



# Invisible hands: the challenges and lived realities of migrant workers in Delhi and the need for inclusive development

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Received 11 Sep 2025; Accepted 1 Oct 2025; Published 4 Nov 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64171/JSRD.4.S1.93-100>

## Abstract

This research paper looks at the various challenges faced by migrant workers in urban India. It focuses on their poor working conditions, lack of respect and recognition at work, and ongoing denial of minimum wages required by Indian labor laws. Using a thorough literature review and data from semi-structured interviews with 54 migrant workers in Delhi, this study examines the daily struggles of workers in construction, sanitation, and other informal sectors. The literature shows a clear pattern of systemic neglect, including inadequate living conditions, exclusion from welfare programs, mental stress, and weak enforcement of labor protections. Migrant workers experience not only economic hardship but also social and emotional isolation, often working in unsafe and abusive environments. The interview findings support existing research and highlight the urgent need for inclusive policy changes, legal enforcement, and social acknowledgment to protect the dignity and rights of migrant workers. By combining personal insights with scholarly analysis, this paper aims to deepen the understanding of urban labor migration and its human costs in today's India.

**Keywords:** Migrant workers, internal migration, social inclusion, wage theft

## Introduction

Internal migration has long been a defining feature of India's demographic and economic landscape (Bhagat, 2011; Singh & Sirkeci, 2021) [3, 16]. According to the 2011 Census of India, approximately 45.4 crore people, about 37% of the national population, live outside their place of birth. In practical terms, a UNESCO study on the Social Inclusion of Internal Migrants in India estimates that three out of every ten Indians are internal migrants, a trend further reinforced by labour force estimates showing continued growth in mobility over the past decade (Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation [MOSPI], 2021). This large-scale movement is driven primarily by rural-to-urban migration, where individuals seek better livelihoods in cities (Bala, 2017; Kundu, 2018) [2, 6]. Delhi, as India's capital and one of its largest urban economies, remains a magnet for this flow. Migrants are drawn by its vast construction sites, bustling marketplaces, expanding service sector, and the promise sometimes illusory of higher wages and regular work (Chandrakanta *et al.*, 2023) [4].

The push factors behind this movement are deeply structural: shrinking agricultural plots, erratic monsoons, declining farm incomes, and a lack of non-farm employment opportunities in rural areas (Prasad, 2025; Podh, 2024) [13, 12]. For many, migration is not a choice but a necessity to ensure survival and support for their families (Ansari, 2016) [1]. The "pull" of Delhi lies in the perception that it offers continuous demand for unskilled and semi-skilled labor, where "a willing pair of hands" can always find work (Lakhchaura & Tara, 2023) [7].

Yet, the reality that greets new arrivals is far harsher than the expectations. Migrants often end up in overcrowded, makeshift settlements, one-room shacks of tin, tarp, or scrap materials, sometimes shared by more than ten people. Basic amenities such as drinking water and sanitation are scarce; water may flow for only an hour or two daily, toilets are communal and overused, and open drains create unhygienic, mosquito-prone environments (Nagpal & Srivastava, 2025) [11]. Healthcare access is equally limited: public clinics are distant and overstretched, while even the cheapest private consultation can cost several days' wages (Mallya & Shrinivas, 2011) [9]. Working conditions are equally precarious. On construction sites, laborers mix concrete, carry heavy loads, and climb bamboo scaffolding without helmets or safety harnesses. Domestic workers, often women, spend twelve-hour days cleaning and cooking, yet remain "part-time" in employment records depriving them of benefits or security. Industrial workers operate noisy, hazardous machinery without protective gear. Wages are frequently below legal minimums, and delayed payments are common. The absence of formal contracts and the prevalence of cash payments make legal recourse nearly impossible (Mahalakshmi & Balamurugan, 2023) [8]. Women workers additionally face gender-based pay disparities and harassment in male-dominated workspaces (Shazia & Khan, 2022) [15].

Beyond material hardship lies emotional and psychological strain. Many migrants, particularly young men and women who have never left their home villages, experience profound

isolation in an unfamiliar city. Communication with families is brief and costly, festivals feel hollow without loved ones, and homesickness can spiral into depression. Coping mechanisms vary from relying on community networks or family and friends. Illness or injury often pushes households into debt, as high-interest loans from local moneylenders fill the gap left by inaccessible formal credit (Khan & Arokkiaraj, 2021) <sup>[5]</sup>.

Despite these adversities, migrant workers display resilience by creating informal support systems. People from the same home district often live together, share food, and exchange job information. In some slum clusters, residents contribute to informal savings funds to help members with emergency expenses such as medicine or train fares. Civil society organizations, charitable groups, and a few proactive trade unions have introduced mobile health clinics, legal helplines, and skill training programs (Rajan & Bhagat, 2022) <sup>[14]</sup>. Policy ideas such as portable ration cards under the One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) scheme, low-cost dormitories near job hubs, identity-linked accident insurance, and neighborhood legal-aid desks have been discussed, though implementation remains uneven (Srivastava *et al.*, 2020) <sup>[17]</sup>.

This study builds on earlier scholarship but adds fresh, ground-level narratives drawn from in-depth conversations with 54 migrant workers in Delhi, men and women employed as masons, painters, security guards, domestic helpers, and street vendors. Through these open-ended interviews, we capture their reasons for migration, the process of finding work and shelter, the risks they face daily, and the coping strategies they deploy when resources, health, or hope run thin. When juxtaposed with statistical evidence and previous research, these voices provide a worker-centered perspective on Delhi's development, revealing the paradox of a city whose growth depends on migrants yet often denies them basic dignity and security.

By foregrounding these lived experiences, the research aims to illuminate both the structural challenges and the grassroots resilience that define the migrant worker experience. Ultimately, the findings seek to guide policymakers, urban planners, and civil society actors toward more inclusive, rights-based urban governance—one in which Delhi's growth is not built on the silent suffering of those who sustain it, but on the principles of fairness, safety, and social justice.

### Literature review

The situation of blue-collar workers, especially internal migrants in urban India, has gained more scholarly attention due to their systematic denial of rights, poor working conditions, and lack of social dignity. Although these workers are crucial to India's urban economies, they often find themselves stuck in insecure jobs, unsafe living situations, and low-wage positions with little legal protection. The studies reviewed highlight these structural inequalities and stress the need for effective policy change. Lakhchaura and Tara (2023) <sup>[7]</sup> offer a close-up view of migrant workers in Delhi. They show that the absence of community support, awareness, and job stability puts these workers at risk of long-term poverty.

Ray and Balamurugan (2023) <sup>[8]</sup> also discuss the gap between the hopes migrants have and the harsh realities they encounter. Many live in overcrowded slums and work in informal sectors without wage security. Building on this, Mathur (2024) explores the socioeconomic challenges faced by labor migrants living in slums. She stresses their exclusion from social protection schemes and the shortcomings of initiatives like the One Nation, One Ration Card (ONORC). Her research highlights the disparity between policies and the real-world situations migrants face. Despite working full-time, many do not earn even the legal minimum wage. Sharma and Jose (2020) examine regional migration trends to Delhi. They identify Uttar Pradesh and Bihar as key sources of migrant labor. They argue that while migration contributes to urban economic growth, it also leads to increased pressure on housing, sanitation, and healthcare, further marginalizing these communities. Bag, Seth, and Gupta (2016) significantly add to this topic by comparing slum conditions in three metropolitan cities - Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata. Their extensive survey shows clear inequalities in housing, sanitation, education, and job conditions among slum residents, particularly recent migrants. The study indicates deep material deprivation and notable differences between cities, especially in Delhi, which suffers from poor civic infrastructure and overcrowding. Bala (2017) <sup>[2]</sup> takes a broader look at migration patterns in India, noting the high levels of rural-urban migration from underdeveloped states due to job shortages, droughts, and poor living environments. She highlights that most migrants end up in informal settlements with inadequate infrastructure, making them highly vulnerable to exploitation and health risks. Chandrakanta *et al.* (2023) <sup>[4]</sup> provide a different perspective by examining the emotional and psychological effects of migration on construction workers in Delhi. They argue that migrants face not only financial difficulties but also mental health challenges, homesickness, and social exclusion. Their research highlights the unseen trauma experienced by workers due to long hours, low wages, limited medical access, and discrimination, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic. Ansari (2016) <sup>[1]</sup> backs this view by documenting the legal, social, and educational problems migrant workers encounter, such as lacking identity, limited educational access for their children, and insufficient legal assistance. He points out the need for focused inclusion efforts, including labor protections and support for mental health. The body of literature shows a common theme: current legal and institutional frameworks fall short of protecting the rights and dignity of internal migrants and blue-collar workers. The failure to enforce labor laws, particularly regarding minimum wage and safe working conditions, appears throughout the studies. Additionally, the mental and emotional burdens of migration, including feelings of isolation and distress, add an often-overlooked aspect to their exploitation.

### Key themes identified in literature

- Insufficient legal enforcement of minimum wage laws and labor protections (Mathur, 2024; Bala, 2017) <sup>[2]</sup>.

- Poor living and working conditions in urban slums (Bag *et al.*, 2016; Sharma & Jose, 2020).
- Mental health challenges and social exclusion among migrant workers (Chandrakanta *et al.*, 2023; Ansari, 2016) [4, 1].
- Exploitation based on gender and caste in the informal labor market (Ray & Balamurugan, 2023) [8].
- Need for rights-based, inclusive urban development policies (Lakhchaura & Tara, 2023; Mathur, 2024) [7].

### **Synthesis: interconnected themes and research gaps**

Combining these strands, the literature surfaces several interrelated themes:

**Legal and Policy Gaps:** While frameworks exist, poor enforcement and lack of portability prevent effective protection (Mathur, 2024; Srivastava & Sutradhar, 2016).

**Urban Marginalization:** Migrants live and work in unsafe, underserved zones, amplifying health, housing, and sanitation risks (Bag *et al.*, 2016; Sharma & Jose, 2020).

**Psychosocial Distress:** Mental health issues and social isolation are prevalent, compounded by identity crises, limited access to services, and pandemic shocks (Chandrakanta *et al.*, 2023; Ansari, 2016; Kesar *et al.*, 2021) [4, 1].

**Intersectional Exploitation:** Gender and caste hierarchies compound exploitation in informal employment (Ray & Balamurugan, 2023; Majumder, 2021) [8].

**Policy Shortfalls and Aspirations:** While migrants strive for upward mobility and recognition, inclusive policy remains elusive (Lakhchaura & Tara, 2023; Mathur, 2024; Deshingkar & Akter, 2009) [7].

These insights affirm that the resilience and agency of migrant workers are constrained by structural neglect. The literature further reveals significant gaps—particularly in linking lived experiences with macro-level governance failures and in proposing integrated, context-specific implementation models. The literature highlights a clear need for change: systemic reforms are essential to close the gap between policy and reality. Migrant workers, vital to India's urban growth, remain overlooked and unprotected. Future research and policy should focus on enforcing labor laws, ensuring access to welfare programs, providing mental health support, and raising public awareness to restore dignity, safety, and justice for these crucial yet unseen workers.

### **Objectives**

- To investigate the socio-economic and other underlying factors driving migration to Delhi.
- To examine the post-migration challenges and hardships encountered by migrant workers in the city.
- To analyse the coping strategies and adaptive mechanisms employed by migrant workers in navigating these challenges.
- To explore the aspirations, future goals, and expectations of migrant workers, particularly about inclusive development and institutional support.

### **Methodology**

#### **Aim of the study**

The main aim of this study is to understand why people leave their homes and villages and come to a city like Delhi, and what kinds of challenges they face once they arrive. This research also prospects to explore how these migrant workers manage to survive challenging circumstances and what they aspire to achieve in the future.

#### **Interview style**

The researchers went into local areas where migrant workers live and work. After building a connection and trust, the researcher explained what the study was about in simple language (Hindi, Bengali, Madhubani, Bhojpuri). Any doubts or questions they had were patiently answered. All participants were assured that their names and identities would not be shared and that talking to the researcher would not create any problems for them. Once they were comfortable and gave their oral consent, the researcher began documenting their experiences.

#### **Sample population**

The people who took part in this study were migrant workers living in Delhi, originally from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal. The sample of 54 migrant workers has been taken, including 41 men and 13 women. Each of them had migrated from their home states and was now living and working in Delhi. Participation was entirely voluntary, and they could skip any question or stop at any time. These people work in different sectors—construction, housekeeping, street vending, security services, and other informal jobs.

#### **Research approach**

This research adopts a qualitative approach, focusing on personal stories, subjective meaning, and human perceptions. To gather information, the researcher used semi-structured interviews. These are conversations guided by a few key questions, but flexible enough for participants to speak freely and share their thoughts in their own words. The questions were open-ended so that the participants could explain their situations in detail, and the researcher could gently ask more if something needed clarification.

The questionnaire includes questions like: Where are you from? Why did you come to Delhi? What kind of work do you do here? How long have you been working in Delhi? What kind of challenges do you face in your work and daily life? What kind of support do you wish the government or society could give?

These interviews were not rushed. The participants were given time to reflect and speak at their own pace. The researcher always made sure they were comfortable and never pushed them to answer anything they didn't want to.

#### **Data analysis**

Once the interviews were complete, the researcher carefully read and re-read the stories shared by the participants. The

responses were studied using thematic and narrative analysis. This means the researcher looked for common themes or patterns in the stories—such as reasons for leaving home, kinds of work they do, living conditions, emotional stress, and how they manage everything with limited resources.

### Ethical consideration

Throughout the study, the researcher made sure that confidentiality and respect were maintained. All participants were spoken to in a respectful and empathetic way. The goal was not just to collect data, but to give them a safe space to speak honestly about their struggles, hopes, and dreams.

### Findings of research

In this study, we spoke with 54 migrant workers currently living in Delhi, out of which 41 were men and 13 were women. The women mostly shared that they migrated due to family reasons or marriage and are now working as domestic helpers, usually at very low wages. Most of the workers we spoke to were unskilled and had migrated from their hometowns because of a lack of job opportunities, poor living conditions, or landlessness. For many of them, coming to Delhi was not a choice made out of ambition, but a step taken for survival.

The majority of these workers are engaged in daily-wage or informal sector jobs, such as construction, cleaning, street vending, or security services. They reported earning very low wages, and many shared that they do not have any written job contracts, making them highly vulnerable to wage cuts, delayed payments, and sudden job loss. Some also mentioned facing discrimination and disrespect at their workplaces, especially women workers.

When it comes to their living conditions, most of the participants live in overcrowded, temporary shelters or rented rooms in informal colonies. Their biggest struggles include unaffordable rent, poor sanitation, irregular water supply, and the constant fear of eviction. Basic facilities like clean toilets, safe drinking water, and medical care were often missing or difficult to access.

Despite all these challenges, many workers expressed simple hopes for a better life. They wished for fair and timely wages, safe and affordable housing, better healthcare, and good schooling for their children. These are not big demands—but basic needs that every worker should receive in return for their hard work.

Their voices and experiences highlight the gap between existing laws and the everyday reality of migrant workers in Delhi. While they continue to contribute to the growth and functioning of the city, their own lives remain full of uncertainty, struggle, and invisibility. Their stories remind us that behind every building, every clean home, and every street market, there are real people with real dreams—who deserve dignity, protection, and a better future.

This table presents the demographic characteristics of a sample group, providing insights into their sex, marital status, and age distribution in terms of marital status, the largest segment of

the sample is married with family residing in Delhi, making up 57.4% (31 individuals). Single individuals represent 31.5% (17 individuals), and those married with family in their hometown constitute 11.1% (6 individuals)

**Table 1**

Demographic characteristics	Percentage (%)	No. of sample (N)
Sex		
Male	75.9%	41
Female	24.1%	13
Marital status		
Single	31.5%	17
Married (family in Delhi)	57.4%	31
Married (family in hometown)	11.1%	6
Age group (years)		
Under 18	1.9%	1
18 - 25	20.4%	11
26 - 35	33.3%	18
36 - 50	33.3%	18
Above 50	11.1%	6
Total	100.0%	54

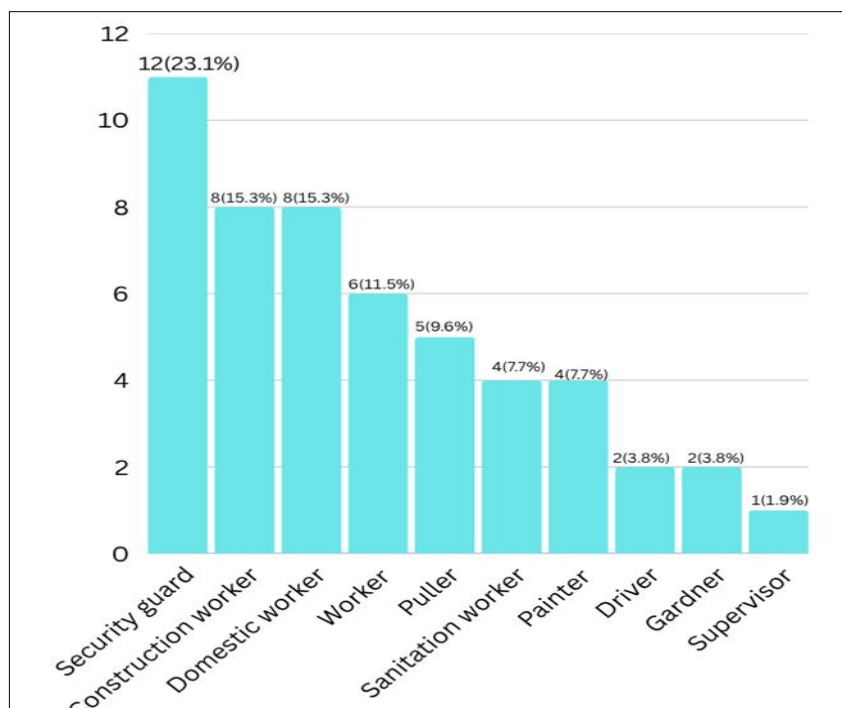
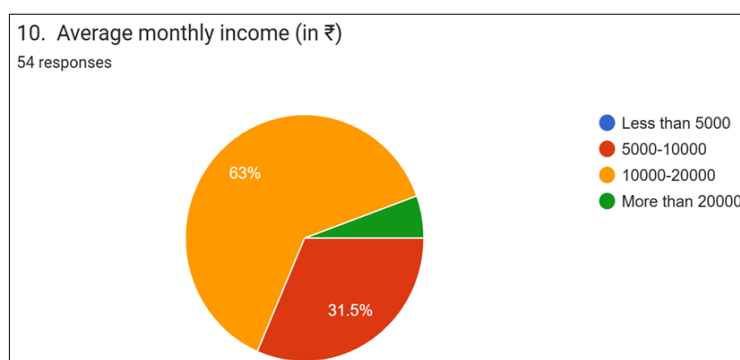
The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) conducted in 2020-21 by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation gathered specific information on migration as a one-time initiative, with its report titled "Migration in India, 2020-21" released in June 2022. This report highlighted distinct primary reasons for migration between genders: males predominantly migrated in search of employment or better employment opportunities (22.8%) or for direct employment/work (20.1%), while for females, marriage was by far the overwhelming main reason, accounting for 86% of migrations. According to our research, 'better job opportunities' come as a sole reason for migration

**Table 2**

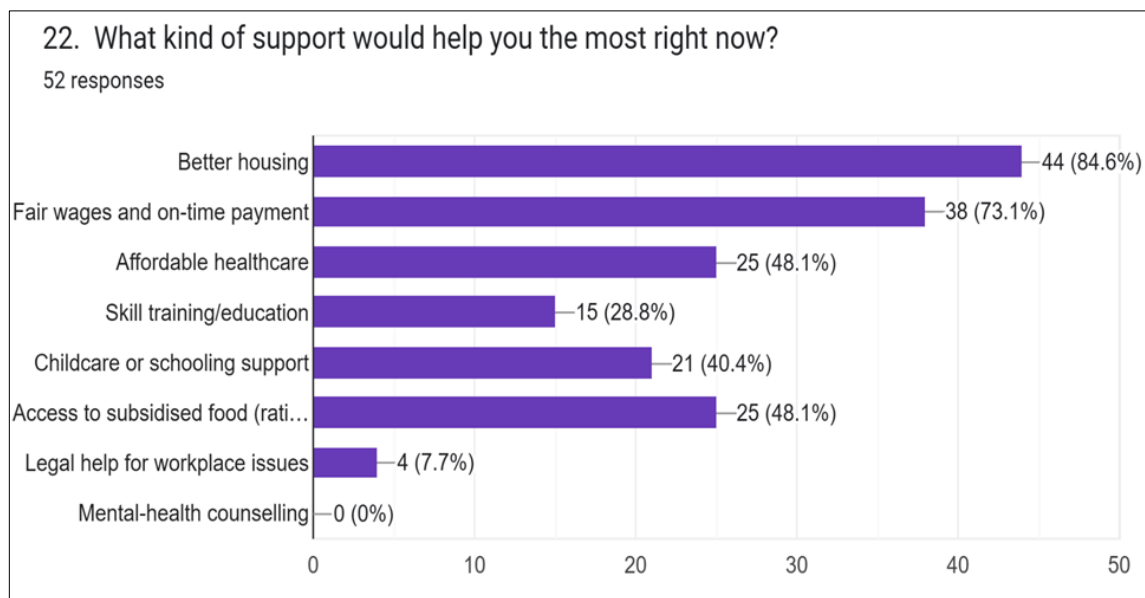
Background characteristics	Total (%)	N
State		
Uttar Pradesh	32.7%	17
Bihar	30.8%	16
West Bengal	15.3%	8
Uttarakhand	7.7%	4
Rajasthan	5.5%	3
Haryana	3.8%	2
Madhya Pradesh	3.8%	2
Reason for Migration		
Lack of farmland or work	62.3%	33
Better job opportunities	83%	44
Family or friends already here	20.8%	11
Education or training	0%	0
To repay debt	5.7%	3
Duration of Staying at Destination Place (Years)		
< 1 Year	0%	0
1-3 Years	25%	13
3-5 Years	50%	26
More than 5 Years	25%	13

**Table 3:** Challenge/Problem of migrants

Category	Challenge/Problem	Number of responses	Percentage
Main challenges at work (52 responses)	Low wages	37	71.2%
	Delayed payments	32	61.5%
	Long working hours	21	40.4%
	Harassment or discrimination	22	42.3%
	Unsafe conditions	18	34.6%
	Job insecurity	14	26.9%
	Other (unspecified)	1	1.9%
Main challenges in daily life (52 responses)	High living costs	49	94.2%
	Lack of ID/documents	24	46.2%
	Access to healthcare	24	46.2%
	Childcare/schooling	17	32.7%
	Loneliness/homesickness	16	30.8%
	Debt	6	11.5%
Problems in the living area (54 responses)	Irregular water supply	31	57.4%
	High rent	31	57.4%
	Poor sanitation	30	55.6%
	Risk of eviction	23	42.6%
	Mosquitoes/diseases	19	35.2%
	Overcrowding	4	7.4%
	None of these	4	7.4%

**Fig 1:** Current employment**Fig 2:** Average monthly income (in ₹)





**Fig 3:** Possible support from the government

## Recommendations

### a) Ensure proper implementation of existing schemes

India already has a robust policy framework intended to protect informal and migrant labour. Laws such as the Code on Wages, 2019, aim to guarantee fair remuneration; the One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) ensures food security regardless of location; and Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) provides health insurance for low-income families. However, the persistent gap between legislation and on-ground impact reflects weak enforcement, bureaucratic hurdles, and inadequate inter-departmental coordination.

To address this, regular third-party audits should be conducted to assess the reach and effectiveness of these programs, combined with strict accountability for local officials. Technology-based monitoring (geo-tagged beneficiary lists, digital dashboards for real-time updates) can minimise corruption and leakage. Awareness drives in migrants' native languages should complement enforcement so that schemes are both available and accessible to the intended population.

### b) Link e-Shram cards with wage payments

The e-Shram portal, launched by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, provides a centralised database of unorganised workers, yet it remains underutilised for wage protection. Linking wage payments directly to the worker's bank account associated with the e-Shram ID can eliminate several problems—wage theft, arbitrary deductions, and payment delays.

This measure would also ensure that workers have a verifiable employment history, which could later help them in securing credit, accessing insurance, or proving eligibility for government benefits. Integrating this with Aadhaar authentication would create a secure, transparent, and traceable wage payment mechanism, protecting workers from exploitative middlemen.

### c) Set up on-site registration desks

A significant barrier to accessing benefits under the Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Act, 1996, is the cumbersome registration process. Migrant workers often have neither the time nor the resources to travel to government offices, leading to chronic under-registration.

On-site registration desks, stationed at large construction projects, industrial zones, and factory clusters, can solve this. Staffed by trained government or NGO personnel, these desks could handle documentation, provide guidance on eligibility, and issue temporary receipts instantly. This would dramatically reduce exclusion from welfare schemes such as accident insurance, pensions, and education support for workers' children.

### d) Improve access to healthcare

Occupational injuries, respiratory illnesses, heat stress, and musculoskeletal disorders are common among Delhi's migrant workforce, yet most have no access to affordable and timely medical care. Existing government hospitals are often far from work sites, and long waiting times discourage workers from seeking treatment.

Mobile health vans equipped with basic diagnostic tools, first-aid facilities, and medicines should be deployed in high-density labour areas. These vans should operate on a fixed weekly schedule, ensuring predictability for workers. Additionally, community health workers could help migrants navigate Ayushman Bharat benefits and other health insurance schemes, while periodic health camps could screen for chronic illnesses common in physically demanding jobs.

### e) Build affordable rental housing

Housing insecurity forces migrant workers into overcrowded informal settlements, often without clean water, electricity, or sanitation. This not only impacts health and safety but also limits productivity. The Delhi government, in partnership with

private developers and NGOs, should expand dormitory-style, low-cost rental housing near major employment hubs.

Such housing should include shared kitchens, clean toilets, safe drinking water points, and waste disposal systems. Rent should be regulated and subsidised for low-income workers, with transparent allotment processes to prevent middleman exploitation. A well-planned housing policy would reduce commuting costs, improve quality of life, and indirectly enhance work performance.

#### **f) Strengthen the labour helpline**

Although Delhi has a labour helpline, its limited operating hours, language barriers, and slow response rates reduce its effectiveness. Expanding it to a 24×7 multilingual service (covering Hindi, Bhojpuri, Bengali, Odia, and other common migrant languages) would ensure timely assistance for emergencies.

The helpline should be integrated with field inspection teams so that complaints about wage non-payment, harassment, or unsafe conditions can trigger immediate action. Regular public awareness about the helpline number—via posters at worksites, wage slips, and local radio—would enhance usage and trust.

#### **g) Organise legal and ID camps regularly**

Lack of proper identification documents prevents migrant workers from accessing essential services such as subsidised food, health insurance, and bank accounts. Regularly organised “legal aid and documentation camps” in migrant neighbourhoods can bridge this gap.

These camps should offer on-the-spot Aadhaar enrolment/update, ration card issuance, voter ID corrections, and bank account opening. Legal aid desks can help workers file labour disputes, claim accident compensation, or resolve tenancy issues. Partnering with law schools, legal aid clinics, and pro bono lawyers could reduce costs and improve outreach.

#### **h) Offer evening skill and language training**

Since most migrant workers cannot afford to lose daily wages, skill enhancement programs must be scheduled in the evenings or on rest days. Offering short, modular courses in basic Hindi, English, and vocational trades (plumbing, electrical wiring, tailoring, basic computer literacy) can help workers transition to higher-paying and more stable jobs.

Government skill development missions and CSR-funded NGOs could run these centres in or near migrant settlements, with incentives such as completion certificates, job referrals, and subsidised course fees to encourage participation.

#### **i) Spread awareness of rights and benefits**

Information poverty is one of the biggest reasons migrant workers remain excluded from welfare programs. Awareness campaigns should be multimodal and multilingual—using posters at bus stands, loudspeaker announcements at worksites, illustrated pamphlets in local languages, and trained peer educators from the migrant community.

Digital platforms such as WhatsApp groups can also be leveraged to share information about upcoming health camps, job openings, or grievance redressal procedures, provided workers have basic digital literacy support.

#### **j) Promote dignity and respect in daily life**

Beyond formal interventions, social perception plays a crucial role in shaping migrants’ lived realities. Employers and the public must acknowledge their role as essential contributors to the city’s functioning. Simple but meaningful actions—ensuring timely payment of wages, providing clean sanitation facilities, supplying protective gear, and showing verbal appreciation—can significantly enhance workers’ sense of worth.

Awareness drives in schools, workplaces, and residential communities can challenge stereotypes about migrant labour and promote inclusion. Over time, this cultural shift would complement legal and policy measures in fostering a more equitable urban environment.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study reaffirm that migrant workers form the backbone of Delhi’s economic growth, sustaining critical sectors such as construction, sanitation, and other informal services. Despite their indispensable contribution, they continue to endure low wages, hazardous working conditions, substandard housing, and restricted access to healthcare and welfare provisions. While numerous governmental schemes exist to safeguard their rights and well-being, gaps in implementation and outreach mean that the benefits rarely reach those most in need. This disconnect reflects not only administrative inefficiencies but also the broader social marginalisation of migrant labour.

Addressing these issues requires a coordinated effort between the central and Delhi governments to strengthen the delivery mechanisms of welfare programs, enforce labour protections, and ensure equitable access to essential services. Equally important is fostering a societal shift toward recognising and respecting the dignity of migrant workers. Inclusive development must extend beyond economic metrics to encompass safety, security, and the human aspiration for a better quality of life. By embedding fairness, protection, and respect into urban policy frameworks, Delhi can evolve into a city where migrant workers are not merely surviving, but living and thriving with dignity, safety, and hope for the future.

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