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Emerging Patterns of Migration Streams in India: A State-level Analysis of the 2011 Census

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Abstract

This article discusses changing patterns of migration in India using the data from the 2011 Census. In this study, the statistical (growth rate, percentage distribution) and cartographic methods have been used to analyse and map the changing patterns of migration across the states in India. It is found that in India, 37.5 percent of the population experienced spatial mobility in the 2011 Census which is higher than that of the 2001 Census (30.8 percent). The volume of migrants in the intercensal period (2001 to 2011) increased from 98.3 million to 161.4 million, an increase of over 64 percent. Overall, migration is more likely among the rural populations compared to the urban. However, substantial increase in the volume of urban-urban movements (14 million in 2001 to around 33 million in 2011) is the focus of the current study along with the rural-urban flows. For the first time in Indian Census history, the volume of urban-urban migration overtook the rural-urban migration volume in the last intercensal period. Creation of additional 2700 new Census Towns in the 2011 Census may be the real driving force for this staggering increase.

Keywords: migration streams; increase; rural; urban; Indian Census.

Introduction

The Provisional Migration data (in respect of the place of last residence) estimates of the urbanisation rate published in the Census of India 2011 have evoked several queries among social scientists and academicians (Kundu, 2011; Pradhan, 2013; Samanta, 2014). Although migration research is an age-old phenomenon in India, during the last decade the country has experienced a noticeable increase in human movement (314 million in the 2001 Census to 453 million in the 2011 Census). In India, out of the 1.21 billion population, nearly 453 million are migrants. The share of migrants to the total population in India is more than 37.4 percent. In other words, four out of every ten people in India are migrants. While in the previous 2001 Census, the share of migrants to the total population was around 31 percent, the National Sample Survey (NSSO) data 2007-2008 reported that about 29 percent of India's population is internally mobile (Bhagat and Mohanty, 2009). The impetus behind this article is to throw empirical light on recent migration activities in India using the 2011 Census data. In developing countries like India, rural-rural migration is still dominant, roughly accounting for 62 percent of all movements in 1999-2000,

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indicating a sharp increase in rural-urban migration so as to work in the expanding urban informal sectors (Dev and Evenson, 2003; Srivastava and Bhattacharya, 2003). The study by Premi (1984) on internal migration in India based on the 1961 to 1981 Censuses revealed that rural-rural migration formed the dominant migration stream, followed by rural-urban and urban-urban in the successive censuses. The analysis of census data in different Southeast and South Asian countries also observed that rural-rural migration is the dominant stream followed by rural-urban, urban-urban and urban-rural (Kumar, 2003; Afsar, 2003; Guest, 2003). The study by Afsar (2003) on Census of Bangladesh 2001 reported that rural-urban migrants account for two-thirds of all migrants and that the number is increasing rapidly. The study by Guest (2003) on Census of Thailand 2001 reported that rural-rural migration has been decreasing in Thailand while the share of rural-urban migration has been increasing. After the liberalization of Indian economy, rural-urban migration accelerated which pushed more numbers of rural people to metropolitan areas to seek better employment opportunities (Kundu and Gupta, 1996). In India, there has also been an increase in the proportion of urban-urban migrants (Lusome and Bhagat, 2006).

Objectives, Data Sources and Methodology

Against this background, the present paper attempts to analyse the changing patterns of migration in India over the decades. The broad objective has been divided into two, that is:

- 1) To analyse the trend and pattern of migration across Indian states; and, 2)
- To map and analyse the rural-urban and urban-urban migration streams across Indian states.

Since rural-urban and urban-urban migration is motivated by economic reasons, it has different policy implications. So, the present study will analyse these two streams. The data required for the present study have been used from Migration Table D-5 (Censuses of 2001 and 2011) and Primary Census Abstract (Censuses of 2001 and 2011) across India and state levels. To fulfil the objectives outlined above, statistical techniques (growth rate and percentile distribution) and various cartographic methods have been used.

The limited information provided (so far due to unknown reasons) in the Migration Table of the 2011 Census published by the Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, has confined the discussion to migration streams, i.e. rural-rural, urban-rural, rural-urban and urban-urban and growth rate of migration over the intercensal period. The available information and data in Table D-5 do not give any separate insight into inter-state or intra-state migration, which is very useful for policy implications. The present study lacks socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the migrant respondents which could have proven useful for initiating effective policies and



programmes. Therefore, due to data constraints, the analyses of the rural-urban and urban-urban migration streams present the overall migration scenario in the Indian states which includes both inter-state and intra-state migration patterns of the particular state.

1. Trends and Patterns of Migration in India: An Insight

In the 2011 Census, 161.42 million migrants reported their duration of residence as less than one year to nine years while the figure was only about 98.3 million in 2001 Census with a registered growth rate of 64 percent. Although as per the 2011 Census rural people are more likely to migrate (88.3 million), the mobility figure of urban population is quite noticeable (73.1 million). As per the 2001 Census, the volume of rural migrants was 61.8 million and that of urban migrants was 36.5 million. Thus, the volume of additional migrant population in urban mobility is higher (36.9 million) than the addition in rural mobility (26.4 million). The overall growth rate of urban migrants registered a steep jump (more than 100 percent) over the intercensal period, while rural migrants registered a growth rate of around 43 percent. The share of urban migrants rose from 27 percent in the 2001 Census to 45 percent in the 2011 Census. Among migration streams, rural-rural migration is still dominant, accounting for 69.1 million migrants. The figure was about 53.3 million in the 2001 Census. Thus, in the decennial period, the growth rate of rural-rural migration was 29.6 percent. The second most dominant stream is urban-urban, accounting for 32.94 million migrants. Interestingly in the 2001 Census, urban-urban migration stream accounted for 14.3 million migrants and was the third-most significant migration stream after rural-rural and rural-urban. But in the 2011 Census, the urban-urban stream emerged as the second-most significant migration stream in India with an absolute increase of more than 18 million migrants. The registered growth rate of urban-urban migration was 130.3 percent, higher than any other migration stream (Table 1). The third largest stream is rural-urban migration (rural-push), accounting for around 33 million migrants with a calculated growth rate of 56.8 percent. The urban-rural (counter stream or reverse movement) stream has the lowest volume of migrants accounting for 11.45 million. However, there has been a considerable increase in this stream during the period between the 2001 and 2011 Censuses.

It is evident from the study from the 55th round (1999-2000) of the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), that in India the flow of rural-rural migration is substantially higher (61 percent) compared to all other streams. Similarly, NSSO in its 64th round (2007-2008) reported that rural-rural migration was the dominant migration stream, accounting for nearly 62 percent of the total internal migrants, followed by rural-urban migration stream which constituted nearly 20 percent of the total internal migrants. The share of urban-urban migration stream stood at 13 percent, while that of urban-rural migration stream was merely 6 percent of the total internal migrants. Also, as compared

to the period 1999-2000, the share of rural-rural migration has decreased while that of rural-urban migration has increased during the period 2007-2008. The study by Singh *et al.* (2011) shows that from the 1971 to the 2001 Census years, rural-rural migration was the most dominant migration stream in India, but its volume decreased over time. Further, the study also reported a gradual upward trend in rural-urban and urban-urban migration during the same time period. Thus, a combined turnover of the rural-urban and urban-urban migration streams (65 million) may create significant pressure on infrastructure (social and physical), shaping of the economic, social and political life, and, job markets in cities (Weiner, 1978; Kundu, 2007; Rajan *et al.*, 2011; Srivastava, 2012a; Bhagat, 2012b; Rameez and Varma, 2014).

Table 1. Migration streams in intercensal period (million) in India

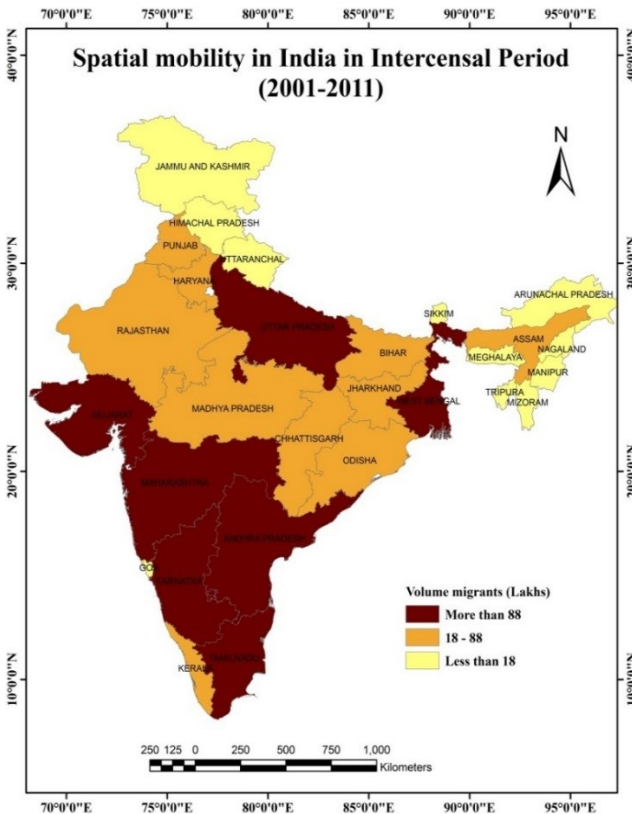
Migration streams	Volume in million		Growth rate (in percentage)
	2011	2001	
Rural-Rural	69.1	53.3	29.6
Urban-Rural	11.4	6.2	84.6
Rural-Urban	32.1	20.5	56.8
Urban-Urban	32.9	14.3	130.3

Source: *Census of India, 2011 (Provisional Migration Table)*

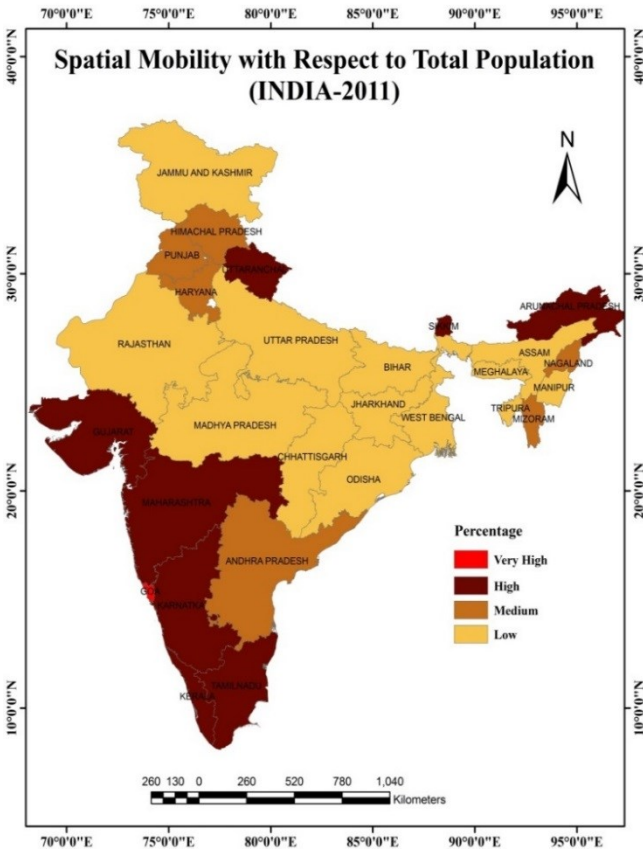
The 2011 Census data on the overall regional migration patterns in India indicates the emergence of geographical pockets in the country. The southern states of India, which have become more industrially well-developed after the introduction of economic reforms, experience more mobility than the agriculturally-developed states of North India (Map 1). It is indicative of a shift in the course of migration stream from agriculturally-developed states to industrialised states. In North India, only Uttar Pradesh reported the size of its migrant population which stood at 17.55 million. The state added 7.47 million migrants in the last decade, registering a record 74.1 percent growth. The state of Maharashtra, which is the financial capital of India, has reported the highest number of migrants (22.89 million). The State added only 7.11 million migrants, registering a slow growth rate (45.5 percent) which was lower than the national average (64 percent). The emergence of southern Indian states as favourable destinations for migration was noticeable. States like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh experienced a phenomenal increase in the number of migrants (Map 1). The state of Tamil Nadu reported 12.39 million migrants in the 2011 Census, while it was only 3.95 million in the 2001 Census. The State added the highest number of migrants (8.47 million) among all states in India, registering a growth rate of 213.7 percent. The states of Andhra



Pradesh and Karnataka had 12.29 million and 10.49 million migrants respectively; of these, 4.67 million and 4.71 million migrants respectively were added during the intercensal period. The number of migrants in Kerala was 6.38 million. The State also recorded a phenomenal growth of migrants in the intercensal period. In eastern India, West Bengal has a sizeable migrant population (10.33 million) with a 48 percent growth rate, which is lower than the national average of 64 percent. Most of the North-Eastern States, which are less attractive to migrants as compared to the rest of India, also registered a phenomenal increase in the number of migrants. The state of Assam recorded a 105 percent increase in the number of migrants. Other North-Eastern States like Manipur (281 percent), Meghalaya (307 percent) and Nagaland (225 percent) recorded tremendous growth in spatial mobility. The volume of migrants in Meghalaya is 3.02 lakh, Nagaland 2.82 lakh, and Manipur 2.62 lakh respectively. Interestingly, the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi, which holds 2.9 million migrants in the 2011 Census, registered a significant low in migration growth (23.8 percent) over the intercensal period as compared to the 2001 Census (42.5 percent).



The percentage distribution of migrants with respect to the total population of states indicates regional concentration as observed in the 2001 Census. However, within the intercensal period the proportionate share has increased in all states (Figure 1). The state of Tamil Nadu reported the highest percentage point increase over the intercensal period. In the 2001 Census, the proportionate share of migrants to the total population was only 6 percent, while the 2011 Census reported more than 17 percent with a nearly 11 percentage point increase. In the 2001 Census, states like Goa, NCT of Delhi, Maharashtra, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat reported a considerable percentage of migrant population to the total state population (Figure 1). In the 2011 Census, the western region of the country, i.e. Gujarat and Maharashtra, along with the southern region comprising Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, reported a higher proportion of migrants to the total population in the last decade than the rest of India (Map 2). In Maharashtra, migrants constitute 20.38 percent of the total population of the state as per the



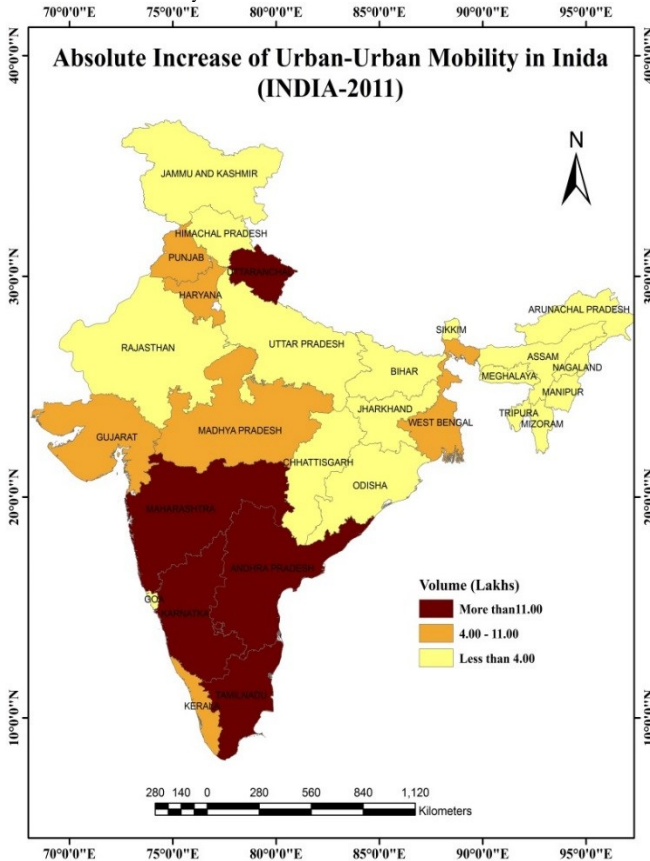
Source: *Census of India, Migration table prepared by Author.*



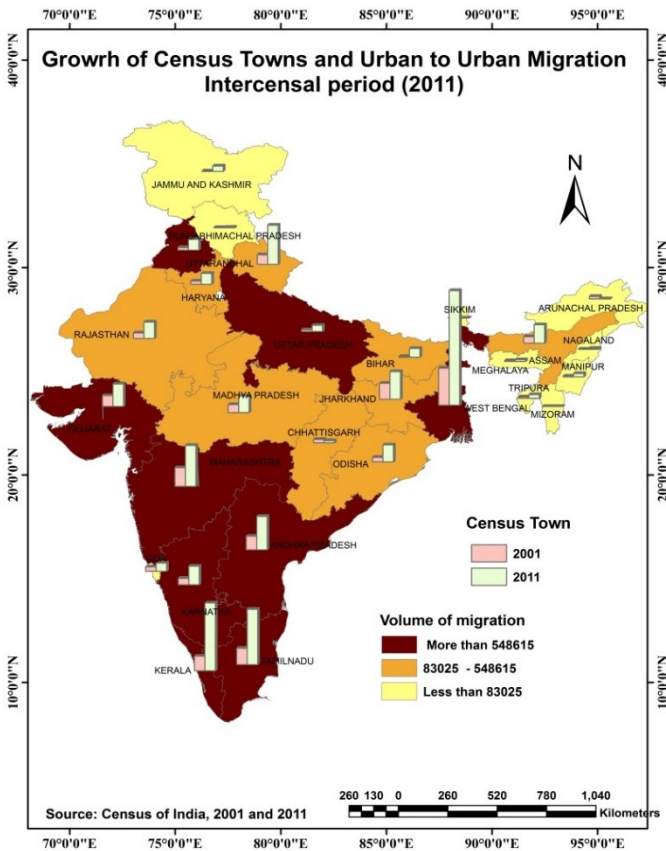
2011 Census. In Gujarat, the proportion of migrants (whose duration of residence is less than one year to nine years) in the total population is 17 percent (Map 2). These are the states which are industrially well-developed, but scope for urban informal work may lead to the high concentration of migrants. Although the southern states are emerging as the industrial hub of India, large-scale emigration to the Middle Eastern countries still takes place. As a result, labourers from distant states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha and Assam landed in most of the southern states to fill the labour vacuum (Narayana *et al.*, 2013).

2.a. Urban-Urban Migration Stream

The discussion on state-level migration streams, particularly from urban-urban and rural-urban areas, found wide regional variations in the intercensal period. The volume of urban-urban migration is one of the important migration streams, next only to rural-rural in the 2011 Census. This flow is caused by both



push factors of urban areas (reclassification of villages into urban or small towns) and pull factors of urban areas (large cities). In other words, increasing job opportunities in major cities as compared to towns gave rise to the urban-urban migration stream in India (Kundu and Sarangi, 2007; Srivastava, 2012; Singh, 2016). The urban-urban movements are also significantly increasing; as a result, the urban-urban stream is likely to emerge as the dominant migration stream in the future (Lusome and Bhagat, 2006). The creation of jobs in the informal sector in major metropolises and big cities also fuelled the urban-urban stream (Premi, 1990). The intercensal growth rate of urban-urban migration in India is registered at 130.3 percent. As per state level analysis, the increased levels of urbanization have been usually fuelled by a sudden increase in the number of Census Towns (CTs). It ultimately resulted in a sudden increase in the volume of urban-urban migration, which suppressed the volume of rural-urban stream in the intercensal period. The state of Maharashtra



Source: Census of India, Migration table prepared by Author.

accounts for 5.93 million urban-urban migrants and holds the top rank at the national level. It indicates that Maharashtra is a traditionally-favoured destination for migrants (Census of India 2001). But the State has reported a slow rate of urban-urban migration growth (78.4 percent) in the last decade as compared to the southern Indian states. Tamil Nadu occupies the second place with the urban-urban migration volume at 4.36 million. The state has witnessed tremendous growth in urban-urban migration. Over the intercensal period, 3.23 million urban-urban migrants were added in the State (Appendix 1). The intercensal growth rate of urban-urban migration stream accounts for 284.9 percent, which is highest amongst the southern states. Other southern states like Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh account for 1.09 million, 2.83 million and 2.59 million respectively, which can be inferred from Map 3. Amongst these three states, the highest number of urban-urban migrants have been added in Karnataka (1.74 million), followed by Andhra Pradesh (1.71 million) and Kerala (.77 million). Although Kerala added comparatively smaller number of urban-urban migrants, its registered growth rate of urban-urban migrants is highest at 235.6 percent, followed by Andhra Pradesh (194.89 percent) and Karnataka (158.71 percent) in that order. The western state of Gujarat reported a considerable volume of urban-urban migrants, accounting for 2.16 million. The state registered a 102 percent growth rate in case of urban-urban stream and added 1.10 million urban-urban migrants in the last decade.

The eastern state of West Bengal accounted for 1.74 million urban-urban migrants with a registered growth rate lower (99 percent) than the state average (135 percent). The NCT of Delhi also reported a very low growth rate of urban-urban migration stream. Thus, while traditional destinations (Mumbai, Kolkata, and Delhi) have reached a saturation level, the emergence of new urban centres with comparatively vast scope for jobs in the informal sectors have gradually diverted the route of urban-urban migration stream. In the northern part of India, only Uttarakhand reported the highest volume of urban-urban migrants (3.14 million) among the rest of the states. The state of Punjab reported 1.10 million urban-urban migrants. Uttarakhand accounted for a 200 percent growth in the urban-urban migration stream. Over the intercensal period, the State added 2.10 million urban-urban migrants (Map 3). Interestingly, in all other major states of Central India and North-East India, the absolute increase in urban-urban migration is lowest than the rest of India (Map 3). This region does not have any large urban centre. It can be further inferred from Map 3 that there exists a clear-cut north versus south divide in terms of absolute increase in urban-urban migration. Thus, the northern region which has a higher percentage of rural population pushes people to flock to urban areas far away from their native place. Nevertheless, the growth rate of urban-urban migration stream in these states is noticeable in the 2011 Census. Among all states, Himachal Pradesh recorded a very low growth rate of urban-urban migration (29.6 percent).

In the present study, the bivariate correlation estimates found that the emergence of new CTs is positively associated with increased volume of urban-urban migration in India ($r = 0.41, p < 0.05$). It can be inferred from Map 4, which depicts the increased volume of urban-urban migration *vis-à-vis* the growth rate of CTs. It is clearly visible from Map 4 that most of the southern states which have recorded tremendous increase in the number of CTs over the intercensal period also reported higher volumes of urban-urban migration. In Tamil Nadu, 265 CTs were added during the intercensal period. In Kerala, in the 2001 Census, there were 99 CTs, but the number increased to 461 in the 2011 Census. Similar situation is observed in rest of the southern states. The highest number of CTs was added in West Bengal. In West Bengal, the number of CTs in the 2011 Census is 780 while it was only 252 in the 2001 Census (Pradhan, 2013). A closer look into this phenomenon of sudden rise in both the share and volume of urban-urban migration stream may be explained by considering the fact that the 2011 Census had experienced an unprecedented growth in the number of CTs. Thus, because of lack of facilities in rural areas, the out-migrating workers have shifted to non-agricultural activities (Guin and Das, 2015). Although the exodus continues, the stream designation has changed. Thus, the gradual shifting of urban-urban stream as the dominant pattern calls for a new interpretation of rural-urban migration stream in India.

2.b. Rural-Urban Migration Stream

Prior to the publication of the Census of India 2011 Migration Table (Table D-5), the rural-urban migration stream was the second most important stream after rural-rural migration. However, in the 2011 Census, the rural-urban migration flow slid to the third position in respect of significant stream of migration (32.15 million migrants) because of the phenomenal increase in urban-urban migration. In India, temporary labour migration from rural-urban is substantial (63 percent), while among permanent labour migrants the rural-urban migration stream has the largest share (35 percent) followed by the urban-urban stream (27 percent) (Keshri and Bhagat, 2012). In rural areas, appalling poverty, unbearable unemployment, low and uncertain wages, uneconomic land holdings and inadequate facilities for education and other services work as push factors (Yadava, 1989; Kundu and Gupta, 1996; Keshri and Bhagat, 2012). People flock to urban areas to avail better infrastructure and services (Samata, 2014). In contrast, the pool of urban areas includes amenities like better employment opportunities, fixed working hours, regular and higher wages, educational facilities, and better comforts of living (Bhagat and Mohanty, 2009). In brief, rural-urban migration is an outcome of lucrative opportunities available in urban areas. States which are characterized by poor development of socio-economic indices also drain their human resources into the major urban destinations which have become commercial magnets since the liberalization of the Indian economy (Rameez and Varma, 2014).



The regional pattern of rural-urban migration stream indicates a low rate of growth as compared to that of the urban-urban stream in the 2011 Census. States which experienced massive urban-urban migration growth rate did not necessarily experience a higher rural-urban growth rate (Appendix 1). In the 2011 Census, Maharashtra is still one of the most desirable destinations for rural migrants, flowing either from other states (inter-state) or from other districts within the states (intra-state). The State reported 5.39 million rural-urban migrants, which is slightly lower than that of its urban-urban (5.93 million) stream. In the last decade, the State experienced 26.6 percent growth rate in respect of rural-urban migration stream, which is also lower than the growth rate of the urban-urban stream. In most North-Eastern states (Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura), the growth rate of rural-urban migration is noticeable. The Central Indian states where majority of the population is residing in rural areas categorised by low-income level, agrarian-based economies (mostly rain-fed), hilly and scheduled tribe/caste population dominated states also reported a higher rural-urban migration growth rate than the national average (54.7 percent) in the intercensal period (Appendix 1). Micro-level studies in India also found that the above-mentioned states (Breman, 1994; Jayaraman, 1979; Mosse et al., 2005) reported higher levels of migration from rural-urban. Uttar Pradesh with the largest population size in India reported 1.18 million migrants in the rural-urban stream. Another geographical pocket, i.e. states in north India, reported small volume of rural-urban migrants either because of the agrarian nature of the economy and low level of industrial development or a low level of urbanisation, excluding the case of Haryana. Haryana accounted for 1.05 million rural-urban migrants. The emergence of Gurgaon city and the influence of the National Capital Region generated vast number of jobs in the urban informal sectors in the State (Sudhakar, 2014). In Gujarat, 3.14 million migrants reported that they moved from rural-urban, which is higher than urban-urban migration stream. In the State, the growth rate of rural-urban migration stream is very low as compared to the urban-urban stream (Appendix 1). Interestingly, in the State, the total addition of migrants from rural-urban is higher (1.13 million) than the addition of urban-urban migrants (1.10 million). The State has a long history of rural-urban migration as compared to its neighbouring states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh (Breman, 1994). The story of rural-urban migration in the southern states is also interesting. The Gulf countries in Middle-East Asia attract a substantial number of migrants from South India, creating a vacuum for unskilled/semi-skilled labour in the State. However, the process of urbanisation and industrialisation created new job opportunities in the urban informal sector. As a result, people from remote villages located in North India (Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand), East India (West Bengal and Odisha) or even from the North-East India (Assam and Manipur) started to flock to the southern states to work in the urban informal sector. Moreover, the wage rate

in most of the southern states is much higher than in rest of the Indian states (Narayana *et al.*, 2013). Kerala reported 1.69 million rural-urban migrants, which is higher than the volume of urban-urban stream.

Although in the intercensal period urban-urban migration experienced a higher rate of growth rate (235.6 percent) than rural-urban stream (193.4 percent), the net addition of rural-urban stream (1.12 million) is higher than that of urban-urban stream (0.72 million). Among the southern states, Andhra Pradesh has the highest number of rural-urban migrants, accounting for 2.43 million followed by Tamil Nadu (2.24 million). In all southern states, the net addition of urban-urban stream is higher than rural-urban, except in Kerala. In the past, migrants were mostly employed in construction and plantation sectors, but now they are engaged in more or less all sectors of the economy. In every restaurant, workshop and petrol pump, one can find migrants hailing from West Bengal, Odisha, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Manipur (Narayana *et al.*, 2013). The existing intra-state inequality and inter-state inequalities and income difference are also likely to fuel the emergence of this stream. Although migrants collectively constitute a small part of the total population of the North-Eastern states as compared to the rest of the Indian states, interestingly, the states of Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland reported exceptionally high numbers of rural-urban migrants than urban-urban migrants at the all India level. These states also reported a slower rate of rural-urban migration stream as compared to the urban-urban migration flow. States in Central India (Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh) and East India (West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha) also reported a higher number of rural-urban migrants than urban-urban, except for West Bengal. Although the volume of rural-urban migration is low in these states as compared to other Indian states, it is higher than the urban-urban migration stream in the North-Eastern states (Appendix 1). However, interestingly, in these states, urban-urban migration got a boost in the last decade as compared to the rural-urban migration flow. Sudden increase in the number of CTs in India, particularly in these states, may be the reason for this shift to urban-urban migration (Pradhan, 2013; Guin and Das, 2015). Since many of the villages in the 2011 Census qualified as CTs, it added more numbers of urban migrants which went unacknowledged in the 2001 Census.

Conclusion and Policy Brief

A significant finding that emerges from this study is that during the specified decennial period, spatial mobility has increased tremendously in India. The level of increase in urbanization which is fuelled by the sudden upsurge in the number of CTs in 2011 ultimately resulted in an increase the volume of urban-urban migration but suppressed the volume of rural-urban stream in the intercensal period. The bivariate correlation estimates found that the emergence of new CTs is positively associated with increased volume of urban-urban migration in India. This study validates previous studies (Kundu, 2007; Bhagat,



2012a) which found that in India, migration is rooted in the emerging pattern of urbanization. The study makes it public that for the first time in the Census history, the volume of urban-urban migration stream surpassed that of the rural-urban stream during the intercensal (2011) period. The study raises certain questions regarding the alarming increase in the volume of urban-urban migration. Can urban-urban (U-U) migration be the result of some census activism working under pressure in order to report a lower level of rural-urban destitute migration or of the reclassification of settlements and shrinking job opportunities in small cities that would push its population to the major cities?

The migration stream—whether from rural-urban or urban-urban—is what ultimately exacerbates the serious urban unemployment problems (Todaro, 1969) and creates significant pressure on the available infrastructure in the urban centres. Rural-urban migration or migration from small cities to large cities has often been considered as a major factor behind the growth of slums, urban congestion and housing shortages (Rameez and Varma, 2014; Kundu, 2007). On the other side, migrants are often blamed for the declining civic amenities and almost all of the culminating woes of the city. They are even held responsible for the rising crime rate as well as for the rising law and order problems in the city (Bhagat, 2012b). Thus, there is a need for a comprehensive urban development policy which will recognise the role of migration, rather than view it as a labour policy issue to overcome the emerging problems in urban areas in view of the increasing level of migration. There must be inclusive urban development policy (particularly for those small towns) to create better job opportunities which are so far neglected in urban development policies in India. Still, rural-urban migration, which is the second most migration stream, is fuelled by insufficient economic opportunities in rural areas. Therefore, there should also be comprehensive rural development policy to hinder the pace of large-scale migrations from villages in the country.

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