A Discussion Paper on State Policies towards Internal Migration and Development with Special Reference to Developing Countries

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Background: Purpose and Objective
Migration is the direct manifestation of the process and pattern of socio-economic development and the resultant demand and supply of labour and their remuneration including social pay-offs, at different locations. Understandably, any interventions by state and para-statal organizations to influence the dynamics of growth and distribution of economic activities in space would impact on spatial distribution of population. Identifying the policies and programmes of development having an impact of migration in any comprehensive manner would, therefore, be difficult as any sectoral intervention would have its implications for labour mobility. One has to be selective in approach and focus only on those interventions that have a direct and substantive impact on labour mobility. It would be important to analyse the spatial impact of the polices and programmes geared to different development goals like growth, poverty alleviation, reduction of regional disparity, social transformation, capacity development in backward regions etc. in order to identify the key issues for migration research in developing countries. The present paper begins by providing a short overview of the policy perspectives of the state interventions, having significant impact on population mobility in the developing countries. The major thrust of the paper is at stocktaking on the impact of current development policies and programmes on population mobility, in order to develop a research agenda on the subject, building upon and synthesizing different geographical and disciplinary perspectives. It concludes by reflecting on how research can contribute to effective policy making for balanced regional development.

Current Policy Perspectives for Migration Linked State Interventions
Migration in many of the less developed countries has been considered as a negative manifestation of development, reflecting regional inequality. This has been attributed to economic and social deprivation in the outmigrating regions and resulting in enormous pressure on basic amenities in inmigrating regions, particularly large cities. It is also seen as a process of brain drain from less developed regions. Rarely, internal migration is seen as a
manifestation of people trying to improve their socio-economic conditions by moving from less to more remuneration jobs by changing their locations.

Understandably, the major focus in migration related policies has been to create a livelihood support system in chronically out-migrating regions through employment generation and other welfare programmes. Upliftment of the socio-economic conditions of the people in these regions, provision of basic civic amenities and encouraging commutation through improvement of transport system are the key concerns, the objective being deceleration of migration into large cities. With globalisation leading to greater inequality in space, these policies and related programmes have assumed considerable importance in recent years.

Environmental lobby within the State has often taken the stand that the slum dwellers occupying lands that are hazardous for the city population like on river banks and rain water channels, in proximity of railway tracks or pollutant industries, and that reserved for proposed roads, housing schemes and other public purposes should not be allowed to remain there since that is detrimental to the convenience of other members of the society and larger public interest. Direct evictions of migrants by government authorities have thus become common under the relevant laws, such as, Municipal Corporation Acts of the cities, Town Planning and Urban Development Act of the State and Slum Areas (Clearance and Improvement). The recent judgements from the Courts have reasserted the rights of the legal citizens to access the public spaces that are often encroached upon by the migrants.

It is important to note that the avowed reactionary attitude of the state does not always result in direct actions against the migrants. Reduction of public sector intervention, ensuring appropriate prices for infrastructural services and urban amenities through elimination or reduction of subsidies, development of capital market for resource mobilisation, facilitating private and joint sector projects, simplification of legislative system to bring about ‘efficiency induced’ land use changes and location of economic activities etc. are being advocated as a package, heralding a new system of urban governance in the era of globalisation. Withdrawal of the state actors from some of the support systems, a large share of whose benefits were going to migrants, has resulted in deceleration in the rate of migration. Further, the functioning of the market for land and basic services, combined with an emerging sense of ‘otherness’ among the local population become the major barrier. State also has tried to improve transport, communication and commutation facilities thereby alleviating the need to shift residence from rural to neighbouring urban centres.
Under the global agenda of good urban governance, pursued vigorously particularly by UN Habitat, many of the national governments have tried to empower their lower levels of governance as also encourage participation of civil society organisations. The regional and local governments in turn have launched special measures to attract investments from national and global corporate sector by facilitating their land acquisition as also sanitising the cities by pushing out the slum and squatter settlements. Further, civil society organisations like resident welfare associations, local management groups etc. have often invited state and judicial intervention in eviction of encroachers and demolition of slums. All these have resulted in deceleration of migration flows, particularly in the fast globalising cities.

The attitude of the state to leave the migrants on their own has resulted in indifference with regard to collection of reliable information at national, regional and sub-regional levels. The scope and coverage of migration data are noted as extremely inadequate for addressing emergent policy issues and yet no systematic effort is made to remedy the problems. In some countries, reliable urbanization and migration data are available in case of a few mega cities that are getting linked to global capital market. The state policies have, thus, tended to ignore the smaller towns, although the migrants in the latter report higher levels of poverty and deprivation in terms of quality of life.

**Issues for migration linked Research and their Context**

*a. Analysing the Trends and Pattern of Internal Migration in Developing Countries in the Context of Regionally Differentiated Growth*

Migration in many traditional societies has been observed as low. Researchers have attributed this to prevalence of caste system, joint families, traditional values, diversity of language and culture, lack of education and predominance of agriculture and semi-feudal land relations. By this logic, improvement in the levels of education and that of transport and communication facilities, shift of workforce from agriculture to industry and tertiary activities etc. would increase mobility. Following this line of reasoning, international agencies like United Nations and World Bank have projected the percentage of urban to total population for different countries using a logistic curve. The curve being symmetrical around the value of 0.5 (i.e. 50 per cent level of urbanisation), one would stipulate that the growth rate of urban population would accelerate till the share of urban to rural population reaches fifty per cent level. The growth impetus would understandably come also from the rapid growth of globally linked industrial and tertiary activities.

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1 Davis (1951) and Racine (1997)
A part of migration in these less developed countries has been attributed to stagnation and volatility of agriculture and lack of sectoral diversification within agrarian economy. Low growth in agricultural production, unstable and disparate across regions, results in lack of livelihood opportunities in rural areas. Many of the developing countries, currently on the path of globalization and opening up their economies to international market have not been able to make substantial infrastructural investment as they are being ‘mandated’ to keep their budgetary deficits low. This in turn has affected agriculture adversely, resulting in out-migration from backward rural areas\(^2\) to rapidly growing urban centres that are attracting global investment.

Neo-classical models of growth and labour mobility stipulate that spatial disparity in development, *ceteris paribus*, would result in migration, bringing about optimality in the spatial distribution of labourforce. The mobility pattern observed in developing countries, in a way, fits well in these models. An analysis of *interregional* migration reveals that the less developed regions have a high percentage of net out-migrants. The developed regions, on the other hand, are in-migrating in character\(^3\). Given this macro scenario, the primary concern of migration related policies has been stabilizing the economy of the chronically out-migrating regions through creation of livelihood opportunities\(^4\). Poor must not be forced to shift as “forced migration and transferring encompass more poignant vulnerabilities”. Enabling rural people avail urban amenities and strengthening rural urban linkages and commutation through a network of urban centres, have been an important goal of policy intervention for addressing the problem of exodus from rural areas. *Globalisation resulting in greater inequality in space and concentration of poverty in a few pockets would underline the importance region specific studies for more effective intervention in stalling poverty induced migration.*

The migration pattern, however, seems to be undergoing a change in recent years, reflecting certain kind of immobility among the population\(^5\). A few scholars have explained the decline in internal migration in terms of developmental programmes, launched by central and regional governments in the post Independence period, promoting a spatially balanced development. Others have attributed it to growing assertion of regional and language identity, adoption of Master Plans and land use restrictions at the city level etc., that have been considered fallouts of the process of

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2 American India Foundation (2006)
3 Kundu (2006)
4 United Nations (1995) talks of attacking the “root cause of migration especially those related to poverty”.
5 United Nations(2005)
globalization. It is important to note that it is no longer the avowed reactionary policies of the state that are restricting migration. It is the functioning of the market for land and basic services, combined with an emerging sense of ‘otherness’ which is the major barrier. Furthermore, better transport, communication and commutation facilities are also alleviating the need to shift residence for employment or education, since people can now commute to neighbouring cities and towns. Importantly, there has been some sort of stepping up of outmigration from poor states and of immigration into developed states in a few developing countries, due to policies of globalization resulting in accentuation of regional imbalance. Still, scholars believe there is nothing alarming regarding this hike in internal mobility.

Given this conflicting perspectives, one would ask “Is indeed the scale of migration and urbanization very high and alarming in developing countries?” The rates of urbanization have started to decline in many parts of the world, much more than what can be attributed to decline in natural growth in population6. Despite deceleration in natural growth of population, its share in incremental urban population has not declined much due to a similar trend in RU migration7. Most of the mega cities have grown at a rate much below what was projected by UN organizations8. These trends in urbanization and migration indeed question the validity and the basic premise of the UN models postulating phenomenal urban growth. Also, these discount the proposition that the mobility of labour, operationalised through market, would ensure optimal distribution of economic activities in space. The declining trend of urbanisation in several countries, despite growing information flows, accentuation of regional inequality etc. would be an important subject of research.

b. Comparability of Data over time and Across Regions
A major problem in migration research is inadequacy of temporally and cross sectionally comparable data. The national data gathering agencies limit the scope and coverage of their data collection to a few parameters. Even the limited information collected by the agencies are often not strictly comparable. Migrants are classified, besides rural urban identification of their place of residence, based on their nature of movement - within the

6 Urban rural differential in population growth has gone down in most countries and regions of the world.
7 Several international organizations have built in an “unprecedented scale of urban growth” in their development perspective and support it by indicating that Africa and Asia would double their urban population in the next three decades. Indeed, the increase in absolute terms appears massive and alarming but one may note that urban population in the two continents had tripled during the past three decades and that urban growth has unmistakably decelerated, both due to slowing down of natural growth as also migration.
8 UNFPA (2007)
district, across the districts within the state and beyond the state. Interestingly, these three have been used as proxy for short, medium and long distance mobility. Temporal comparability of the data has, unfortunately, been rendered extremely difficult due to not-too-infrequent reorganization of state and district boundaries. Besides, one would note even more serious problems of comparability of migrants with different durations of stay at the place of enumeration. This is due to growing uneasiness on the part of recent migrants to admit their arrival date due to the apprehension that this may disqualify them from certain benefits in the context of tenurial rights and publicly provided amenities. Furthermore, the agencies often change the format for data collection, tabulation etc. and add new questions, phrases, clarifications etc. that affect temporal and cross-sectional comparability. All these come in the way of making generalizations with regards to trends and patterns of migration at national or regional levels.

In order to bring in migration issues within the framework of development planning and programme formulation, it is important that national level data gathering organizations consider expanding the scope and coverage so that the data can be used for addressing emergent policy issues. More importantly, it would be necessary to take steps to improve temporal comparability and reliability of these data. It is only through collection, dissemination and utilisation of comprehensive data and enhancement of their reliability/comparability that one can expect evidence based formulation of policy and interventions in the field of migration and development.

c. Impact of Migration on Receiving Regions and Large Cities
Withdrawal or displacement of labour from rural economy and their absorption in urban sectors have created serious stress in receiving regions, particularly the large cities. The capacity of the cities and towns to assimilate the migrants by providing employment, access to land, basic amenities etc. are limited. The problem have acquired severity as migrants have shown high selectivity in choosing their destinations (understandably linked with availability of employment and other opportunities), leading to regionally unbalanced urbanization as also distortions in urban hierarchy. It is argued that there has been concentration of poverty, growth of slums and social deprivation in cities, posing a challenge to the development dynamics in less developed countries.

The MDG target 11 which stipulates significant improvement in the conditions of 100 million slum dwellers assumes importance in the context noted above. The Report of UN Secretary General of 2000 entitled *We the Peoples* makes it explicit that there should be no attempt to prevent

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9 UNFPA (2007)
formation of new slums in order to make the cities more attractive for globalization through “sanitisation” or by pushing out the slum population. The Taskforce for Improving the Lives of Slum Dwellers therefore reformulates the target 11 to suggest improving “substantially the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers while providing adequate alternatives to new slum formation by 2020”. The Taskforce further specifies that the challenge of target 11 will be two-fold. It would be (a) to improve the lives of existing slum dwellers and simultaneously (b) to plan for adequate alternatives for future urban growth. The message comes loud and clear that the national and urban governments, civil society organizations must come forward with policies to mitigate the problems of these large cities, not only through micro level initiatives of improving slum conditions and access to basic amenities but also by adopting macro strategy of balanced regional development. This would imply that substantial research needs to be done into the changing economic base of the large cities and the process of absorption of the migrants into their economic sectors.

It has been pointed out that the technological shift from cheap labour based modes of mass production to knowledge based system is a factor bringing down the demand for migrant workers, particularly of unskilled labour force and decelerating urbanization, as discussed above. Migrants are often noted to be better off and relatively skilled than those left behind, implying that the displaced small peasants and agricultural labour are finding it increasingly difficult to put a foothold in the urban centres, in the present globalising environment. Migration to the large cities that have global linkages has become relatively more difficult for them as they do not have access to information, market friendly skills and “some sort of bank roll”. The implications of the deceleration in the rates of migration of the rural poor need to be analysed in the context of both sending and receiving regions.

It would be important to look at migration not always as a negative phenomenon - reflecting misery and lack of livelihood opportunities in the outmigrating regions and absence of basic amenities and health hazards in inmigrating cities. It should be seen also as an opportunity being taken up by people to improve their socio-economic conditions\(^\text{10}\). There are evidences that a segment of skilled and better off population has succeeded in availing these opportunities. A large number of science and technology personnel from backward regions are locating themselves in a handful of cities and developed regions, analogous to the trends and pattern in international migration.

While a section of the elite and highly skilled persons are increasingly enjoying the “benefits of migration, barriers to poorer migrants are increasing.” UNFPA (2006)
increasing.” It should be possible to “use urban dynamics to help reduce poverty” and make migration an instrument in the strategy of poverty alleviation, the first and the most important target under MDG. It is important to harness the potential of migration in the context of development and poverty alleviation and work out measures to promote ‘orderly migration’, instead of considering proposals to discourage mobility of population.

d. Regional Pattern and Growth Dynamics of the States
Migration and urban growth (or urban rural growth differential) across regions exhibit, in general, negative relationship with their levels of economic development articulated through income, consumption expenditure etc., suggesting presence of push factors behind RU migration. In a few countries, however, migration exhibits positive correlation with indicators of economic and infrastructural development and negative relation with poverty. Here, the urban centres in developed states have experienced rapid demographic growth. Understandably, these cities and towns are not getting their migrants driven out of agrarian economy by natural, social or economic calamities but those who have higher levels of skill or economic assets. The latter find it easier to establish linkages with the economy of the large cities through socio-cultural channels and avail the “opportunity” offered through migration, many of them traveling beyond their states. The negative perspective which characterizes and dictates large part of the contemporary literature on migration, therefore, needs to be urgently revisited through micro level surveys.

e. Migration to Different Size Class of Settlements with Focus on Small and Medium Towns
It would be erroneous to restrict the analysis of urbanization and migration to a few mega cities and ignore the smaller towns as the latter report even higher levels of poverty and deprivation in terms of quality of life. Furthermore, globalisation strategies have opened up possibilities of resource mobilisation for large cities by strengthening their internal resource base and empowering them to attract funds from global capital market and institutional sources. Unfortunately, these have not been available to smaller towns as their economic base is very low, offering little possibility to local government for internal resource mobilization. Given this somewhat disturbing scenario, it would be a challenge to divert “bulk of population growth towards smaller cities and towns” that are seriously “underserved in housing, transportation, piped water, waste disposal and other services”.

11 See Dubey, Gangopadhaya and Wadhwa (2001) and Kundu and Sarangi (2005)
12 UNFPA (2007)
These have “fewer human, financial and technical resources at their disposal” and their “capabilities for planning and implementation can be exceedingly weak”. Migration towards small and medium towns indeed is an area of policy intervention in case the government is serious about its commitment to promote balanced settlement structure and alleviate poverty, ensuring equity and sustainability in development process.

Empirical evidence suggests that large cities in developing countries grow at a distinctly higher rate than the lower order towns, as noted above. The edge that the class I cities have over smaller towns seems to have gone up in recent years. Urban growth has become more unbalanced as million plus cities, with strong economic base, raising resources through institutional borrowing and innovative credit instruments, have successfully attracted population as also economic activities. The modest decline in their population growth in recent years can be attributed largely to fertility decline. Slowing down in the rates of RU migration and urbanization and concentration of demographic and economic growth in and around a few global centres seems to be the logical outcome of the new economic policy. Many among the larger cities have been able to corner much of the resources, available for infrastructural and industrial development both from private and public sector, as noted above. The small and medium towns located away from these "global centres of growth", particularly those in backward regions, have failed in this which explains their low demographic growth. All these need to be studied with a temporal and cross sectional framework.

f. Poverty and Vulnerability as Correlates of Migration
The share of the poor is reported to be declining in urban growth in several developing countries. In many of the million plus cities, there has been significant decline in the level of poverty, much more than in small towns. This is because of the exclusionary urban growth based on slum eviction and restrictions on migration in these fast globalizing cities where land is required for accommodating local elites and global enterprises. This is in spite of a proactive vision of inclusive development and launching of pro-poor land and basic service related programmes. The possibilities of supporting economic opportunities to the poor migrants by providing them access to infrastructure and basic services, besides removing discriminatory regulations that deny migrants equal access to these, needs to be examined with empirical rigour.

One must look at urban employment scenario in order to understand the dynamics of urbanization and migration. Indeed, the large cities have successfully attracted infrastructural and industrial investment during the past decades of structural adjustment and thereby recorded reasonably high
growth in employment. Consequently, the poverty levels work out to be very low. The low migration absorptive capacity of small and medium towns can be attributed to high poverty and absence of livelihood related activities. The new employment opportunities coming up in the large cities require certain level of education and skills. The benefits of new employment opportunities, thus, seem to have gone to the weaker segment within the workforce like the illiterates and women. The questions that researchers must address urgently are: Does the percentage of migrants declining over time and their economic and social status being better than that of non-migrants and even improving over time, reflect barriers to mobility for the poor? With service provision being based on market affordability and changes in skill requirements in urban labour market, has the emerging institutional structure become hostile to poor newcomers? Is the migration process very selective wherein unskilled labourers are finding it difficult to access the livelihood opportunities coming up in developed regions and large cities?

**g. Livelihood for Women and Children**
The age and gender composition of migrants in urban areas has altered significantly in recent years, with an increase in the share of women and youth. An assessment of the trends in labour market for women during the last decade and a half gives complex and mixed signals. Growth of women workers has often been noted as high – higher than that of men. One has reasons to be optimistic in terms of its impact on poverty reduction, as it is observed that a larger proportion of women’s earning goes into household for essential consumption. Also, employment growth for women among illiterates and semi educated, daily status workers etc. has been relatively faster. This too may be a positive sign since employment among them would provide livelihood support to the poorest rung of households. The developments in agrarian economy and economic displacement have prompted family migration while the urban informal sector has opened up possibilities for women and children. The unfortunate development, however, is that there has been no simultaneous improvement in their real wages. Vulnerability of these groups to socio-economic exploitation is a matter of policy concern for the governments of the developing countries and must be analysed and assessed with clarity.

**h. Changing Programmes and Institutional Structure for Urban Governance**
The policy perspective and strategy of urban development have undergone major changes in recent years in most developing countries, resulting in alteration in the nature and content of the programmes/schemes as also transformation of the supporting organisational structure and financing system. Reduction of public sector intervention, ensuring appropriate prices
for infrastructural services and urban amenities through elimination or reduction of subsidies, development of capital market for resource mobilisation, facilitating private and joint sector projects, simplification of legislative system to bring about ‘efficiency induced’ land use changes and location of economic activities etc. are being advocated as a package, heralding a new system of urban governance\textsuperscript{13}. Some kind of "financial discipline" has been imposed by the Central Banking institutions on the government departments and urban local bodies to ensure that their programmes and projects rely increasingly on internal resource mobilization, loans from development cum banking institutions and capital market at non-subsidised interest rates. The para statal agencies that had taken over many of the functions of local bodies, have particularly come in for sharp criticism on grounds of inefficiency, lack of cost effectiveness and continued dependence on grants for sustenance. Projects for the provision of sanitation facilities, improving slum colonies etc., that have a substantial component of subsidy, too have received low priority in this changed policy perspective.

Decentralised governance has been hailed as a panacea for the problems of urban management in recent years. Constitutional assignment of the responsibility of planning to city level agencies, however, often prompted the latter to adopt migration restrictive policies. Also, they have sought greater engagement of financial intermediaries, credit rating agencies etc. in resource mobilization as also designing of projects\textsuperscript{14}. A large number of such agencies have come up in recent years in the private sector with assistance from international organisations. Projects are being prepared or identified in formal or informal consultation with interested companies or the “stakeholders” through the intermediation of the financial institutions. Given the resource crunch in the government agencies, privatisation, partnership arrangements and promotion of community-based projects have become the only options for undertaking such investments. All these have been responsible for launching of commercially viable projects that have resulted in the poor being evicted or relocated in the peripheries of the cities. Even the public sector projects have increasingly been made to depend on institutional or capital market borrowings resulting in “sanitization of the cities” through clearing up the slum areas and discouraging the inflow of new migrants needs to be assessed.

Decentralisation in many countries has meant empowerment of civil society organizations and local level committees. The institutional vacuum created by the withdrawal of the state and hesitation in the entry of private sector agencies has been sought to be filled up by these organizations. This unfortunately has led to elite capture since better-off localities have been able

\textsuperscript{13} Dutta (1999)
\textsuperscript{14} Rao (1999)
attract private entrepreneurs and subsidised government programmes for improving the quality of services, based on their political connections and the capacity to pay higher user charges. These local institutions that have come up mainly in the planned colonies have been effective in policing their localities against any encroachment and prevention of squatting by the migrants. Many of these associations have filed petitions against encroachment by vendors, squatters etc. Courts have taken a sympathetic view of the Public Interest Litigations filed by them. All these have led to deceleration in the inflow of migrants to the large cities where they have assumed importance.

i. Administrative and Legal System concerning Migrants
An overview of the Constitutional and legal provisions along with the Court judgments and administrative orders in several developing countries suggests that the State has often taken the stand that the hutment dwellers occupying lands that are hazardous for the city population like on river banks and rain water channels, in proximity of railway tracks or pollutant industries, and that reserved for proposed roads, housing schemes and other public purposes cannot be allowed to remain there since that is detrimental to the convenience of other members of the society and larger public interest. The evictions of migrants by government authorities have thus become common under the relevant laws, such as, Municipal Corporation Acts of the cities, Town Planning and Urban Development Act of the State and Slum Areas (Clearance and Improvement). It may be noted that the City level Master Plans have been given the status of law that also have discouraged encroachment on public or private land by the poor. The perspective of streamlining the functioning of urban land market through effective legislation and their implementation, as put forward by Hernando de Soto has failed to guarantee the right to shelter. On the contrary, this has facilitated evictions on a large scale and acted as a deterrent to future migration of the poor and displaced rural population into the city. It is important that the implications of the recent changes in legal and administrative framework are analysed within a human right framework.

Conclusions
It is important that the basis of the prejudices and the vested interests supporting the present development policies of the state, having bearing on migration, are examined empirically with some rigour. Comprehensive data analysis on livelihood pattern of the migrants would help in determining the large contribution they make in economic development of the regions, receiving them. The remittances and the social capital that they bring back to

15 Payne (2002)
their regions of origin help the policy makers in recognising their role as ‘catalysts of development’ and leaving space for them in future development strategy. All these should help in altering the negative attitude still predominant against the migrants in the policy making circles in developing countries. Analysis of the different streams of migrants in different regions and identification of the socioeconomic factors behind them would help the states design informed and differentiated interventions. This could mean restricting the outflow of people from some regions or groups but the opposite in other cases. The state could then facilitate migration into smaller settlements that are experiencing economic and demographic decline, decelerate the flow in and around a few mega cities and thereby address the problems of distortions in settlement hierarchy. Similar analysis should help in designing a better support system for the migrant population in the regions or cities receiving them.
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