

## **An Empirical Study on Socio-Economic Status of Unorganised Migrant Construction Labourers in Bangalore Urban**

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### **Abstract**

Migration is an important feature of development of any economy. It occurs as a response to unbalanced growth and economic inequality. Construction industry is one of the fastest growing industry in the country. Construction industry is the backbone of a country as it creates the infrastructure necessary for the economic and industrial growth. In India large number of the unorganised labourers workforce due to its huge demand as well as it will create migration. The infrastructural development and construction sector is in full of in Bangalore attracting semi-skilled and semi-skilled labourers from different parts of the country. construction industry would worker's higher income and better working conditions, these unorganised migrant labourers are denied of basic facilities entire country. This paper tries to study the economic position, working conditions, living conditions, food security, health facilities, education of the labourers before and after migration. The present study was conceived to help to answer some of the pertinent questions concerning migrant construction workers in Bangalore urban. Primary data are collected from randomly selected labourers especially interstate and inter district migrants, secondary sources of data collected to analysis the conditions of migrant labourers.

**KEYWORDS:** Migrant labourers, economic inequality, unorganised workers

### **Introduction:**

Migration is a characteristic feature of the growth process of any nation. It occurs as a response to unbalanced growth and economic inequality. Macro level estimates shows that migration for economic reasons has increased in the recent years. According to the censuses report, the total number of migrants increased from 19.85 million in 1991, 28.9 million in 2001. Today the construction industry is a pool of opportunities progressing at a very faster rate. It is the second largest employer after agriculture and can be considered as one of the primary sector in urban areas. The asset creation potential of the construction sector is estimated at 3,50,000 crores. The share to the GDP is 12% and provides employment to 14% of employable citizens.

### **Scope of the Study:**

The present study involves the migrant workers in various construction sites specifically the interstate migrants are considered. The migrant construction workers only within the Bangalore urban are selected for the study.

### **Objectives:**

- To compare the economic status of labourers before and after migration.
- To examine the food, health and education entitlements of migrants labourers.
- To understand the working conditions of migrant labourers
- To study the problems faced by the migrant construction workers

- To provide few suggestions for their betterment

### **Methodology:**

The survey sample method was used to collect data pertaining to inter-state migrant construction labourers. The workers working in construction of apartments, individual houses were considered for survey. A sample of 100 respondents were selected for the study. Secondary data were collected from books, articles, journals and government reports.

### **Migration in India:**

Census defines migrants by place of birth and by place of last residence. A migrant according to the place of birth concept is one who lives in a place (place of enumeration) that is different than their place of birth. On the other way, a person is considered migrant by place of last residence if the place of enumeration during census is different than their place of residence. According to the NSSO, a person is a migrant in case they stayed for more than six months in a place which is different than their last usual place of residence. The study has tried to compare the migration of labourers in 1991 census- 838.5 and 2001 census- 1028.6.

### **The Socio-Economic Status of Migrant Construction Labourers**

Construction industry provides jobs to many unskilled and semiskilled workers in Bangalore. Its recent industrial and IT related development around Bangalore, a state capital, is an important target for movement from the densely populated rural areas of three neighbouring states of Kerala, Andrapradesh, and Tamilnadu. Migrants from districts like Raichur, Gulbarga, Yadagiri, Chitradurga, mostly from poorer district with poor employment opportunities, poor landless farmers are migrating towards Bangalore in search of employment opportunities in the faster growing construction sector. Construction industry in Bangalore is unorganised in nature is attracting workers from different parts of the country and state.

In order to compare the economic status of labourers before and after migration, a sample of 100 migrant labourers from within the state working in different apartments and house construction workers were selected randomly, of which few were skilled, semiskilled and some of them were unskilled workers. In order to compare the income level of these workers, questionnaire was structured to know their occupation and income before migration and it was compared with the present income level.

All the respondents were from North Karnataka. It can be observed that many of the migrants have settled in Bangalore from 10-15 years long and have permanently settled with all voting rights, other social entitlements extended by Government by converting slums into well-structured pakka houses with all electricity, water and sanitation facilities in many areas in Bangalore.

**Table -1 showing the occupation and income level before and after migration**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Income</b>
Animal husbandry	Around Rs 30-35/day
Domestic worker	Rs 1000-2000/month
Tree climbers	Rs 50/tree

Farmers	Rs 100/day during harvest season
Construction workers	Rs 100-120/day unskilled ,Rs 200/semiskilled, Rs 350/skilled
Others	Rs 55-66/day

After collecting data from the respondents the main jobs in which they were involved was taken into consideration to know their income level at their place of birth. The available data it could be understood that an unskilled or semiskilled worker earned Rs 900-1000/ month and sometimes even lesser if they did not get work for the entire week or month. Ex. The tree climbers were engaged only when there was need and remained unemployed most of the days. Semiskilled and skilled labourers could earn Rs 3000-3500/ month if they were working in construction sector. Many workers who reared their own cattle did not earn anything but reported that they had to travel long ways in the hot sun along with cattle in search of water and food. Most of these work was seasonal in nature and non-remunerative which forced them to leave their birth places and migrate towards Bangalore in search of better life most of the times along with the family.

**Table -2 Income level after migration in constructed industry**

Skill/Income	Skilled labour	Semiskilled	Unskilled
No of labourers	24	41	35
Income before migration (Rs/day)	250-300	150-180	25-55
Income after migration (Rs/day)	750-900	400-500	200-250

The above table gives the details of the income level of the migrant workers before and after migration. The table shows that there is an improvement in the economic status of the migrant labour after having started working in construction sector. The workers are satisfied to have found a livelihood. Many of the landless labourers who were working as agricultural labourers could not make even two meals a day in their native places and now at least they have two meals a day. Table-2 reveals painters, granite workers, electricians, are earning more than three times of what they were earning before. Semi-skilled workers have almost doubled their earnings after migration. The unskilled workers led a very pathetic life because they earned around Rs 55-75/day and that too only on the days on which they found job, many a times they did not find any work and had to lead life with just Rs 700-800/month. But after being migrated ad found work as helpers in the construction site, they are earning a minimum of Rs 250/day. So, the table reveals that the economic position of the workers has improved after migration.

### **Food, Health and Other Social Entitlements of Migrant Labourers**

Internal migration spurred primarily by employment and marriage which shapes the economic, social and political life of India's sending and receiving regions. Regardless of the duration of their stay, migrant labours face myriad challenges at their destinations because of diversified cultures and traditions. Among the challenges, restricted access to basic needs such as identity documentation, social entitlements, housing and financial services. The construction workers who are settled at the place of residence permanently from more than 10years in renovated slum areas and Gulbarga colonies have permanent address and so have access to food security since they hold the ration cards through which they can buy food items at subsidized

rates and under Anna Bhagyayojana they are entitled for free rice. But the labourers who have migrated recently do not possess ration cards because they do not have a permanent address.

Most of the times these workers buy provision at retail price which is burdensome. The cost of living is very high in metropolitan cities and 60-80% of workers spend a lot of earnings to buy food items. So they cannot have nutritious food with the limited income they earn. Moreover, these people possess ration cards and Yashaswini cards at their place of birth which is used by their families there. They usually buy rice from PDS shops when they go back home on visit and purchase all other food items in Bangalore. Many of them stated that they cannot afford to buy vegetables and fruits other than onions and tomatoes.

The migrant workers often suffer from various ailments. They are denied health benefits at Government hospitals since they do not have BPL cards. They visit private doctors and spend about 300-400 in a month for the treatment of normal ailments. Because of the dirty surrounding and water, they are prone to illness frequently. The health benefits that any citizen of the country is entitled to be denied to these workers only because of the reason that they have travelled away from their place of birth in search of livelihood. Many of the migrated workers from Raichur and Gulbarga do not send their children to schools because they do not have permanent housing facility. They are often made to live in working sites till the work gets over, after their work is done they go in search of other work sites where they find employment opportunity.

The workers stay in small sheds either on the construction sites/basement or on neighbouring vacant sides or roadside, tents made of plastic sheets and do not have ventilation. Among 100 respondents many of them worked for small contractors had to stay in vacant sites around work place, 87 respondents said that there was no electricity and had to manage with the street lights. Among them those working for apartments had sanitation and bathroom facility. The workers who stay on construction sites get water that is used for construction purpose or had to borrow it from neighbouring houses. Lack of safety, proneness to pests, mosquitoes and rats are common. Most of these workers cook their food in the temporary sheds or outside the sheds.

### **Working Conditions of the Migrant Labourers:**

The lack of opportunities in less developed areas is drawing thousands of people from rural and semi-rural areas to migrate towards the big cities like Bangalore. As a burgeoning industry, the construction sector offers work. With limited skills and little or no formal education, migrant construction workers face a lot of problems in their work areas.

The majority of the migrant workers are illiterate and unskilled which makes them vulnerable to being exploited by the sub-contractor/contractors. They do not possess bargaining power and cannot claim their part of rights. The wages paid to them is lesser than the minimum wages fixed by the labour commission and many a times they are made to work more than eight hours without making payments for overtime. Compared to other states like Gujarat, the minimum wages fixed by government seems to be lower. The workers take only 50% of the wages and keep the remaining with sub-contractors because they cannot keep it safely in their sheds.

Only 15% of the migrant workers have bank accounts. Among them, many of them have it in their native place in the name of one of the family members. Only a small percent of around 2-5% of workers have a bank account in their own names in Bangalore. The workers lack of the knowledge on how to open bank account and the lack of identification and address proof documentation are the reasons for not holding bank account in Bangalore. The pan card is the mandatory documents to open an account now which is avoiding many workers from opening an account. These workers send their money to their dependents through relatives, friends and mainly bus drivers who collect commission for doing the same.

Many of the construction workers are not provided with safety helmets and spectacles while welding, cutting stones especially those working in metro stations. Workers are prone to small accidents which leads to infection. We have a glaring example of nearly 22 construction workers who lost their lives while constructing Vikas Soudha in the year 2003-04.

Many of the empirical studies have also reported of some of the permanent ailment of workers working in metro stations and few have lost their lives. Small accidents are very common, and very sadly these workers are not covered under insurance.

#### **Suggestions:**

- Awareness should be created among these workers regarding the health camps, nutrition and food intake and about the immunization campaigns.
- Creation of crèche facility at the work sites, compulsory schooling for the children till they are of 15 should be addressed seriously.
- Financial literacy to open bank accounts, keep money safe in their account is a must.
- Awareness about the existing labour laws for their formal organizations and trade unions, placement cell etc. should be provided.
- Provision for enhancing skill base and skill acquisition to workers which could bring more wages to workers.

#### **Conclusion:**

The contribution of migrant workers to the economic growth of any country is immense but their place of birth. They migrate for better living conditions and opportunities. They are kept out of the purview of welfare measures and legal services. Migrant construction workers should be ensured safe and secure working conditions. Their food, health, political security should be given the top most priority.

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