

## **SOCIAL SECURITY CONCERNS OF THE MIGRANT LABOURERS AT FISHERIES SECTOR**

**Vidya Vinutha D'Souza<sup>1</sup>**

**Dr Mohan A K<sup>2</sup>**

---

### **Abstract**

Human history has witnessed the phenomenon of migration in all the spheres of life for the purpose of better livelihoods. Migration occurs when one region doesn't support the requisites of the population and in turn makes their inhabitants move to another region to access the opportunities. It is both a new and old human practice which has taken place at every decade and every rule since human civilisation. Rural to rural, rural-to-urban, urban-to-rural and urban-to-urban migrations have taken place whenever the basic requirements of the individuals have not met by their respective areas. In the present time, migration has achieved the status equal to any other human problems (Weiner, 1989). Various cultural, economic and social factors influence this process of mitigation which differs for men, women and from one region to another (Srivastava, 2003). Migration carries itself with the bundle of related problems which can have an impact on the physical wellbeing of the individuals (Adsul, 2011).

The empirical paper on the Social Security Concerns of the Migrant Labourers at Fisheries Sector portrays the social security concerns of the migrated labourers available at Mangalore Fishing Harbour situated at Bunder. It highlights employment prospect along with high wages as a key factor for their migration. The plight of the labourers due to the absence of social security measures is narrated and the suggestions for their improvement are also attempted.

**Key Words: Migration. Social security, fisheries sector, labour issues, plight of labourers**

---

**<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, DOS in Social Work, University of Mysore, Manasagangothri, Mysuru**

**<sup>2</sup>Dr. Mohan A K, Associate Professor, Department of Social Work, Central University of Kerala, Kasaragod, India**

**Introduction:** Migration is considered as a barometer of changing socio economic conditions at the national and international levels. It is the movement of people from rural to rural, rural to urban, urban to urban or urban to rural in pursuit of employment, better working conditions, personal reasons for a permanent settlement or for a temporary one. Lack of employment, low earnings, irregular payments, no fixed job, conflicts between castes, exploitation of labour and urge to improve standard of living are the common reasons for migration in India. Regional disparity is also a common reason for migration commonly found in our country. Migratory behaviour is of two type's i.e. outward and inward migration. Outward migration is a process which involves movement of individuals outside their revenue villages in search of employment opportunities, and inward migration is movement of the labourers into the native villages from any other place. (Lekshmi *et.al*, 2011) Indian Marine Fisheries Sector has been witnessing this phenomenon of migration since a very long time from the migrants of less prosperous and less employable places. Availability of employment for a longer duration and distance from original place of habitat is also a reason behind the same. Various kinds of job opportunities in primary, secondary and tertiary sector of fisheries gives ample opportunities for the migrants to be employed. Primary sector consists of fishermen who are involved in active fishing, the secondary sector consists of fishermen exclusively involved in pre or post-harvest sector and tertiary sector consists of those engaged in activities other than fishing/post-harvest sector (Lekshmi, 2014).

### **Migration and Fisheries**

The major change in the traditional fisheries sector has influenced the labour mobility or migration pattern to a greater extent. Change from traditional to mechanised method of fishing and provision of foreign venture in Indian water has given rise to employment opportunities which becomes a focus point to the aspired workmen from various neighbouring states. Given the diversity in the nature of migration in India, the causes are also bound to vary. Migration is influenced both by the pattern of development (NCRL, 1991), and the social structure (Mosse *et al*, 2002). Certain 'push' and 'pull factors also contribute enormously towards to cause of migration in fisheries sector. Lack of suitable employment options, expectations to increase standard of living, poverty at home. Crop failure, natural calamities are the usual push factors and better employment opportunities, higher wages are the usual pull factors motivating a migrant move to a new place. This concept was first given by Revenstoein in 1989 (cited by

Rafique, 2003). According to him the living conditions are “push factors” and attractions of better living conditions are “pull factors”. The migration from farming to fisheries sector causes labour displacement in the agrarian sector and on the other, it leads to labour gain in the fisheries sector. This steady inflow of migrants has taken place not only in the primary sector (sector that consists of the active fisher folk) but also in the secondary sector (harbour workers and processing sector). Improvements in technologies in the fisheries sector has led to unbridled capital investment in this sector and has attracted more and more people from the adjacent coastal transects who necessarily do not belong to the fishing community (Sathiadhas et al., 2009)

### **Present Scenario of Migrant Labourers**

Poverty, crowded into the lower ends of labour market, meagre personal assets and range of deprivations in the destination areas are the common characteristics of present day migrant labourers. Migrant labourers working in agricultural or non- agricultural sector live in dreadful conditions. (Srivastava, 2003) Unhealthy drinking water, absence of hygienic sanitation is the usual issue of migrated labourers. Unhealthy work atmospheres that labourers work in make them victims of occupational borne diseases. As the employer does not follow any safety measures, accidents are also commonly found among migrants. For women workers, there is no provision of maternity leave, forcing them to resume work almost immediately after childbirth.

Lekshmi (2013) The living conditions of the primary sector migrants of fishing sector are deplorable. They do not have either temporary shelters or houses in the place of work. They work, rest, eat and sleep on board the fishing vessels. There are temporary shelters available to secondary sector labourers as most of them come along with the family members whose labour will also be used in the secondary sector. These labourers do not have any social security measures and they do not come under the benefits provided by the State Fisheries Department.

### **Existing structures for policy implementation**

The Ministry of Labour and the Departments of Labour, at state levels, are responsible for formulating and implementing measures to protect migrant workers. Certain existing labour laws aim to improve the conditions of migrant workers and prevent their exploitation. The important ones are: the Inter State Migrant Workmen (Regulation and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979;

the Minimum Wages Act, 1948; the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970; the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976; and the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996. The enforcement of these laws is the responsibility of both the central and state governments. At the central level, the key agency is the office of the Chief Labour Commissioner and its field offices. However, the Directorate General of Labour Welfare and the Welfare Commissioners also deal with certain welfare provisions emanating from some of these enactments. In the states, the offices of the Labour Commissioners and their field offices are responsible for enforcing these laws. The organisational structure in the centre and states is shown in Chart 1 (Annex 3). Concerns of migrant labourers are also the responsibility of the relevant Social Sector Ministries (Health and Family Welfare, Human Resource Development, Food and Consumer Affairs, Urban Affairs, Social Justice). However, there are no separate departments in these ministries dealing exclusively with migrant labour.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To evaluate the determinants for migration to fisheries sector
2. To understand the working conditions of migrant labourers
3. To analyse the social security requirements of migrant labourers of fisheries sector

### **Methodology:**

In Dakshina Kannada District Mangalore Fishing Port was selected for the study which consist primary,secondary and the tertiary sector labourers.The Primary sector consists of the fishermen who are involved exclusively in active fishing, the secondary sector consists of the fishermen exclusively involved in fishery related activities in the pre or post-harvest sector and tertiary sector stakeholders are those who are engaged in activities other than fishing /post- harvest sector.(Lekshmi, 2014) Researcher selected a sample of 20 from each of the sectors following convenient sampling method. Respondents were interviewed following an interview method. Open ended questions were asked to the respondents to seek their response on issues related to their migration pattern, causes of it and their feedback on the same. They were also interviewed to understand the availability of social security schemes and to seek their suggestions for the same.

**Results and Discussion****Table No. 1: Demographic Profile**

Variables	Classifications	Sectors in Fishing		
		Primary N=20	Secondary N=20	Tertiary N=20
Age	21-25	3 (15%)	5 (25%)	4 (20%)
	26-30	14 (70%)	5 (25%)	8 (40%)
	31-35	2 (10%)	5 (25%)	3 (15%)
	36-40	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	2 (10%)
	46-50	1 (5%)	3 (15%)	3 (15%)
Gender	Male	20 (100%)	0 (0%)	20 (100%)
	Female	0 (0%)	20 (100%)	0 (0%)
Education	Illiterate	2 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Primary	15 (75%)	19 (95%)	14 (70%)
	High School	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	4 (20%)
	PUC	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (10%)
Religion	Hindu	15 (75%)	17 (85%)	19 (95%)
	Christian	4 (20%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)
	Muslim	1 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Migrated From	Andhra Pradesh	12 (60%)	5 (25%)	13 (65%)
	Tamil Nadu	7 (35%)	10 (50%)	0 (0%)
	Kerala	1 (5%)	5 (25%)	0 (0%)
	Orissa	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (35%)
Family Structure	Joint Family	7 (35%)	5 (25%)	6 (30%)
	Nuclear Family	13 (65%)	15 (75%)	14 (70%)
Marital Status	Married	18 (90%)	13 (65%)	20 (100%)
	Unmarried	2 (10%)	7 (35%)	0 (0%)

In the above table the demographic profile of the respondents is discussed for the understanding the background of the study with special reference to fisheries sector. Most of the respondents

migrated to be the fishing labourer at Mangalore Port is between 26-30 years of age. This is a very peak age in the life of any individual wherein they mould their career. This is the age of marriage for most of the Indian youth. So being settled in a good job and earning handsome remuneration is always a top priority especially at this age. In Mangalore Fishing Port most of the respondents of this particular age group have migrated which shows the employment opportunities available at this area. It is also to be noted that it is not just men who migrate but also women in search for greener pastures. Women in most of the cases are accompanied by either husband or a relative and are not migrated alone due to the fear factor. But if accompanied by latter they do not mind staying separately after one year of migration as they get familiar with new people and place. Most of the respondents have not completed their basic education and being unskilled or semi-skilled, fishing port is the most convenient and attractive option available to them. Among the respondents interviewed most of them are from Andhra Pradesh, where compared to Mangalore the income earning potential in fisheries sector is found low by most of the respondents. Researcher found a lesser number of respondents from Kerala and Tamil Nadu which is found equal to the fishing sector at Mangalore. Mostly coming from the nuclear family background the respondents find it hard to manage their families back in their home states but are satisfied with the assistance received by the family members of their spouses and themselves.

In primary sector the respondents interviewed were either the drivers of the boats who at times multitask and also perform the task of catching fish or the fishing labourers themselves. In the secondary sector most of the fishing labourers are the ones associated with loading the ice boxes to the boat and the others unloading fish from the boat. All the women respondents interviewed by the researcher are found in secondary sector. In tertiary sector the shop keepers, net weavers at Mangalore Fishing Port were interviewed. They own shops selling necessary items required for the boat, the fishermen and the customers coming to the port. The availability of abundant jobs at Mangalore Fishing Port is found convenient and homely for most of the migrated labourers.

A comfortable stay is a requirement for a human being. It is also inclusive in the basic necessities of life. All the respondents in the primary sector stay in their respective boats even during their non-sailing hours. They do not have a place of stay apart from the boat itself. Their basic requirements like bathing, resting and cooking while at port is done in boat itself and the toilet

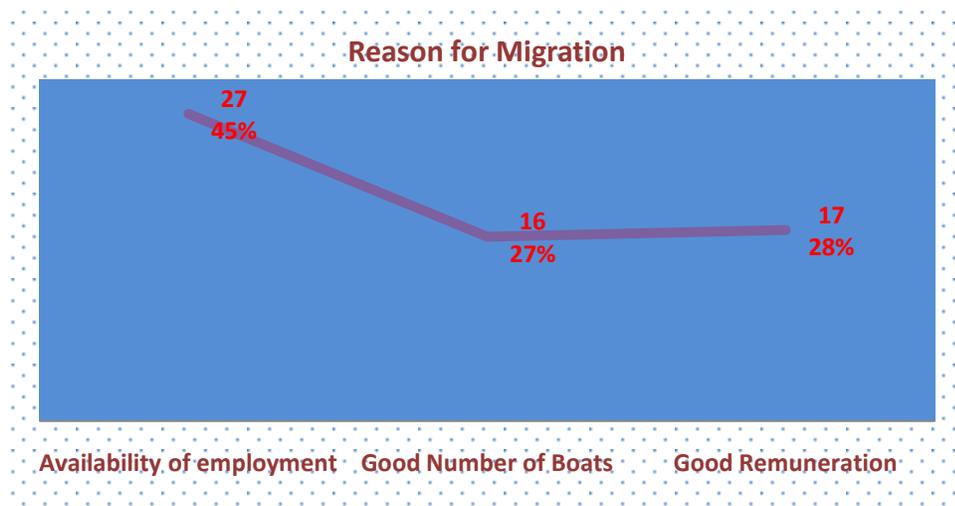
requirements are taken care at the common toilets in the port. As they do not carry any valuables apart from a cell phone, couples of clothes and images of god they do not fear of theft and stay in harmony with each other at the port. As Mangalore Fishing Port is very close of the city, they do go out for watching a movie or eating a meal, to buy alcohol and to get cigarettes or beedi.

**Table 2: Occupation of the Respondents**

Occupation	Primary sector	Catching Fish	17 ( 85% )	-	-
		Selling Fish	3 ( 15% )	-	-
	Secondary sector	Loading Ice Boxes	-	2 (10% )	-
		Unloading Fish from Boat	-	18(90% )	-
	Tertiary sector	Weaving net	-	-	16 (80% )
		Boat Repairer	-	-	2 (10% )
		Petty shop keeper	-	-	2 (10% )

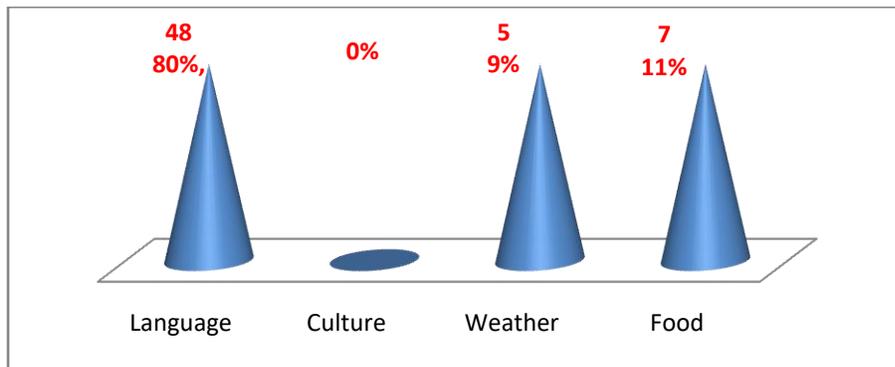
All the secondary sector labourers of Fishing Port are provided with accommodation facility by the respective employers who charge them a small amount as a rent. The rooms are very congested and not in a hygienic condition as well. There are as many as 7-8 people living in a 350-400sq ft. room which makes it not a very good place of stay. The labourers at the tertiary sector have their own arrangements for the stay which comprises of a small room filled with 7-8 people. As providing a safe and clean housing is not a mandatory requirement by the government this problem has not drawn the attention of any authorities.

Inspite of such hurdles faced the migrants prefer Mangalore Fishing Port to any other place due to the income generation potentiality of this place. 100% of the respondents have come to Mangalore with the reference of either a family member or a friend. Due to the comfort they face in spite of the lack of basic facilities Mangalore fishing Port is always referred to others in need of a good employment with handsome income. The labourers employed here are quite satisfied too with the availability of employment at the fishing port. They feel satisfied that they can spend their earnings home to provide a better living for the family members.

**Chart No: 2.1: Reason for Migration**

The reason for migration to Mangalore Fishing port is uniformly defined by most of the respondents as availability of employment, good number of boats at the fishingport which gives them a full time job and the fair payment option available at port. Absence of middlemen is also found as a reason for selecting Mangalore as a place of work for the migrants.

The respondents of primary and secondary sector who were interviewed by the researcher are of opinion that though they work for only 9 months a year, they earn sufficient enough to take care of the expenses of their family for 12 months without any hitches. And 100% of them during the 3 months troll ban period go back to their homes and either rest or do a part time work and again come back to Mangalore Fishing Port on time on the Ban removal day. While questioning them if they need to be reminded about their return they were of the opinion that they count days to return to Mangalore and they need not be reminded. This shows the level of commitment of the fishing labourers towards Mangalore Fishing Port.

**Chart No: 2.2: Main Challenge Faced at Mangalore Fishing Port**

Being in Mangalore fishing Port as an employee for more than a years' time, the Labourers have got accustomed to the culture, the weather, and the people. But while questioning them about their initial experience in Mangalore City 80% of the Labourers said communicating with the localities was a main challenge for them due to language barrier. But they were also of the opinion that it did not stop them from communicating with the people as Mangaloreans were familiar with Hindi which was a common bridge for them. During work time, the primary and the secondary sector Labourers were of the opinion that there was no language trouble as most of them were from outside Mangalore and from the same state with a common language. A small portion of respondents had a trouble with weather and food but eventually they agreed to be adjusted to the situation. Regarding food, the Labourers also opined that as they cook their own food there was not trouble but when they go out it was an issue.

**Table No.3: Provision of Social Security Measures in Primary and Secondary sector**

<b>Social Security Measures available for organised sector</b>
Health Care/Health Insurance
Life Insurance
Provident Fund
Disability Cover
Child Care
Old Age Benefit

While finding out about the various welfare measures and provisions available to the primary and the secondary sector fishing employees all of them responded to a reality i.e., the

unavailability of any of the above mentioned social security measures. The owners of the boats are the members of the various federations through which they receive subsidy for buying the boat as well as for the fuel. But membership of any worker is not seen at Mangalore Fishing Port. It is also because of their unstable employment due to which they are found absent during few months and sometimes in a new job. This is also a reason due to which they are not provided with an ID card by their employer as well as from any authorities. Unavailability of a local ID card is also a reason for them not getting into any associations. Medical expenses of the fishers are not taken by any one apart from themselves. They are not provided with any security with regard to their job, life or health. Absence of Health and Life insurance is also a proof for the said condition of theirs. The primary and the secondary Labourers in the fisheries sector get paid for the amount of work they perform. It is always based on the percentage basis for every employee. The day's when the worker is unable to work is the day he will not be paid any allowance. He will have to take care of his health very well so that he doesn't miss the working day which can provide him his remuneration. None of the Labourers in the sector are enrolled in any kind of pension schemes. While discussing about this element they responded that they are not in need of any pension as they are not planning to get retired. Women fish workers engaged in secondary sector fisheries are in this same situation and are also on temporary occupations. Facilities such as Maternity or Pre-Post Natal care provisions are also unavailable to them. This shows the amount of ignorance and negligence that is seen among the migrant labourers.

### **Social Work Implications:**

Helping the deprived to come out of their troubles and providing them with the support to acquire necessary skills, amenities and attention is the need of the hour which can be fulfilled with the help of social work methods.

Different migrated labourers have a varied base of troubles that motivate them to this fisheries sector. Some of them succeed in their choice and some of them will find nowhere in a newly moved –in place. An absence of association makes their present situation worst which can be very dangerous to them in the long run. Organising them in the forms of teams and helping them to resolve their issues and helping them to solve their troubles themselves can be a productive social work approach. Social Action has to be promoted wherein the migrant workers also must

be brought under the preview of Labour Laws. In the study it can be seen that language is the main challenge faced by these workers which in turn can give rise to complicated interpersonal problems. Social Group work can also be an efficient method which would alter their behaviour as well as work as a platform to voice about their concerns which can be heard by the ones who are responsible. As most of these workers have a family it is the moral responsibility of the voluntary sector, government as well as the individual to settle all the issues through right method before it is too late.

### **Suggestions/ Recommendations**

The fishing labourers at Mangalore Fishing Port are in need of welfare measures and provisions which can increase their job satisfaction and provide them with an arena to live a safe and secure life. Improving the skills and potentialities of the fishing Labourers at Mangalore Fishing Port is the need of the hour wherein an orientation to the concept of fishing, awareness about the hazards involved in it along with the requisites of safety measures must be included in the content of the training manual which can be made mandatory for the Primary and Secondary sector fishing labourers. Providing them with safe and secure accommodation can help the former, to spend their on shore hours resting and prepare them for the next voyage. District Adult education Officer can also intervene by providing informal education to these sector Labourers for their betterment. Payment of remuneration must be systematised for these Labourers by opening a bank account and motivating them to save for the future. Enrolling them for pension schemes is also an awareness that has to be created among these Labourers which can benefit them in times of need. Health safety of the tertiary sector is of their own concern as they are independent working entities. But the primary and the secondary sector fishing labourers are to be provided with the measures by their respective employers as similar to the organized sector employees who are looked after by the respective employers at certain situations and by the concerned legislations. Health Insurance and Life Insurance measures are to be compulsorily made available to the fishing labourers to improve their personal and professional safety. Providing the fishing labourers with an identity is also the need of the hour through which they can recognise themselves as the employees of a particular sector and the same recognition can be given to them by the rest of the Labourers. Better implementation of the Inter State Migrant Workmen (Regulation and Conditions of Service) Act- 1979, the Minimum Wages Act- 1948,

the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act-1970, and the Equal Remuneration Act-1976 must be done by concerned authorities to help the migrant labourers live a decent, healthy and safe life.

## Conclusion

Empowerment as a concept is at a widespread in the present scenario due to its vast applicability. Amongst the various applicability it possess one of it would be the empowerment of the unorganised sector Labourers. Compared to the organised sector employees, the unorganised sector owns no rights and no gains apart from the monitory aspects. It is high time the drastic changes need to emerge in the context of unorganised labourers. In the study conducted the unavailability of social security measures to the unorganised sector and in particular the migrated, unorganised sector employees in the fishing sector at Mangalore Fishing Port is highlighted. Provision of the basic facilities to that sector in the economy can motivate the internal staffs to be more productive in a healthy and competent manner.

## References

- Comprehensive Marine Fishinig Policy.(n.d.). Retrieved December 09, 2015, from <http://dahd.nic.in/dahd/division/fisheries/comprehensive-marine-fishing-policy.aspx>
- Department for International Development Report (2007), Moving out of Poverty: Making Migration Work Better for Poor People, March.
- G, H. (1977). Pleasant Organizations and Rural Development. *Development Policy and Administration Review*,3(1), January, 6-15. Retrieved November 13, 2015.
- Ministry of Labour (1991) Report of the National Commission on Rural Labour (NCRL Report). New Delhi: Government of India
- Mosse, D., Gupta, (2002), S., Mehta, M., Shah, V., Rees, J. Brokered livelihoods: Debt, labour migration and development in tribal western India. *Journal of Development Studies*, 38(5), pp. 59–88.
- PS, S. L., Kumar, V., & VP, M. (2014). Primary, secondary and tertiary sectors in Marine Fisheries of Karnataka, India: A Socio-Economic Profile. *Asian Academic Research Journal of social science & humanities*,1(21), March, 32-50. Retrieved January 28, 2016, from [http://eprints.cmfri.org.in/10099/1/Swathilakshmi\\_AARJSH.pdf](http://eprints.cmfri.org.in/10099/1/Swathilakshmi_AARJSH.pdf)

- R. S., (2014). Rural Distress and Rural Migration. *Kurukshetra*,62(11), september, 3-6. Retrieved December 12, 2015, from [http://yojana.gov.in/Recent\\_archive\\_english/September-14.pdf](http://yojana.gov.in/Recent_archive_english/September-14.pdf)
- Sathiadhas, R. (2009), Prathap, K Sangeetha. Employment Scenario and Labour Migration in Marine Fisheries. *Asian Fisheries Science*, 22 (2). pp. 713-727.
- Upadhyaya, C., & Rutten, M. (2012). Migration, Transnational Flows & Development in India: A Regional Perspective. *Economic & Political Weekly*,XLVII(19), May, 54-62. Retrieved September 19, 2015, from <http://www.epw.in/journal/2012/19/special-articles/migration-transnational-flows-and-development-india.html>.