular migrant if you have completed at least 'two loops' between two countries.
- Circular migration became quite popular in the 60s and 70s with the advent of globalisation and development.
- **Characteristics of Circular Migration**
  - Temporary residence in the destination location
  - Multiple entries into the destination country
  - Freedom of movement between the country of origin and the country of destination during the period of residence
  - Legal right to stay in the destination country
  - Protection of migrants' rights
- **Driving factors of Circular Migration**
  - Increased access to modern forms of transport and communication.
  - Social networks
  - Growth of multinational corporations
  - Ageing population in developed countries such as Western Europe and Japan.

### What is Circular Migration within India?

- **Internal Migration** - In India, internal migration, which is migration within a particular country or State, has almost always been circular.
- **Rural to Urban** - With the advent of jobs in the manufacturing, construction and services sector, there has been a huge flow of migrants from rural areas to urban cities.
- Between 2004-2005 and 2011-2012, the construction sector witnessed one of the largest net increases in employment for all workers, specifically for rural males.
- **Rural Urban Collapse** - Due to this migration Rural populations and their economy

dwindled and urban spaces witnessed infrastructural collapse as they are unable to properly house incoming populations.

- **Uneven development post-liberalisation** - It led to a lot of inter-State migration, with States like West Bengal, Odisha and Bihar having some of the highest rates of out-migration.
- Initially, while most of the migration was to Delhi, nowadays it has increased to southern States as well.
- Most of the rural migrants were occupied in agricultural jobs in their origin States and when they migrated a majority of them were engaged in low-skill jobs.
- **Positive Outcomes** - Higher paying jobs when compared to origin States, better household welfare due to remittances, ease of mobility etc.
- Women get more autonomy and decision-making power in the family due to the absence of men who migrate.
- **Issues** - As Language barrier is a big obstacle, Rural circular migrants are often at the mercy of middlemen or brokers.
- They are made to work in unhygienic and unsafe conditions with little to no protective equipment.
- They are routinely exploited and suffer significant 'unfreedoms' in host States.
- Indigenous wage groups and unions resent these migrants as they are seen as taking away their jobs by agreeing to work for lower wages.
- **Bare Minimum** - The migrants are able to barely provide for themselves and their families, with no scope for further asset creation or savings.
- **Uncertainty** - There is also a certain precarity associated with these jobs as they are seasonal and often irregular.

### What are the Benefits of circular migration?

- **Balanced migration** - It looks at migration not only from the point of view of the receiving country but also of the sending nation.
- **Human Capital Development** - Enhanced experience of working with sophisticated construction machinery and advanced management protocols
- **Prevent Brain Drain** - The negative effects of brain drain will reduce and a sort of brain circulation will be encouraged, wherein the migrants can use their talents in both countries and still contribute to remittances.

*Brain drain is the permanent out migration from home country to foreign country of highly-qualified human resources like doctors and engineers.*

- **Improving Quality of Life** - The ageing demography of the developed world has created the greatest opportunity for India to enhance the quality of life of many Indians in a single generation.
- **Win Win solution** - Government-to-government agreements safeguard the wages and social security of migrant workers in destination countries and their guaranteed return.

## What are the challenges?

- Even though India has the requisite numbers, fulfilling the global skills gap is not an easy proposition.
- **Language barriers** - Communication becomes challenging, since since moving across different countries with short period stay doesn't let learning the language.
- **Legal compliance challenges** - G-to-G agreements for circular migration require exact skill-matching and many legal compliances.
- **Procedural challenges** - Acquiring a passport and the ability to demonstrate skills in a format required by the receiving country are challenges for rural people.
- Though Indian workers may have the requisite skills, they may not be able to demonstrate them in the pre-defined manner with the use of specific tools.
- **Identifying the resources** - It is a challenge to identify, at scale, youth with the exact required skills.

## What are the government initiatives?

- **Demand Aggregation** - National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) has aggregated the skill gap demand for many of India's partner countries.
- **State level SOPs** - Maharashtra Institution for Transformation (MITRA) worked closely with the NSDC to evolve SOPs and policy norms so that skilled youth could access higher wage markets.
- **Skill Development** - Launched in 2015, this mission aims to provide vocational training and skill development to Indian youth, making them more attractive to employers abroad.
- **Booster Training** - NSDC has developed a four-day course on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to upgrade the existing skills.
- **International Cooperation Agreements** - India has signed bilateral and multilateral agreements with various countries to facilitate labor migration and protect the rights of Indian workers.
- **Overseas Employment Cell (OEC)** - The Ministry of Labor and Employment has established Overseas Employment Cells in various states to provide assistance to migrants and their families.

## What lies ahead?

- Establish comprehensive bilateral agreements that outline the rights, responsibilities, and expectations of both migrants and host countries.
- Simplify visa processes, reduce costs, and increase the efficiency of obtaining work permits.
- Offer vocational training and skill development programs to migrants, equipping them with the necessary qualifications for specific job roles.
- ensure secure and affordable remittance channels to encourage migrants to send money back to their home countries.
- Collaborate with employers in both countries to identify skill gaps and develop tailored training programs.

## References

1. [The Indian Express | Circular Migration to Meet Global Skill Gap](#)
2. [The Hindu | Circular Migration](#)

