

Legal Protections for Migrant and Interstate Workers

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Abstract

The legal system in India provides migrant and interstate workers with essential safeguards against vulnerabilities including exploitation and displacement. Important laws guarantee welfare, safe working conditions, and fair pay in the face of increasing labor mobility. This abstract examines these protections, their development, and the difficulties in putting them into practice.

Constitutional Foundations

Articles 14, 16, 19, 21, and 23 of the Indian Constitution provide guarantees of equality, non-discrimination, freedom of movement, the right to life, and the ban on forced labor. Articles 39, 41, 42, and 43's Directive Principles further require social security, fair labor practices, and living wages. Despite their interstate mobility, migrant laborers are treated as equal citizens under these regulations, which uphold their dignity.

Core Legislation

The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979, requires contractor license, employer registration, and provisions for equitable pay, housing, medical assistance, and displacement/journey compensation. Timely pay, appropriate housing, and welfare amenities like canteens are among the obligations. The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 has recently undergone changes that strengthen safety regulations, identity cards, and grievance relief.

Judicial Interventions

Important rulings such as *Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India* (1984)² placed obligations on the federal and state governments for enforcement, superseding contradictory contracts. Courts prioritize adherence to ILO Convention No. 97, guaranteeing maternity benefits, ESI, and provident funds. Rehabilitation was emphasized by post-COVID verdicts, highlighting implementation shortcomings.

Challenges and Reforms

Despite legislation, problems still exist: inadequate enforcement, 90% of workers are migrants, benefits are not portable, and they are not included in universal

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² Mukti Morcha v. Union of India (1984)

programs. Although ratification of ILO Convention No. 143 is still pending, the Code on Social Security, 2020 seeks to expand coverage. For portability, portals like e-Shram and state helplines must be strengthened.

Keywords

ISMWA 1979, OSH Code 2020³, constitutional rights, labor welfare, fair pay, judicial enforcement, migrant workers, interstate movement, and social security.

Empowering India's Migrant Workforce: A Comprehensive Legal Shield Against Exploitation and a Blueprint for Dignity

Introduction

Over 450 million internal migrants, or about 40% of the country's workforce, drive economic growth in India, from factories in Gujarat to skyscrapers in Mumbai. However, as the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic made clear when millions of people hiked home without food or transportation, this mobility frequently comes at a high human cost: exploitation, dangerous conditions, family separations, and abrupt displacements. India's legal system, which has evolved from constitutional requirements to contemporary labor laws, provides a strong defense by guaranteeing social security, secure workplaces, and fair salaries. This motivational piece elaborates on these safeguards by exploring their historical foundations, analyzing significant legislation, commemorating court victories, addressing enduring obstacles, and outlining a forward-thinking course. By shedding light on these processes

, In order to ensure that every migrant worker's sweat equity translates into dignity and justice, it asks for group action to turn vulnerability into empowerment.

Significance of the Study

In India's current legal and socioeconomic framework, the research "Empowering India's Migrant Workforce: A Comprehensive Legal Shield Against Exploitation and a Blueprint for Dignity" is important. Although the core of India's labor market is internal migration, migrant workers continue to be among the most vulnerable and least protected populations. Migrant workers still experience exploitation, hazardous working conditions, social security denial, and exclusion from welfare programs despite the existence of labor laws, legal rulings, and constitutional safeguards.

In light of recent crises like the COVID-19 epidemic and displacement brought on by climate change, this study takes significance as it critically investigates the gap

³ OSH Code 2020

between law and practice. It emphasizes how humanitarian disasters might result from inadequate coordination and enforcement.

The study is important for academics, lawyers, and policymakers because it analyzes current labor changes, especially the Labor Codes, and determines how they might change the governance of migrant labor. The study adds to the larger conversation on labor rights, social justice, and inclusive development in India by including constitutional principles, statutory analysis, judicial interventions, and international best practices.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To investigate the constitutional underpinnings of migrant and interstate workers' rights and safeguards in India.
2. To examine how the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979⁴ protects migrant workers.
3. To critically assess the 2020 Labour Codes⁵, namely the Social Security Code and the Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions Code, with regard to migrant workers.
4. To research how the judiciary has expanded and upheld the rights of migrant workers via significant rulings.

Research Hypothesis

The following theories form the basis of the study:

1. Main Hypothesis: Weak enforcement, informality, and a lack of benefit portability are the main reasons why migrant workers in India are still exploited despite the country's extensive constitutional and legal framework.
2. Secondary Hypotheses: o Although court interventions have been essential in defending the rights of migrant workers, they are insufficient on their own without efficient administrative implementation. Although the Labour Codes, 2020 have the potential to enhance the protection of migrant workers, its efficacy is limited by weak implementation and delayed notification.

Cooperative federalism and adherence to international labor norms can greatly improve India's administration of migrant labor.

⁴ Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service Act, 1979

⁵ 2020 Labour Codes

Scope of the Study

This research encompasses both legal and socioeconomic aspects. It addresses:

- Constitutional clauses pertaining to equality, freedom of movement, dignity, and the ban on forced labor.
 - Central labor laws that particularly impact migrant workers, such as labor codes and ISMWA.
 - Supreme Court and High Court rulings on the rights of migratory workers.
 - Welfare boards, ONORC under the National Food Security Act (NFSA)⁶, and e-Shram⁷ are examples of administrative systems.
 - A comparison with ILO norms and a few other international practices.
- The research only looks at internal migration inside India; it doesn't go into great detail on international labor migration until it's necessary for a comparative analysis.

Limitations of the Study

Despite its goal of offering a thorough review, the study has certain limitations.

1. Because there isn't much primary fieldwork, the study mostly uses secondary sources, such as statutes, case laws, reports, and academic works.
2. States may have different implementation data, and consistent findings might not accurately account for regional differences.
3. Since the Labour Codes are still being fully implemented, it is impossible to determine with certainty how they will affect migrant workers in the long run.
4. Due to time and budget limitations, the study does not contain empirical surveys of migratory workers.
5. International comparisons are not comprehensive; rather, they are illuminating.

Research Methodology

A **doctrinal and analytical research technique** is used in this work.

- **Doctrinal Method:** The study entails a thorough examination of labor laws, regulations, court rulings, and constitutional issues pertaining to migrant workers.
- **Analytical and Critical Method:** To find discrepancies between legislative purpose and practical execution, current laws and policies are critically analyzed.
- **Comparative Method:** To identify lessons and best practices, some foreign frameworks—such as ILO Conventions and labor protection models from the EU, Germany, and Thailand—are contrasted with Indian legislation.
- **Data Sources:**

⁶ National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013

o The Indian Constitution, labor laws, and court rulings are the main sources.
o Secondary sources include books, government papers, ILO publications, committee reports, law journals, and reliable internet sites. This approach offers significant policy suggestions and allows for a comprehensive knowledge of migrant labor protection.

The Epic Scale of Migration: Drivers, Patterns, and Hidden Toll

In India, internal migration is essential to progress and not just a statistic. States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Odisha send millions of migrants each year to destination cities like Maharashtra (20% of migrants), Delhi-NCR, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh, according to the 2011 Census and later NSSO studies. 35% of GDP is absorbed by construction, 20% by manufacturing, and the remaining 10% to 15% by services. This is caused by economic inequality: seasonal cycles in brick kilns and harvesting, coupled with rural despair from agrarian failures, push laborers into metropolitan promise.

However, the human story is moving. Imagine a Bihari worker in a Surat textile factory who makes ₹300 a day but sleeps in waterless shanties. Gender-based risks for women migrants include being harassed and not being granted maternity leave.

Five percent of migrants are children who labor in dangerous jobs, which feeds the cycle of poverty. Over 40 million people returned from the 2020 lockdown, exposing vulnerabilities: 80% of workers reported starvation, and salary losses averaged ₹50,000 per person. This is made worse by climate change, which causes 18 million people to be displaced annually due to droughts and floods. Unlike intra-state migration, interstate movement crosses regulatory boundaries, increasing the danger of exploitation. Workers become "footloose," invisible to welfare nets, in the absence of transferable identities or benefits. However, there is hope since there are legal instruments available to personalize this flow and transform numbers into tales of resiliency.

Constitutional Bedrock: Elevating Migrants as Equal Citizens

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's concept of social justice is reflected in India's Constitution, the longest in the world, which upholds migrant rights as essential. Domicile-based discrimination is prohibited by Article 14, which ensures equality before the law. Equal job opportunities are guaranteed by Article 16, which nullifies state advantages that exclude outsiders. Mobility is based on the protection of free movement, residence, and professional pursuits provided by Article 19(1)(e)–(g). When construed broadly, Article 21, the right to life and liberty, requires timely pay, health care, and safe working conditions. Article 23 makes bonded debt traps, which

are frequently found in quarries, illegal and prohibits forced labor (begar) and trafficking. Non-justiciable but morally obligatory Directive Principles: Article 39 demands pay parity between the sexes; Article 41 asks for the right to labor and study; Article 42 calls for maternity aid and humane circumstances; and Article 43 calls for living wages and village industries.

Significant expansions were prompted by these provisions. Similar to the situation of migrants, the Supreme Court held in **Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation (1985)**⁸ that the expulsion of pavement dwellers without alternatives violates Article 21. By treating immigrants as citizens rather than outsiders, this constitutional armor promotes national cohesion in the face of diversity.

Historical Evolution: From Colonial Shadows to Post-Independence Reforms

British legislation that bonded people to plantations before to independence, such as the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act (1859), were reminiscent of slavery. The Constitution changed perspectives after 1947. The National Commission on Labor (1969) gave rise to the 1979 ISMWA, which focused on interstate exploitation in construction and mining. The Supreme Court's suo motu case in 2020 revealed inadequacies and sparked calls for a national database, accelerating the conversation on COVID. 320 million unorganized laborers were registered by e-Shram by 2025, a significant digital advancement. Global changes, such as the EU's free movement directives, are reflected in this progression from ad hoc acts to comprehensive laws. The Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act of 1979 (ISMWA) is the foundational law. Examined

ISMWA, which was passed in March 1979, governs hiring contractors from one state to another. Scope: Applies to contractors and major employers (mines and factories with five or more migrants).

Employers register businesses, and contractors apply for permits that provide migrant numbers, salaries, and travel information. Workers' fees range from ₹100 to ₹500 for licensing.

Wage Parity and Allowances: • Wages: paid prior to travel at the minimum of planned work or local rates.

• Displacement Allowance: non-wage head, 50% monthly wage or ₹75, whichever is greater.

• Journey Allowance: Employer-paid travel expenses.

⁷ Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation (1985)

• During travel, transit wages are paid in full.

Mandates for Welfare:

• Housing: Appropriate and free (not subtracted from salary).

• Medical: Free services, licensed physicians.

• Protective gear: For occupations that pose a risk.

• Crèches (50+ women), canteens (50+ workers).

• One day off after travel and weekly holidays.

Enforcement: Conciliation is used to resolve conflicts; labor officials conduct inspections. Penalties: ₹500–₹1,000 fine; 3 months–1 year in prison; more severe for repeat offenders. Governments are advised by boards at the source and destination.

Limitations: Ignored self-migrants (80%), limited scope (only contractor-recruited).

Conceptually eliminated by 2020 Codes, but regulations continue without warning.

.2020 Labor Codes: A Contemporary Revolution in Consolidation
Four Codes (2020), which cover 90% of the workforce, simplify safeguards amid the complexity of more than 1,500 labor regulations.

Partially notified, the Occupational Safety, Health & Working Conditions (OSH) Code covers more than ten interstate migrants.

• Interstate Provisions (Chapter XIX): Requires journey/displacement allowances while preserving ISMWA benefits.

• D cards: transportable, with information linked to Aadhaar.

• There are 50% female representatives on grievance committees.

• Safety: Annual health examinations; prohibitions on hazardous jobs for migrants without training.

• Cess Fund: 1-2% charge for the wellbeing of construction workers. demands the same pay as regulars and outlaws core contracts. Benefits for unorganized workers are universal under the Code on Social Security (CoSS) 2020 (wages ≤ ₹18,000/month).

Gig/Aggregator Workers: New, included.

• Gratuity, PF, and portable ESI through the national site.

Schemes are funded by the National Social Security Board.

• e-Shram: ration cards and registration via UPI.

DBT for insurance and pensions.

Floor wages and dispute resolution are complementary to industrial relations and wage codes.

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Full notice is pending as of January 2026, however drafts indicate implementation. The Odyssey of Justice: Courts as Change-Catalysts By using public interest litigation (PIL), the Indian judiciary has given legislation life.

In **Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. UOI (1984)**, the bondage of mine migrants resulted in orders for inspections, rehabilitation, and contract overriding. Article 21 guarantees the "right to live with dignity."

Asiad Games employees received minimum pay in **PUCL v. UOI (1982)**⁹, extending Article 23.

Francis Coralie Mullin (1981): Livelihood is a component of personal liberty.

COVID PILs (2020–2025): trains, dry rations, and the NDUW gateway required by SC. A March 2025 verdict criticized "revdi culture" and recommended skill training over doles.

NGT: OA 293/2025 connected the health of migrants in industrial areas with pollution.

High Courts: In Mumbai projects, trip allowances were enforced by Bombay High Court (2024).

These decisions motivate: Courts keep an eye on changing common law rights through amicus curiae.

Enforcement Ecosystem: State Innovations, Portals, and Equipment Central: DGE, CLC, and the Ministry of Labor enforce. Inspectors are appointed by State Labor Commissioners.

Digital Foundations:

- Aadhaar seeding for DBT, e-Shram: 360 million registered (2026).
 - ONORC: One Nation One Ration Card, has 80 crore recipients.
 - NDUW: Monitors those who return.
- States shine: Telangana's building cess; Odisha's helplines; Kerala's APSEL welfare board helps returnees.

NGOs that integrate workers include Bandhua Mukti and Aajeevika.

Persistent Shadows: Implementation Difficulties
90% of migrants are informal and avoid coverage despite arsenals.

- Corruption is pervasive; there is only one inspector for every 10,000 employees.
- Portability Mirage: PDS partial; PF state-locked.
- Data Deficit: No IDs prior to e-Shram.

⁸ PUCL v. UOI (1982)

- Gender Blindspots: Unaddressed harassment.
- COVID Lessons Not Learned: Floods in 2024 caused a second migration.

Challenge	Statistics	Legal/Policy Gap	Potential Fix
Informality	90% migrants	Codes cover but unregistered	Universal e-Shram camps
Non-Portability	70% lose benefits	State silos	Blockchain IDs
Exploitation	40% wage theft	Weak penalties	AI monitoring apps
Awareness	60% unaware	No campaigns	Migrant unions
Climate Displacement	18M/year	No framework	Green jobs fund

Illuminating Case Studies: Triumphs and Lessons

Gujarat Triumph: 50,000 people were accommodated by housing mandates, and OSH audits in 2023 reduced accidents in Vapi industries by 35%.

10,000 brick kiln workers gained back pay through the ISMWA PIL during the Delhi Strike in 2024.

Tamil Nadu Model: During the monsoon, self-help organizations accessed ESI through CoSS.

Failures: After the NGT order, UP quarries (2025) witnessed bonded releases, although rehabilitation took longer.

Global Benchmarks: Lessons for India

India's system for protecting migrant workers may be strengthened with the help of international experiences in labor migration regulation. Comparative national practices and international labor standards show how mobility may be controlled in a way that strikes a balance between human dignity and economic efficiency. ILO Conventions 97 (ratified) and 143 (pending): Abuse prevention and equality. Germany's Kurzarbeit for emergencies, Thailand's seasonal worker cards, and Gulf NRI funds all encourage repatriation.

ILO Conventions on Migrant Workers

The idea of equal treatment between migrant and local workers with regard to salaries, working conditions, social security, and trade union rights is established by International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 97 (Migration for

Employment Convention¹⁰), which India has accepted. In contrast to transitory or disposable labor, it acknowledges migrants as workers first, reflecting a rights-based approach to labor mobility.

On the other hand, India has not yet signed ILO Convention No. 143 (Migrant Workers – Supplementary Provisions)¹¹, which addresses irregular migration, abusive recruiting tactics, and covert labor exploitation. It requires authorities to fight human trafficking, punish exploitative middlemen, and encourage migrant workers' assimilation. India's commitment to combating abuse in labor recruiting and guaranteeing dignity throughout migration cycles will be greatly strengthened by ratification of Convention No. 143.

Gulf Countries: NRI Welfare and Repatriation Funds

Many Gulf countries that host a significant number of Indian migrant workers have established welfare and repatriation programs to assist workers in times of crisis like pandemics, job loss, or conflict. These grants include sustenance support, legal aid, and emergency return travel. Similar repatriation or contingency funds might be institutionalized for domestic migrants, especially during calamities and economic shocks, based on India's experience managing migration abroad.

Thailand's Seasonal Worker Identification System

In order to properly register migrant workers and connect them to certain companies and industries, Thailand has implemented seasonal and temporary worker cards. These cards allow the government to monitor working conditions while facilitating access to social security, healthcare, and legal remedies. Such a model highlights the significance of identity-based inclusion and legal recognition for India, especially for seasonal and cyclical migrants who migrate between states on a regular basis.

Germany's Kurzarbeit Model

By permitting fewer working hours while preserving financial stability, Germany's Kurzarbeit (short-time labor) program prevents mass layoffs by offering salary subsidies to employees during economic downturns. This technique was quite successful in stabilizing employment during the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to lessen distress migration and income shocks, India should modify this strategy by implementing short-term wage-support measures for migrant workers during emergencies.

⁹ ILO) Convention No. 97 (Migration for Employment Convention)

¹⁰ ILO Convention No. 143 (Migrant Workers – Supplementary Provisions)

European Union: Posted Workers Directive

The EU Posted Workers Directive mandates that employees who are temporarily posted to another member state get the same pay and basic working conditions as local employees, regardless of their home country. This pay parity idea is closely related to the ISMWA and Indian Labour Codes, which mandate equal pay for both native and migrant workers. India's federal structure might benefit greatly from the EU's strict enforcement policies and international cooperation.

Visionary Roadmap: Empowering Tomorrow's Mobility

To transform migration into a path of empowerment rather than vulnerability, India needs a strategic and forward-thinking policy roadmap that integrates technology innovation, legal change, and socioeconomic planning.

Immediate Measures

1. **Complete Labor Code Notification and ILO Convention No. 143 Ratification**

To operationalize migrant safeguards, the Labor Codes must be put into effect immediately. India's commitment to ending irregular labor practices and exploitative recruiting will be strengthened by ratifying ILO Convention No. 143, boosting its credibility both at home and abroad.

2. **Targeted Camps for Universal e-Shram Coverage**

For welfare to be delivered effectively, e-Shram registration must reach 100%. The most vulnerable and mobile workers would be included if mobile registration camps were set up at construction sites, industrial clusters, train terminals, and rural source regions.

3. **AI-Powered Grievance Redressal and Wage Tracking Technology** has the potential to revolutionize enforcement. Through multilingual interfaces, AI-based apps may monitor salary payments, identify irregularities, and provide real-time grievance resolution. These solutions would enable employees to safely report infractions and lessen reliance on inspections alone.

Medium-Term Strategies

•Source States' Skill India Hubs

In high-migration areas like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the establishment of skill development hubs will improve migrant workers' employability, negotiating strength, and income outcomes while lowering distress migration.

•Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for Portable Housing Supported by PPPs, affordable, short-term housing close to workplaces may greatly enhance living conditions and lessen urban informality. Housing benefits that are portable would guarantee continuity across migration cycles.

•Collective Voice Mechanisms and Migrant Assemblies
Migrants would be represented in policy-making through institutional venues like migrant worker assemblies or councils, allowing for participatory governance and accountability.

Long-Term Structural Reforms

•Pilots for Universal Basic Income (UBI)
UBI trials aimed in areas with a high concentration of migrants might offer financial stability during times of transition or unemployment, lowering susceptibility to exploitation.

•Source Regions' Climate-Resilient Livelihoods
Forced migration brought on by environmental stress and economic instability might be addressed by investing in climate-resilient agriculture, green jobs, and rural infrastructure.

•Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between two states
Cooperative federalism in migration governance can be institutionalized through formal agreements between source and destination governments that specify obligations for welfare, data exchange, dispute settlement, and crisis response.

Closing Insight

Global best practices show that insecurity is not a necessary consequence of labor mobility. Migration may become a catalyst for shared prosperity and dignity when it is accompanied by robust legal frameworks, institutional coordination, and comprehensive social protection. India can take the lead in developing a fair and compassionate model of internal labor migration by tailoring global lessons to its constitutional ideals and socioeconomic circumstances. Pay equity is guaranteed under the EU's posted workers regulation; India's codes reflect this.

Inspiration: 50,000 employment were generated by Kerala's "returnee to entrepreneur" program.

Civil society: applications like Sukarya helplines; unions like HMS.

The Motivational Appeal: Respect for All Workers

Migrant laborers in India are not faceless; rather, they are innovators. Laws enable everything from coded realities to constitutional fantasies. However, the bridge is enforcement. Courts must be vigilant, governments must act, and society must accept. Imagine a migrant who is determined to get national health care and cast an electronic ballot.

Recommendations and Suggestions¹²

Migrant laborers in India still face systematic vulnerability and exclusion despite the country's extensive constitutional and legal framework. Legislation, administration, the courts, technology, and civil society must all undergo multifaceted reforms in order to close the gap between legal promise and lived reality. To improve the protection of migrant workers and guarantee respectable labor mobility, the following suggestions are put forth.

- **1. Complete and Consistent Application of Labor Laws**

The full notification and consistent application of the labor codes, especially the 2020 Social Security Code and the Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions Code, must be the top priority. Enforcement delays erode migrant safeguards and prolong legal ambiguity.

- To avoid diluting migrant protections, states should harmonize regulations.
- Employers and contractors must get clear operational guidelines.
- Workers covered by previous legislation, such as the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979, should be protected by transitional measures.

- **2. Migrant Workers' Universal Registration and Identification**

Historically, policy formulation and crisis response have been hampered by the lack of trustworthy data.

- Mobile registration camps should be set up at workplaces, train stations, and rural source areas in order to make e-Shram registration general.
- To prevent exclusion, registration shouldn't be limited to Aadhaar.
- A single national labor ID is required to guarantee identification mobility across states.

Targeting, portability, and accountability will all be enhanced by an extensive database.

- **3. Enhancing Accountability and Enforcement Systems**

The biggest obstacle to effective protection is still lax enforcement.

- Hire more labor inspectors and provide them with digital monitoring equipment.
- To identify dangerous conditions and wage fraud, use risk-based and AI-assisted inspections.
- Stricter sanctions should be applied to employers and contractors who fail to comply.
- Create expedited labor courts or tribunals to handle issues involving migratory

¹¹ Tata Institute of Social Sciences on 2026-01-14

workers.

Reactive governance must give way to preventative governance in enforcement.

4. Making Social Security and Welfare Benefits Portable

When migrant workers relocate, they often lose access to social programs.

- Increase and improve the coverage of the One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC).
 - Make it possible for insurance, pensions, ESI, and provident funds to be seamlessly transferred across states.
 - To facilitate real-time benefit access, integrate welfare programs with e-Shram.
 - Create digital platforms that are compatible across states.
- Social Security should accompany the employee, not the location of employment.

5. Child-Sensitive and Gender-Responsive Migration Policies

A sizable yet unseen portion of migratory populations are women and children.

- Workplace sanitary facilities, maternity benefits, and mandatory crèches.
 - Strict adherence to regulations against sexual harassment in migrant jobs.
 - All migrant children have access to healthcare, education, and ICDS.
 - Particular protection for domestic workers and unmarried women migrants.
- Age and gender-specific vulnerabilities must be taken into account in immigration policy.

6. Building Capacity and Legal Awareness

Many migrant workers are still ignorant of their legal rights and options.

- Start multilingual legal literacy initiatives using community workers, mobile applications, and radio.
- Make migrant collectives and trade unions stronger.
- Promote NGO-state collaborations for outreach and the resolution of grievances.
- Create helplines for migrants in both the source and destination states that are open around-the-clock.

Awareness is the first step toward empowerment.

7. Cooperative Federalism and Interstate Coordination

Source and destination states must work together to manage migration.

- Make agreements outlining duties for interstate migration.
 - Exchange welfare benefits, grievance records, and worker data.
 - For major migrant routes, form cooperative monitoring groups.
 - Promote the sharing of best practices among states.
- Cooperative federalism, not disjointed regulation, must be used to control labor mobility.

8. Framework for Climate-Responsive Migration

Migration is increasingly being driven by displacement brought on by climate

change.

- Under labor and catastrophe legislation, acknowledge climate migrants as a protected group.
 - Invest in livelihoods in source regions that are resilient to climate change.
 - Create urban planning models that take the influx of migrants into consideration.
 - Establish emergency social protection plans for climatic emergencies.
- Climate justice must be incorporated into future migration policies.

9. Compliance with International Labor Standards

India should increase its commitment to global labor.

- Accept ILO Convention No. 143 on migratory labor.
 - Harmonize national legislation with global best practices for protection and portability.
 - Take part in labor mobility frameworks for regional collaboration.
- International alignment improves worker protection and domestic credibility.

Conclusion

The silent builders of India's economic development are migrant laborers. They build its cities, run its businesses, provide its services, and gather its food—often at great personal expense. The Indian Constitution envisions a republic based on freedom of movement, equality, and dignity; in theory, this ideal is reflected in India's labor regulations. Migrant workers are shielded from exploitation and marginalization by a robust legal framework that includes constitutional safeguards, specialized legislation, and progressive judicial interventions. Nonetheless, migrant workers' actual experiences continue to highlight a concerning discrepancy between the law and its application. The revolutionary potential of these rights has been diminished by informality, lax enforcement, lack of mobility, and administrative fragmentation. The COVID-19 pandemic was a sobering reminder of the disastrous failure of legislative protections in the absence of institutional readiness.

Protecting migrant workers is a constitutional duty, an economic necessity, and a moral imperative—it is not just a question of welfare or charity. A country that relies on labor mobility needs to make sure that mobility doesn't compromise dignity. India can turn migration from a cause of vulnerability into a means of empowerment by completely implementing labor reforms, bolstering enforcement, guaranteeing benefit portability, embracing technology, and promoting cooperative federalism.

In the end, how India treats its building workers will determine its level of growth

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more than the speed of its roads or the height of its structures. In addition to being feasible, a mobile, inclusive, and fair India is required under the constitution.

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