Disaster and Vulnerability of Inter-State Migrant labour: A Study of Kerala Flood of 2018

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Abstract:

In 2018, Kerala witnessed and dealt with a major catastrophe in the form of flood. The flood caused an extensive destruction of property and resulted into displacement of lakhs of migrant labourers. During period of disaster, the migrants are the most vulnerable sections. Due to apathy of local authorities, they have to bear the brunt of catastrophe. The differential socio-cultural milieu poses a major roadblock in their way. They are always side-lined from mainstream response activities to the disaster. Despite Kerala being positioned at higher rank in terms of Human development index (HDI), the support towards inter-state migrants during disaster has always been meagre. Millions of migrants from various parts of the country are working in Kerala. Inter-state migrants have contributed immensely to the growth of Kerala's economy. During 2017-18, about 23 lakh persons were engaged in construction sector alone. Most of them are expected to be inter-state migrant workers. But unfortunately, only 2 percent of total migrant workers avail of social security benefits. During flood in 2018, most of the inter-state migrants lost their jobs. It not only dried up the incomes of sev-

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eral families in the source states but at the same time created huge labour deficits in Kerala, which, in turn adversely affected the post-disaster reconstruction efforts. The industries in Kerala started facing acute shortage of migrant labourers. The displaced and stranded migrant workers were ill-treated by local people. The discrimination was so apparent that local administration had to set up a separate camp for addressing problems of inter-state migrant labour in Kerala during 2018 flood. This paper seeks to critically examine the issues faced by inter-state migrant labour during the flood of 2018 in Kerala. The study is an attempt to portray various challenges faced by them and interventions of government towards tackling this bottleneck.

Keywords: *Migration, disaster, reconstruction, displacement, vulnerability, social security, labour.*

1. Introduction:

Migration is one of the indispensable components of global economy. According to 2011 census, India has 117.9 million inter-district migrants and 54.4 million inter-state migrants (Government of India, 2011) These migrant workers operate both in urban and rural areas. They are primarily employed in temporary, informal and casual jobs and are the most vulnerable to various kinds of exploitation (Mencutek, 2022). India has experienced an influx of migrants from eastern corridors to western corridors. Most of the labour is supplied by states like West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh (Biswas, 2020). This inter-state migrant labour is mainly employed in the

brick kiln work, transportation, domestic work, textiles, mining, construction sector and agriculture (Peter et al, 2020). Kerala is one of those states which has an extended tradition of inward migration. In-migration in Kerala began between 1970s and 1990s largely from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka (Biswas, 2020). However, the recent trends in inter-state migration to Kerala have changed. People from states like West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand are migrating to Kerala (Parida et al, 2021). These migrant labours are young and have limited education. The profound rate of migration has been caused by fewer job opportunities back in the hometown and lucrative growth opportunities with better pay package in the host state. In addition to it, social networks also play an important role in promoting in-migration (Parida et al, 2021). Kerala has an estimated 2.5 million migrants, accounting for roughly 10 percent of the overall population (Paridha et al, 2021). These migrant workers face many issues in Kerala. The vulnerability of migrant workers arises from the indifference in habitual places influenced by culture, language, social protection, consumption habits, etc (Krishnakumar, 2019). They are excluded from the benefits of public distribution system (PDS), subsidies and insurance. Most of this inter-state migrant labour work for more than 8 hours per day in a very formidable condition. It has an impact on both their physical and mental wellbeing (National Commission for Women, 2019).

Kerala is one of those states which has witnessed an abrupt weather condition. It has also been recognised as the Monsoon Gateway (Chacko et al., 2018). The rain that began in August, 2018 caused massive rainfall and

landslides in Kerala, which was later labelled as a level 3 calamity by Government of India. With an annual rainfall of approximately 300 cm received during a span of 6 months, Kerala records the highest monsoon rains in India. Home to over 50 dams and 44 rivers flowing through its territory and the torrential rains lasting from 2018 August 1 to 19, Kerala experienced its worst flooding since 1924 (Sebastian et al., 2022). Idukki, Ernakulum, Kollam, Kottayam and Pathanamthitta are the districts which were the most affected by the flood. 11.09 million people, nearly 30 percent of the state's population were affected by the flood (Chacko et al., 2018).

2. Review of literature

The impact of natural disaster has always been long lasting. It affects not only economic activities but break the psychological strength of masses to respond. Skidmore and Toya (2002) in their study find it statistically significant to correlate the incidences of disaster and growth gross domestic product (GDP) (Beyer et al, 2022). In another study by Parida, Saini and Chowdhury (2020), it has been found that flood leads to catastrophic fallout of economic growth. On the other hand, Noy and Nualsri (2007) argue that a negative shock to human capital (loss of human lives) due to natural disasters has a significant negative effect on the medium run (five-year average) growth rate of real per capita GDP, while a similar shock to physical capital has a positive but insignificant effect (Beyer et al, 2022). According to Raddatz (2007), the economic growth is negatively affected by disaster and there is effect of disaster within the same year. In another study by Akter

and Mallick (2013), Cyclone Aila has severely affected the income growth in Bangladesh (Beyer et al, 2022). Karim (2018) states that the flood risks negatively affect non-food expenditure of agricultural households. It reduces their consumption pattern drastically. In contrast, one study by Patnaik, Sane and Shah (2019) found-out that 2015 Chennai flood in India increased household consumption in the months immediately after the event and argued that households increased their consumption at the cost of reducing their assets and household savings (Beyer et al, 2022). The disaster has been considered to be psychologically devastating because of its severity of impact. It has been substantiated by a study by Yao, Xu, and Zhang in 2019 which measured the differential effects of earthquake in Wenchuan province of China on time preference and savings of households. It was stated in the study that natural disasters have gigantic psychological effects on households. The incidence of flood has revoked the economic activity and forced various house owners mortgage their properties. Mishra et al. (2018) found-out that maximum rainfall of one day in August, 2018 in Kerala was more than what had been experienced in the last 75 years. He found-out that majority of reservoirs were full more than 90 percent of their capacity. Sudheer et al. (2018) through his HEC-HMS model tried to estimate flood severity in the region. The study focussed on proper disaster mitigation and preparedness plan to reduce occurrences of major catastrophe. There is also an urgent need to prepare social and infrastructural map to address flood response activities. The creation of vulnerability map in response to flood and other disaster may facilitate the process for adequate response measures. With an increasing number of disaster and their long-term impacts on socio-economic landscape, it is now imperative that indigenous mitigation

and rehabilitation plan must be prepared by local authorities. The disaster response mechanism must incorporate needs of not only local community but migrant people also. It may help in reducing post-disaster after effects.

3. Theories of Climate displacement and Institutional Exclusion

Climate displacement in Kerala is driven by the intersection of sudden-onset disasters (floods, landslides) and slow-onset hazards (sea-level rise, coastal erosion). Theories frame this migration not just as an environmental reaction, but as the compounding effect of governance gaps, and pre-existing socioeconomic vulnerabilities (Neha, 2023). The "Push-Pull" Migration Theory explains people are "pushed" out of their original habitats by sudden, unlivable conditions like extreme flooding and "pulled" to safer urban areas by prospects of stability. In the highly vulnerable coastal districts and wetland areas like Kuttanad, families abandon properties due to repeated, devastating floods, waterlogging, and saltwater intrusion. (Cairo University and International Organization for Migration,2025). Political Ecology Theory framework posits that natural disasters are heavily mediated by human interference and poorly planned development, meaning displacement is rarely just a "natural" act. Political ecologists argue that unscientific land use, hill cutting, and deforestation exacerbate these hazards, heavily impacting indigenous and marginalized populations (Neha, 2023). Vulnerability theory explains disasters acts as a threat to human dignity, disproportionately affecting socio-economically marginalized groups who lack the resources to adapt. Displaced individuals, particularly from the informal and fishing sectors, often migrate into oversupplied urban labour markets, causing a cascade effect of socio-economic marginalization (Vinodhan &

Aravind, 2025). Policy and governance gap theory explain displacement is exacerbated by the absence of localized, human-rights-based legal frameworks to protect climate refugees. Scholars highlight that India's current policies inadequately define "climate-induced displacement," leaving victims with limited paths for formal rehabilitation compared to standard economic migration models (World Bank, 2022)

4. Disaster in Kerala- A historical perspective:

Kerala has a long history of high rainfall because of its geographical location. The first major flood in Kerala happened during 1341 A.D. The fourth-century flood damaged and split the Periyar River of Kerala into two branches (Kerala Disaster Management Plan, 2016). A new island was formed after the flood. It is currently known as Puthuvaipu at Kochi. This devastation was repeated in 1924 in the form of great flood of 99. In July, 1924 Kerala witnessed a massive flood due to incessant rains for more than three weeks. The intensity of flood was so high that it washed away road to Munnar in no time. Munnar alone received 4850 mm of rainfall during this period which was quite unprecedented. This flood of 99 was very infamous because of its devastating aura. It submerged vast regions of Ernakulum, Idukki, Kottayam and Alappuzha districts. During this period of deluge, floodwater carried with itself large bridges, train tracks, twisted metals and debris. Aluva-Munnar route was completely devastated. In subsequent years, frequency of flood remained high in Kerala. This deluge of 1924 was followed by excessive rainfall in 1961. Kerala recorded a rainfall of

3229.3 mm in 1961 which was quite higher than the four-month seasonal cumulative rainfall. The torrential downpours led to flood in 1961. The incessant rains and blockage of drains added fuel to the fire. Several roads had been waterlogged and cut from mainstream network. This episode was followed again in 2018 when cloudbursts resulted into rising river water levels and the opening of dams. Due to excess of water in dams, 35 out of 54 dams were opened resulting into inundation of entire low-lying areas. This event triggered several landslides along the northern slopes at Kavalappara in Malappuram district and Puthumala in Wayanad district (Mehrishi et al., 2022).

5. Cataclysm faced by Inter-state migrant labour:

Kerala due to its growing economy, has always been at the forefront of attracting inter-state migrant labour since 1956. Most of this inter-state migrant labour are engaged as casual labour in construction industry and services sector. Most of these migrant labours reside in low-lying areas which get inundated at times. These areas have very poor drainage facility which remain choked during monsoon season (Umeora and Egwuatu, 2009). During 2018 flood, most of workplaces of migrant labour were washed-away resulting into unemployment of nearly 2.3 million inter-state migrant labour (Thummarukudy and Peter, 2019).

Sudhi (2018) reported in the newspaper "The Hindu" that sudden unemployment led to the fleeing of thousands of migrants from the state. Without power, food, drinking water and employment, many decided to go back. The closing down of relief camps delayed the opening of the job sector. According to Devasia (2018), the employers of majority of these migrant workers

failed to provide proper care for them during the 2018 flood. Some refused to donate their factories to house the rescued workers. The governments in their home states had also failed to come to their aid. Most of the migrant workers didn't get enough information regarding the disaster through proper channel (Zhou et al, 2022). In his study of migrant workers in the garment industry during the 2018 flood, Krishnakumar (2019) discusses how almost all of these migrant workers stayed in small, cramped dormitories or small apartments and cooked their own food after returning from work every day prior to the flood. During the flood, water began to infiltrate their homes, causing them to evacuate with their belongings and seek safety elsewhere. Those engaged in the organised sector were permitted to remain at higher-level sites, while the majority of workers sought refuge beneath flyovers and metro rail works. They were forced to stay there for two to three days. Volunteers and rescue personnel brought food, but there was no shelter for them (Krishnakumar, 2019). Peter et al (2020) estimated that 2.3 million migrants lost their livelihood and were discriminated against during the rescue, relief and rehabilitation phase. The information didn't properly reach them during the preparedness phase due to the language barrier**.**

6. Support rendered by Government of Kerala:

The government of Kerala extended its helping hand towards inter-state migrant labour through certain welfare measures. The government initiated in 2019 a migrant housing project called "Apna Ghar" with an intention to provide affordable houses on rent to migrant labour. Department of Labour and Skills (DOLS), govt. of Kerala constructed nearly 620 bedded hostel in Kanjikode and Palakkad districts for these people. The Police

and fire departments of Kerala actively participated in the rescue process. The control room was open 24/7 during the flood. The system collaborated with the district collector and disaster management authority (Sisira & Pillai, 2019). The Government of Kerala had announced a compensation of Rs. 3600 for all the migrant workers registered in relief camps across the state (Krishnakumar, 2019). Those migrant labour whose residences were flooded were eligible for compensation of Rs. 10,000 from the government (Thummarukudy & Peter, 2019). Another government endeavour was to pay Rs. 10,000 in compensation for migrants' lost items. However, none of the migrants could claim the money because they did not have identity cards issued in Kerala. Nearly 87.14 percent of workers had an Aadhar card or voter's ID from their home state (Krishnakumar, 2019). The government facilitated in healthcare support through an exclusive health insurance scheme for inter-state migrant labour. This insurance scheme called Awaz Health Insurance is state government sponsored to provide health insurance and accidental death coverage to migrant workers in the state (Parida & Raman, 2021& Krishnakumar, 2019). Under this scheme, a migrant labour can avail of health insurance cover of nearly Rs. 15000 and an accidental coverage of Rs. 2 lakhs. The government established various registration camps where the registration of inter-state migrant labour was done to avail of the benefits of this scheme (Krishnakumar, 2019). This project was monitored by the District Labour officers of the respective districts and advertised throughout the state in multiple languages including Hindi, Oriya and Bengali (Remya, 2021). The reviews related effects of disaster among internal migrants relies on macro-level data. There is a lack of localized, village-level studies explaining exactly why some communities complete-

ly adapt while others face abandonment. Academic focus heavily leans on international migration, whereas the vast majority of climate migration is internal. There are few studies about effects of disaster among the internal migrants. Thus, the study is focused is about socio-economic and administrative level issues during the disaster.

7. Objectives:

- To study socio-economic challenges faced by the inter-state migrant labour during the flood of 2018.
- To enquire about various initiatives of state government for welfare of inter-state migrant labour during the flood.

8. Data & Methodology:

This study is based on exploratory research design. The research paper consists of data from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected from Ernakulum district of Kerala. The rationale behind choosing Ernakulum district was high prevalence of inter-state migrant labour and severe impact of flood.

8.1 Sampling

The study chose 13 participants for the investigation through snowball sampling technique. The respondents consisted of inter-state migrant labour affected by Kerala flood only. Out of 13 participants, two from construction industry, two from hotels business, two from marine fisheries sector, two from daily wage earners, two from agro-processing factories and three from

plantations sector were chosen for the study. They ranged between 25 and 45 years of age having completed secondary education.

8.2 Data collection and Analysis

The tools of data collection were case study and in-depth interview. The study incorporated 4 case studies and 9 in-depth interviews. The primary data was collected over a period of 6 months using personal narrative approach and case study guide. The period of six months of data collection included ethnographic methods, including field notes, observations and informal conversations. The researchers conducted collective story telling sessions (CSS), key experience sessions (KES) to get in-depth understanding of data. The storytelling sessions framed narratives based on experiences of respondents throughout complex socio-material assemblage. The data related to risk perception, mobility, power relations in decision making were captured through key experience sessions (KES). The key thematic areas for investigation were drawn-out which consisted of principal components like health issues, work settings, harassment, deprivation etc. The respondents were questioned about their experiences during the flood preparation, disaster and rehabilitation stages. On the other hand, secondary data are gathered from a variety of published journals, articles, books, government websites and other internet sources. The secondary data was obtained using databases such as Jstor, Google Scholar, Springer, Academia.edu and website of Kerala Government. The qualitative data from in-depth interview and case study has been analysed through content analysis method.

9. Results and Discussion:

Inter-state migrant labour during the preparedness phase, disaster phase and rehabilitation phase of Kerala Flood:

This section analyses data from in-depth interviews with 09 inter-state migrant labour who suffered during flood of 2018. The socio-economic challenges faced by inter-state migrant labour during the preparedness, disaster and rehabilitation stages are depicted through thematic analysis of their experiences. The experience of respondents in responding to the crisis has brought a new dimension of mitigation strategies. Accounts of people's heroism and their tolerance of adversity have facilitated in zeroing on significant rescue efforts.

9.1. *Preparedness phase*

Most of inter-state migrant labour witnessed the flood for the first time, except for those from Odisha. They had prior experiences in handling the situation. Others suffered without proper information and support. Due to the language barrier, even though the authorities made continuous announcements, the information did not reach these labour. Most of these labour could not understand necessary steps to be followed at preparedness stage for this catastrophe. During key experience sessions (KES), one worker from construction industry excerpted,

"I was working at a construction company and staying with my friends. We didn't know the seriousness of the flood because we couldn't understand Malayalam. We saw news in the newspapers through pictures only

and hardly understood the scenario. Our owner was also not that bothered about keeping us updated."

The inter-state migrant labour revealed that social networks played a crucial role in passing the information among them. One labour working in the hotel narrated,

"My friends and relatives were working in Ernakulum. We were also from the same villages. Even though we were in different locations, we always stayed connected through our phones. So, during the flood they would keep updating us the information they could get. I would also pass the information on to them. This helped us more in preparation, especially during flood. In our group, some people don't even know how to use smartphones. Therefore, we kept on ensuring that they could get accurate information".

This situation highlighted lack of support from local community at initial stage. Most of these labourers were subjected to their fates for rescue and relief work. Since recovery requires state's intervention, it is quite obvious that these migrant workers were devoid of any support. Ideas about disaster risk reduction priorities also shape the general level of attention given to recovery within the fabric of public policy. Amid the urgency and politics of disaster response, there is a high chance that the situations and needs of more marginalised social groups may draw even less attention than they normally receive (Few et al., 2023).

The factory workers' interviews revealed the discrimination during the flood preparedness phase. Another worker from agro-processing industry shared his experience. He stated,

"Flood struck us. We are manufacturing workers who resided close to the factory. We didn't have many links outside. We did not know exactly what was occurring outdoors. After the flood, we learned that many of our friends working nearby were moved to safer places because they got information from the owners. Somehow, we managed to escape with the help of other Malayali people."

It was generally found that migrant workers engaged in marine sector were facing problems related to language which impeded their access to information for disaster preparedness. One inter-state migrant labour working in the marine sector stated,

"Language barrier and lack of education are the major problems, as they were not getting information. Here are persons from different states. I am from West Bengal. My co-worker is from Odisha. Our languages are different. Thankfully we both knew Hindi. But our owner was a Malayali. We were getting entire information in Malayalam only. Our co-worker from Tamil Nadu acted as mediator. So, we could get information at various levels."

The interview with these respondents revealed that the inter-state migrant labour faced various challenges during the preparedness phase because of language barrier and less social connections with local people. Mostly, they remained dependent upon co-workers and owners for any communication. The apathy of industry owners led them redundant in approach. Another significant finding was that there was an uneven distribution of information among the migrant workers.

9.2. ***Disaster phase***

The disaster has always a tantalizing effect on victims. The victims are not only socially and economically devastated but face a huge psycho-social ramifications of disaster. The disaster brings huge devastation which inevitably overwhelm our society. During flood of 2018, mostly inter-state migrant labour suffered a huge setback partly because of natural factors and partly because of antagonistic attitude of local people towards them. One migrant worker of hotel narrated his story and excerpted,

"We never thought flood would affect us. It was a night in the month of August. In the morning, it was raining, so we didn't have work. We were sitting in the room and getting a good night's sleep. One of my friends suddenly came and woke me up from sleep. When I woke up, our room was surrounded by water. I panicked. I only took my phone and money purse and left. We came after one week. I lost everything from certificates, dress, cooking utensils to bed. We owned everything after coming here. Then we thought at least we would have a job. Unfortunately, the owner suffered a huge loss in the flood, so he stopped everything. So, we lost our job."

Similarly, a plantation worker said,

"*I didn't get the two months' salary. In August, I was planning to visit my home in Odisha. Suddenly, this flood happened. My owner had a huge loss. So, I lost my job and didn't get my two months' salary.*"

Another inter-state migrant labour working as daily wage earner narrated his story of this ordeal. He suffered from an excruciating pain throughout this period of disdain. He stated,

"*We didn't get a chance to escape. We were trapped in our accommodation. We were scared because our phone was also not working. Heavy rain was also continuing. Together, almost 25 people were trapped near the construction site. We moved into some safer parts of the site. Somehow, we managed to stay there. We didn't eat anything for one day. The next day, some volunteers came here and our owner gave information regarding us. The place was safer, so they told us to stay there and provided food. Drinking water issues and toilet issues were there. Somehow, we managed it. After four days, the rain stopped and everything returned to normalcy".*

The inter-state migrants working in the marine sector had a different experience. During the flood, people from the nearest community came into boats. Boats were the safest place to stay during the flood. One migrant worker excerpted,

"We cannot go to work during the flood because the sea level changes. So, the people from the nearest community came here to stay with us. That was a fun day. Many people from different areas sent food and other supplies to them. We had also joined the volunteers' team to help the needy people."

Thus, some migrants working in the marine sector proudly became part of the rescue team during the flood. But this support was not meted-out to other migrant labour. The lack of proximity and social isolation of migrant workers prevented them in getting swift relief from this disaster.

9.3. ***Rehabilitation phase***

Those who stayed at camps couldn't find the proper accommodation after

closing of the camps. For the natives, those who stayed with them got help from the volunteers. In the case of migrants, they were not ready to take on any responsibility. One inter-state migrant labour working in the hotel stated,

"I was perplexed about what I will do after closing of the camp. The natives shifted to their relative's house or other accommodation was arranged by the authorities. They were a little terrified of accepting responsibility since they were afraid that it would bring major problems for them later. Some of them said that they could book tickets for us to return. But how would I return to the village without any money? What would I do after returning? If I moved from here, would I get my job back after returning?"

The uncertainties and anxiety engrossed the minds of migrant workers during the rehabilitation phase. The psychological impact of disaster was realized only during rehabilitation phase. One daily wages migrant labour excerpted,

"After the flood subsided, I visited my old places then only I understood the intensity of flood. The flood destroyed many of our job spots like Kalady, Permbavoor and Aluva. When I spoke with the proprietors, they indicated that they had suffered a significant loss. They were unsure how to overcome it. How could they hire in such a situation? These answers caused panic within me".

The existing penury of these migrant workers is aggravated by lack of awareness about governmental welfare measures. They are also excluded from the compensation due to lack of awareness. One migrant worker in the

plantation industry narrated,

"*I didn't receive any compensation. I heard that those who are affected by the flood will receive money. I had a massive loss, including my certificates. But I hadn't received anything yet. This is the first time I have heard that I will receive compensation. I didn't know about it earlier.*" Therefore, it may be deciphered that lack of knowledge, support, social connections resulted into deprivation of migrant workers from getting adequate rehabilitation. The inter-state migrant workers were denied basic relief assistance by their industry owners. They were rendered helpless and forced to suffer. The following case studies of certain migrant workers will reveal a real scenario regarding flood and its aftermath on them.

9.4. ***Case Study-1***

Sunil (name changed) is a 31-year-old man from West Bengal. He worked in the construction sector for three years. He was working with other bengali friends, so he had not learned any Malayalam word. Three months after the flood, he was transferred to another construction site where the native people are high. He faced huge losses when he cut himself off from his social circle. He couldn't understand the flood issue because of the language barrier. He was residing with three other native workers. During that night of August, 2018, they were stranded in a flood. They called their friends. They came with the rescue team and shifted to the owner's house. He lost everything except his mobile phone. The owner was helpless at that time. After coming to the village, he also experienced some post-traumatic issues like fear, anxiety and lack of sleep. He took several weeks to recover from

the near-death experience. After 6 months, he came to the old construction site again. The work had been stopped because of the loss happened in the flood. Then his friends helped him to find his current job. The native Malayali labour who worked with him got government help to get new Adhaar cards. But he could not get it and got it done from his own hometown only.

9.5. *Case Study-2*

Sanoop (name changed) is a 35-year-old person from Odisha who works in a factory. The previous year to flood, he brought his wife and two children to Kerala. The children were studying in Kerala. His wife was pregnant during the disaster. They took a small rented home and saved money to settle in Kerala. But the flood washed away their dreams. He took rented home far from the main town because he couldn't afford rent in the main city. He brought utensils and other amenities on his own with savings. The water level was raised suddenly so that he couldn't take everything. With pregnant wife and children, he shifted into camp with the help of authorities. He couldn't communicate properly to the authorities about health of his wife. Due to that, she missed proper medical care during the camp days. He didnot want to take risk, so he returned to the village. After a few months, he came alone and saw that he lost everything, including his job. Due to his migration status and lack of permanent residence, he didn't get any compensation from the government. He lost almost all the amenities except some certificates of children.

9.6. *Case Study-3*

Ravi (name changed) from Jharkhand has been working in the hotel in-

dustry of Kerala for the last 5 years. He reached Kerala a few months after the disaster. He was unaware of everything. He came with his friend from Assam. Both of them used to go for daily wage job. Most of the time, he would get job through the network of his friends. So, they didnot have a particular place of stay. Wherever they get the job, they would stay there. During the period of this disaster, they were trapped in the Ernakulum district. Somehow, the native people helped them reach camps. But the native people were not happy by bringing them to the camp. Six more families with children were there at camp. These families were concerned that they might steal their gold and cash. Some of them had made complaints about shifting migrant workers out of these camps. But all the places were flooded so, it was impossible to shift them to another place immediately. Staying at camp was very painful because discrimination from the native people due to misunderstandings was on the air. In this way, Ravi and his friend suffered a lot during rehabilitation period due to apathy of local people.

9.7. *Case Study-4*

Nabeel (name changed) is a 26-year-old man working in the marine sector of Ernakulam and has a different story to share. He is from West Bengal working here for the last 4 years. He was jobless staying on that boat, but his owner was kind. The owner agreed to provide food till work restarted. At that time, some native people came by boat to stay because the camps were overcrowded. The volunteers will provide food for them. Eventually, he became a volunteer with other friends. At that time, people needed to collect relief materials and give them to the people. The native people were happy that these migrant labours also joined hands distributing relief mate-

rials. Some boats went for rescue missions. After some time, he also became part of the rescue mission. He was so happy and proud to participate in the rescue mission that he started investing much of his time in this work. For him, the flood was a chance to show gratitude towards people of Kerala. He experienced a lot of solace in rendering services to the needy people at this time of disaster.

These four case studies showcase that migrant workers have suffered differently during the flood. The language barrier is one of the prominent issues reflected throughout the case studies, leading to adversity of their lives. Some of them faced resistance from native people which culminated into lack of proper emotional support. As any disaster is more psychologically weakening, the existing emotional disconnect worsens the situation. The inter-state migrant labour had already lost their employment and shelter. The added agony of local people towards them created trust deficit among them. Some of them got little support from even respective government authorities due to local pressure.

10. **Discussion:**

Most of the migrant workers are from low socio-economic background and have little education or are illiterate (Chowdhury, 2011). They had to bear significant losses during 2018 flood, just like the native people of Kerala. The government did not have proper data regarding the personal losses among the migrant workers. The studies reveal that they had to bear a significant loss in flood regarding their houses, certificates and other essentials.

The study highlights the issues of inter-state migrant workers during the preparedness, disaster and rehabilitation phases of flood situation of 2018. The study found that language barriers affected migrant workers' ability to follow the instructions given during preparedness phase. They faced difficulty in following the warning instructions given by authorities because it was in Malayalam language. It is evident that the preparedness phase was not that much migrant-friendly. These migrant workers were further discriminated against during the rescue and rehabilitation phase. Despite the fact that the flood had a greater impact on them, they were always put as last resort. During the period of flood, they didn't receive much help for rehabilitation. They were also excluded from the post-flood medical care. They were forcefully evacuated from the camps. The parent states for these people also rendered them helpless. These communities were largely neglected by both the home state and the host state during flood of 2018. The state government announced monetary help for the migrants who lost their houses and livelihoods, but only a few enjoyed these benefits. The plight of inter-state migrant workers during flood of Kerala is the perfect example to rethink over strategies to address their grievances (Babu, 2022). There is an urgent need to create migrant-friendly disaster reduction system where principle of egalitarianism may be followed. Through unanimous pattern of rehabilitation, any disaster can be responded. The disaster can never be tackled through differential approach towards its victims.

11. Conclusion

Kerala is one those few states in India which has provided a number of welfare measures for inter-state migrant workers (Babu, 2022). These mea-

sures and interventions of the government are exemplary for welfare of the migrant workers. During flood of 2018, the government of Kerala initiated various steps to mitigate long term effects of this disaster. As evident, natural disasters such as floods not only affect human life, public infrastructure and economy, but also cause enormous psychological trauma which includes insecurity, fear and depression (Rajan, 2022). Owing to shut-down of various industries, these migrant workers were forced to return to their hometowns. These disadvantaged communities faced particular hurdles during disasters like flood. It not only disrupted inter-state migrant workers' lives and livelihood but also put them in danger of health problems, economic insecurity and social exclusion. In such a situation, disaster recovery keeps a significant position. The recovery interventions should be customised in such a way that there is no space for resistance. The sustainability of recovery in case of disaster depends upon universalistic response to all kinds of trauma caused by disaster. The opportunity for subaltern voices to be exercised and respected is surely one way to help bring about socially just and sustainable disaster recovery. The episode of 2018 has raised various questions related to kinds of disaster response system in Kerala. It has brought the need for bringing an inclusive approach towards disaster risk reduction. The plight of migrant workers should be at par with that of native people from disaster preparedness phase to rehabilitation phase. The governmental as well as community-based initiatives can strengthen response system where migrant and natives can withstand tremors of catastrophe. It has to be a level-playing field in response to kinds of devastating cataclysm.

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labour-intensive informal service sectors are not free to bargain or negotiate the length or conditions of their work. Long working hours are not a matter of individual choice; but are shaped by low wages, insecure employment, labour contracting systems, weak bargaining power and absence of social protection. The question is not whether migrant workers should work longer or shorter hours, but whether the hours they already work for are fairly remunerated with overtime compensation, occupational safety, employment security, paid leave and dignity at work. When prolonged working hours coexist with inadequate wages, insecure employment and weak labour rights, they become symptomatic of structural labour precarity and, in extreme situations, conditions conducive to labour exploitation and labour bondage.

Enforcement of Minimum Wages Act and OSH Code, which place certain parameters of working hours, overtime wages and benefits, especially for migrant workers who often lack bargaining power and awareness of their rights, increases their precarity. With limited access to social security measures, such as healthcare and pensions, they are forced to work beyond legal limits just to make ends meet. The existing data shows that a significant portion of workers already exceed legal working hours.

Interstate migrant workers, who leave their home states in search of better opportunities, find themselves trapped in a vicious cycle of long working hours, low wages, and poor living conditions. The cost of living is rising, inequality is deepening, and yet they continue to earn a pittance that barely covers their basic needs. Weak enforcement of working hours, compensation and rest periods, also have impacts on mental and physical fatigue among employees, making them little more than bonded labour.

1. Economic Vulnerability of the Migrants

This study, using the NSSO Multiple Indicator Survey (2019-21) also brings into focus income vulnerability of migrants as it analyses the change in income on account of migration. This survey provides insightful data on income vulnerability of migrant workers by analyzing how their earnings

alter due to migration. Workers perceive migration as a means of accessing better livelihood conditions, but migration may not always go with financial stability.

Table 7: Percentage distribution of persons by change in income due to migration for each State in Rural Areas. (2020-21)

Rural	De-creased	In-creased	Remain Same	To-tal
Uttar Pradesh	58	33	9	100
West Bengal	56	33	11	100
Bihar	56	30	14	100
Odisha	47	40	13	100
Kerala	44	23	32	100
Chhattisgarh	36	45	19	100
Rajasthan	32	51	17	100
Madhya Pradesh	25	54	21	100
Jharkhand	25	67	8	100
Punjab	24	56	20	100
Tamil Nadu	19	57	24	100
Karnataka	18	45	38	100
Andhra Pradesh	14	55	31	100
Maharashtra	14	49	37	100
Haryana	11	71	17	100
Telangana	11	71	18	100
Gujarat	8	55	36	100
All-India	**30**	**47**	**24**	**100**

Source: National Sample Survey- Multiple Indicator Survey (2020-21)

Table 7 reveals significant variations across states, reflecting the diverse economic opportunities and challenges faced by migrants in rural destinations. At the all-India level, 47% of migrants to rural areas reported an in

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