



# Internal Migration and Climate Resilience in India

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Are current policies  
and interventions  
providing adaptive  
social protection?

## **Internal Migration and Climate Resilience in India: Are current policies and interventions providing adaptive social protection?**

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## List of Abbreviations

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<b>ARHCs</b>	Affordable Rental Housing Complexes
<b>ASP</b>	Adaptive Social Protection
<b>BCAP</b>	Bengaluru Climate Action and Resilience Plan
<b>BoCWA</b>	Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act
<b>BIS</b>	Bureau of Indian Standards
<b>BMTC</b>	Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation
<b>BPL</b>	Below Poverty Line
<b>BREADS</b>	Bangalore Rural Educational and Development Society
<b>BSUP</b>	Basic Services to the Urban Poor
<b>CCA</b>	Climate Change Adaptation
<b>CMID</b>	Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development
<b>CSR</b>	Corporate Social Responsibility
<b>DRR</b>	Disaster Risk Reduction
<b>ECCE</b>	Early Childhood Care and Education
<b>EPoS</b>	Electronic Point of Sale
<b>EWS</b>	Economically Weaker Section
<b>FPS</b>	Fair Price Shop
<b>ICDS</b>	Integrated Child Development Services
<b>IHSDP</b>	Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme
<b>ISMWA</b>	Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act
<b>ISMWWS</b>	Inter-state Migrant Workers Welfare Scheme
<b>JNNURM</b>	Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission
<b>KISMAT</b>	Kerala Interstate Migrants Alliance for Transformation
<b>KSRTC</b>	Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation
<b>LAMP</b>	Learning and Migration Programme
<b>LIG</b>	Low Income Group
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>MSMEs</b>	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises

<b>NAPCC</b>	National Action Plan on Climate Change
<b>NBC</b>	National Building Code
<b>NCPCR</b>	National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
<b>NFSA</b>	National Food Security Act
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organisations
<b>NIOS</b>	National Institute of Open Schooling
<b>NMSH</b>	National Mission on Sustainable Habitat
<b>NREGA</b>	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
<b>ONORC</b>	One Nation One Ration Card
<b>PDS</b>	Public Distribution System
<b>PMAY (U)</b>	Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban)
<b>PPP</b>	Public-Private Partnerships
<b>RTE</b>	Right to Education
<b>SAPCC</b>	State Action Plan on Climate Change
<b>SCPCR</b>	State Commission for Protection of Child Rights
<b>SHGs</b>	Self Help Groups
<b>SP</b>	Social Protection
<b>TIG</b>	Technology Innovation Grant
<b>TSM</b>	Technology Sub-Mission
<b>UHCRC</b>	Urban Health and Climate Resilience Cell
<b>UIDAI</b>	Unique Identification Authority of India



# Executive Summary

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*Image credits:  
Hemant Kumar, IIHS, 2025*

Migration is a critical livelihood strategy to manage risk, meet aspirations, and diversify incomes. In addition to this, across India it is increasingly becoming an anticipatory or responsive strategy to manage impacts of climate change, experienced through drought, floods, heatwaves, cyclones and extreme weather events. The movement of people within national borders—driven by employment, education, marriage, and agrarian distress—has long shaped India's development landscape. As of 2011, internal migrants constituted 37% of the population. The most recent estimates of internal migration from the PLFS (2020–21) reports lower migration rates than the 2011 census but overlooks seasonal/ short-term migration and undercounts migrants as the data was collected between the COVID-19 lockdowns. Climate change compounds internal migration, by impacting rural livelihoods negatively. Once in cities, migrants often face precarious living and working conditions, with limited access to infrastructure, basic services, and rights.

This report reviews 94 interventions across national, state (Karnataka and Kerala), and city levels (Bengaluru and Kochi) to assess whether current development, labour, and climate change policies and interventions recognise and target internal migrants and whether they are helping build adaptive capacities of people on the move. The analysis applies the lens of Adaptive Social Protection—a framework that integrates social protection, climate change adaptation, and disaster risk reduction—to examine whether social protection systems are flexible and responsive to support migrants in a climate-changed India.

## Key Findings

India's current social protection and climate governance systems inadequately address the intersection of migration and climate change. Despite growing evidence of climate-induced displacement and urban vulnerabilities, interventions remain fragmented, siloed, and insufficiently responsive to the needs of mobile populations.

### Varied perceptions and stigma

Migration is framed inconsistently—sometimes as a driver of development, elsewhere as a security concern

## Why supporting migrants is key to climate-resilient development



### India's urban population

**600 million**

by 2031

Urban Population

**850 million**

by 2051

(MoEFCC)



### Migration & climate risks

**400 million**

in 2024

Internal migrants

(EAC-PM)

**5.4 million**

in 2024

Disaster-induced displacements

(IDMC)

**\$10 billion**

in 2023

Economic loss due to climate change

(Swiss Re Institute)



### Economic and development pressures

**3-20%**

by 2100

Loss in GDP due to climate change

(RBI)

**\$1 trillion**

by 2030

Needed for climate change adaptation

(RBI)

(e.g., interventions involving surveillance). Such framing shapes public and institutional attitudes, often reinforcing stigma and exclusion.

**Migrant exclusion from welfare systems**

Migrant workers remain under-protected due to domicile-based service delivery, documentation barriers, and limited portability. Schemes like One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) and ARHCs aim to improve access but face implementation and awareness gaps. Informal workers, often excluded from schemes like ESI and employee compensation laws, face high vulnerability to climate and livelihood shocks.

**Sectoral silos and fragmentation**

Most interventions focus on a single sector (e.g., food, housing, employment) with limited multi-sectoral coordination. Education-focused efforts treat migration as a disruption but rarely address climate-induced displacement of children. Health and nutrition schemes (e.g., ICDS, mid-day meals) benefit migrants indirectly but lack tailored provisions.

**Limited scale and gender sensitivity**

NGO-led efforts are more holistic and migrant-sensitive but remain small in scale and lack institutional support.

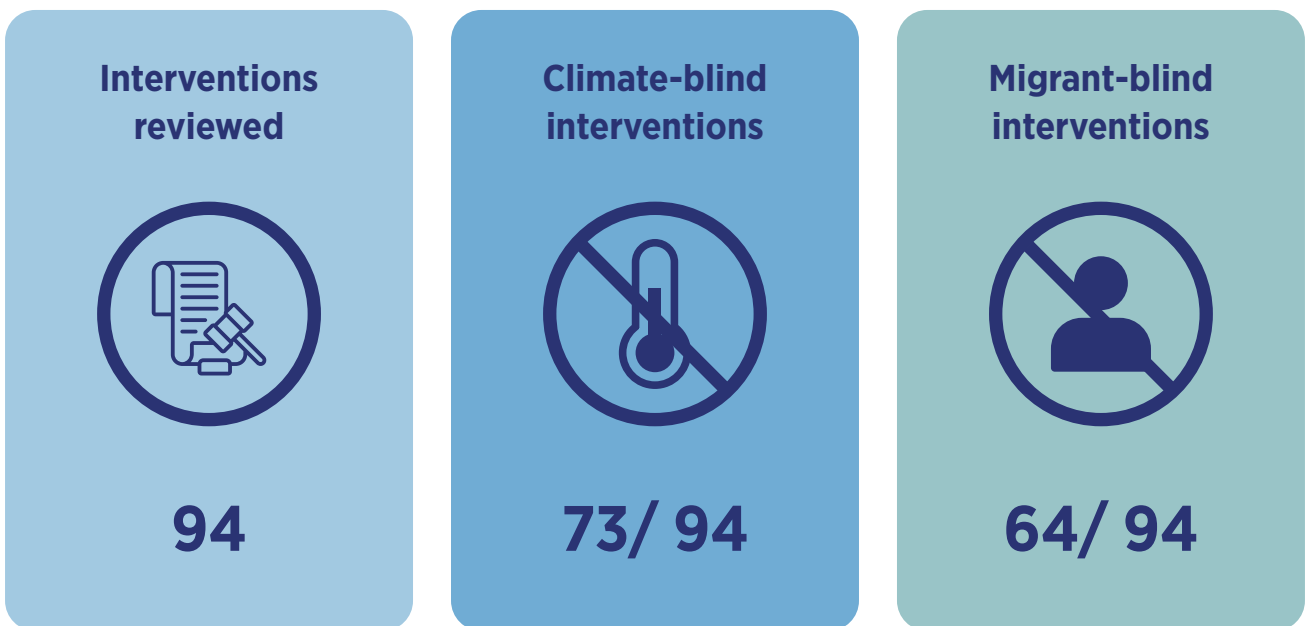
Many interventions assume male beneficiaries, ignoring the specific needs of women migrants (e.g., maternal health, safety, childcare). Definitions of “vulnerable groups” often overlook migrant-specific vulnerabilities, particularly among informal and mobile populations.

**Weak integration of climate and migration**

Of 94 interventions reviewed, only five explicitly address both climate and migration, and only four qualify as Adaptive Social Protection. Climate considerations are mostly limited to infrastructure, with minimal attention to occupational risks, health, or mobility. National and state climate policies—such as NAPCC and SAPCCs—make token references to migration; city-level plans like Bengaluru’s lack targeted actions.

**Missed opportunities for transformative change**

70% of interventions combine two or more types of social protection, yet preventive social protection (e.g., wage regulation) dominate. Protective social protection (5%), promotive social protection (5%), and transformative social protection (6%) interventions remain limited. Adaptive and climate-resilient components are underdeveloped, despite growing climate risks across rural and urban areas.



*This report underscores the need for India's social protection and climate resilience interventions to evolve. With internal migration likely to increase under escalating climate change; adaptive, inclusive, and portable systems are essential to ensure the well-being of mobile and marginalised populations. As India moves towards completing hundred years as an independent country, its climate-proof current development must also ensure no migrant is left behind.*



Image credits: Hemant Kumar, IIHS, 2025

# 01

## Introduction

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Internal migration and  
climate resilience



*Image credits:  
Nabina Chakraborty, IIHS, 2023*

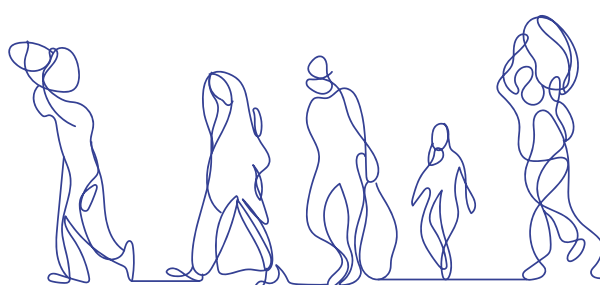
Internal migration, i.e., the movement of people within national borders, has always been prevalent in India. The pursuit of better economic opportunities, agrarian distress due to declining agricultural productivity, and social factors such as marriage, are critical drivers of internal migration within the country (Census of India, 2011). Seasonal employment, with millions migrating temporarily for work in construction and other labour-intensive sectors, also significantly contributes to this trend (Datta & Rajan, 2024; Rao et al., 2020; MoHUA, 2017). Between 2001 and 2011, internal migrants grew from 309 million to 450 million, representing 37 per cent of the population in 2011. More recent estimates suggest this number has decreased (EAC-PM 2024) but issues remain of undercounting short-term movement and commuting.

In recent decades, increasing climate variability and climate change have emerged as additional drivers, exacerbating vulnerabilities and augmenting migration due to environmental degradation, disasters, and unpredictable weather patterns that adversely affect agricultural yields and living conditions (Banerjee, 2021; Mukherjee & Fransen, 2024; Rigaud et al., 2018; Roy et al., 2024). Climate impacts disproportionately affect vulnerable populations in urban and rural areas. In urban destinations, these vulnerable populations, of which labour migrants are a subset, often encounter inadequate physical and social infrastructure, making them more susceptible to climate-induced hazards such as heat stress and urban flooding (Chaudhry, 2024; Rahman et al., 2024; Raj & Sofi, 2023; Kumar et al., 2016). For example, rising temperatures in cities negatively affect the health of migrant labourers working outdoors (Debnath et al., 2023; Jennath et al., 2025). Migrants operate within a context of precarity, and this is exacerbated by compounding hazards, e.g., when extreme heat intersects with water scarcity, out of pocket expenditures on water from private tankers increase. In rural areas, remittances buffer climate risk to some extent and can help build productive assets

but dependence on natural resource-based livelihoods means that households remain vulnerable (Singh et al., 2018). This complex interplay of economic, social, and environmental factors underscores the evolving nature of internal migration in India.

Given this context, how can internal migrants be supported in a climate-changed India? Migration research and practice frequently advocate for social protection to enable safe and inclusive migration (International Labour Organization, Aajeevika Bureau, & Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development, 2020; Peter et al., 2020; Rahman & Pingali, 2024; Sinha et al., 2022; Srivastava, 2020a). Social protection manifests in various forms and across different actor types through state-led policies, schemes, and acts; interventions by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs); and private sector initiatives through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities. In parallel, climate change policies and interventions also aim to reduce risks and vulnerabilities of people and their livelihoods, often articulated through schemes and projects on livelihood diversification, infrastructural resilience, climate-resilient agriculture, or insuring the vulnerable against increasing risk.

This report examines a range of interventions that are either forms of social protection or climate risk reduction, to examine whether they are helping reduce risk and build resilience of internal migrants. We assess 94 interventions that are national, state (focussing on Karnataka and Kerala), and city (Kochi, Bengaluru) levels. The analysis demonstrates that current climate change interventions remain largely migrant-blind and migrant-targeted interventions do not acknowledge the risks climate change poses. We propose adaptive social protection as a conceptual framework to apply to ongoing multi-scalar interventions in India, in a bid to leverage current programmes and investments to deliver migrant-sensitive, climate-resilient development.



# 02

## Enabling migration and climate resilience through social protection

Insights from literature



Image credits:

Nabina Chakraborty, IIHS, 2023

## 2.1

### Right to movement undermined by policy blind-spots

As per Article 19(1)(d) and 19(1)(e) of the Constitution of India, every citizen has the right "to move freely throughout the territory of India" and "to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India," respectively. These constitutional rights enable citizens the liberty to move within the country, and reside and settle in any place, including migrating within the country for livelihoods (Bhagat, 2017; MoHUA, 2017). Major shifts in the Indian economy towards industrialisation and globalisation post the 1990s economic reforms, and stagnation of agricultural growth, played a major role in pushing labour to undertake rural-urban migration (Deshpande, 2009; Mishra, 2020; Rupakula, 2016; Reddy & Mishra, 2009; Vakulabharam, 2013). These rural to urban migrants who typically engage in temporary migration are termed as floating populations (Ashok & Thomas, 2014). In the 2011 Census, almost 450 million people were internal migrants of which 17.4 per cent or almost 78 million people moved from rural to urban areas. Areas that received the highest number of in-migrants include cities like Mumbai and New Delhi while the top sending states were predominantly rural states of Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Bihar (Mahapatro, 2020).

In India, where almost 40 per cent of the population is classified as an internal migrant, (Census of India, 2011) policies invisibilise internal migrants and remain inadequate and/or poorly implemented (Bhagat & Kumar, 2021; Deshingkar et al., 2022; Naik, 2024; Peter & Johnson, 2021; Rajan & Bhagat, 2022; Srivastava, 2020b). The COVID-19 pandemic was a period when India discovered her migrants, with commentators calling them 'an invisible workforce' (Allard et al., 2022) and highlighting how the pandemic exacerbated existing legislative blind spots (Deshingkar, 2022; Rajan et al., 2020). This lack of acknowledgement of internal migration and migrants, has been highlighted repeatedly, described as a "nightmare for administrative and legislative bodies" (Deshingkar & Grimm, 2005) as it requires high-level collaborations across ministries and sectors that are not used to cooperating (Deshingkar, 2005).

The Indian labour force is predominantly informal, and workers are often left without formal protection (Dhanya, 2013; Mehrotra, 2019). Existing social security policies such as the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act (2008) provide only limited coverage focussing on life and disability cover, health and maternity benefits, and old age pensions (Rajan et al., 2020). Significant challenge exists in bridging differences between states around design, financing and delivery of social protection programmes (Srivastava, 2020), with Bhan (2022) noting that "the safety net in India's cities is a patchwork, its threads worn and in need of repair. It has also shown us that even if mended, it would not be enough". The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed the vulnerability of internal migrants in India and highlighted inefficiencies of social safety nets (Srivastava, 2020a; Rao et al., 2020; Rajan et al., 2020).

## 2.2

### Social Protection

Social protection aims to reduce vulnerability and risk among low-income households by ensuring access to basic consumption and services (Sabates-Wheeler & MacAuslan, 2007). This includes public, private, formal and informal measures that help vulnerable groups avoid negative wellbeing outcomes (Sabates-Wheeler & MacAuslan, 2007, also see Box 1).

Historically, interventions have focussed on protective measures such as providing basic education and health, serving as safety nets (Bhan, 2024; Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2008). These have evolved to provide social security through risk proofing livelihoods (e.g., crop insurance), thereby preventing losses due to shocks and stressors or into interventions that are promotive, acting as springboards (e.g., migration, livelihood diversification) (Singh et al., 2018). In their most expansive form, interventions can be transformative through legislative change for decent work, policy and regulatory controls on work timings or climate insurance (Figure 1).

### **Box 1. Social policy, social safety nets, social protection, social security, and social welfare**

In the 1990s, **social safety nets** gained prominence with the World Bank's (1990) 'New Poverty Agenda' defining social safety nets as "some form of income insurance to help people through short-term stress and calamities". In 1996, this definition was extended to include interventions "which protect a person or household against two adverse outcomes in welfare: chronic incapacity to work and earn (chronic poverty); and a decline in this capacity from a marginal situation that provides minimal livelihood for survival with few reserves (transient poverty)" (Devereux, 2002).

Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler (2004) critique traditional **social safety nets** as too focussed on economic risks and livelihood shocks and negligent of structural inequalities that exacerbate economic vulnerability. They argue for moving beyond economic protection to addressing broader social vulnerabilities and advocate for a social protection agenda that is more transformative; aiming to reduce vulnerability, empower marginalised groups, and contribute to sustainable poverty reduction and social equity.

**Social protection** aims at reducing people's vulnerabilities and disruptions in income. It is defined as a set of policies and programmes designed to foster efficient labour markets, reduce poverty, and enhance people's capacity to protect themselves (Ortiz, 2001). Social protection includes social insurance, social assistance and welfare services, child protection and micro and area-based schemes, which target vulnerable groups such as the sick, elderly, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, unemployed, people with substance use disorders, single-parent households, refugees, etc. (Asian Development Bank, 2003).

**Social security** includes legislative measures to maintain individual/ family income or to provide income when some or all sources of income are disrupted or terminated or when exceptionally heavy expenditures must be incurred (e.g., childcare, health care). Thus, social security may provide cash benefits to persons faced with sickness and disability, unemployment, crop failure, loss of marital partner, maternity, childcare responsibility, or retirement. Social security benefits may be provided in cash or kind for medical need, rehabilitation, domestic help during illness at home, legal aid, or funeral expenses.

While social protection and social security are often used interchangeably, they differ, social protection covers both formal and informal sectors, whereas social security focuses on a more contributory protection system typically in formal employment sectors.

**Social welfare** includes government-funded programs that assist individuals in need. In India, these programmes include legal and policy instruments such as Housing for All (2015), the Food Security Act (2013), and pension and insurance schemes (Asher & Vora, 2018; Bhan, 2017). Social welfare also includes benefits for retired or unemployed individuals, such as the National Social Assistance act (Rajan & Prasad, 2008) and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) (Sen & Rajasekhar, 2012; Srivastava, 2008).

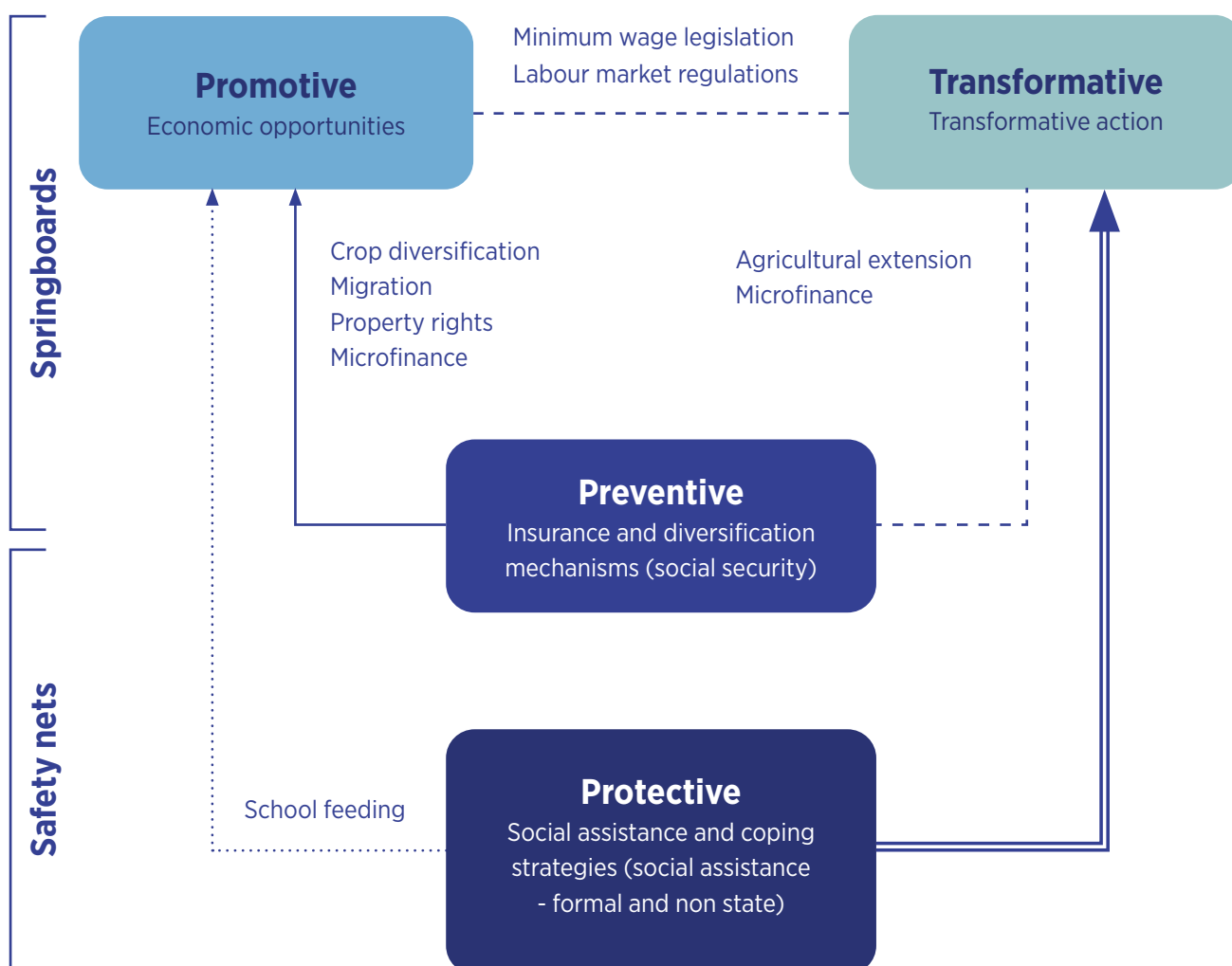


Figure 1: Social protection can be preventive, promotive, or transformative

Source: Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2008.

## 2.3

### Social protection for migrants

Households undertake migration as a livelihood strategy to cope with and spread risk. Access to social protection affects this decision in multiple ways, including increasing or decreasing the propensity to migrate (Hagen-Zanker & Himmelstine, 2013; Raithelhuber et al., 2018). Social assistance programmes can be categorised, based on their implicit goal to either facilitate, or constrain mobility or explicitly enable spatial mobility (Adhikari & Gentilini, 2018).

For developing countries, social policy plays a key role (Mares & Carnes, 2009) by helping address social conflicts and attenuate hardships arising from socio-economic transitions such as rural-urban migration (Hujo & Piper, 2010; Srivastava, 2012). However, for social protection to be 'transformative', it is key to shift away from assistance-focused policies to those addressing societal power imbalances, employing rights-based approaches, and raising awareness to combat discrimination and exploitation of vulnerable groups (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2008; Sabates-Wheeler & MacAuslan, 2007).

There are various policy instruments relevant to internal migration in India (Table 1).

Table 1: Illustrative examples of government policies and schemes relevant to migration in India. Source: Authors.

Policy	Scale	Aims and targeted beneficiaries	Status and year
<b>Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act (ISMWA)</b>	National	The act regulates the recruitment and employment of inter-state migrant labourers.	Enacted in 1979, states across India adopted the rules of the Act for its implementation. Karnataka adopted these rules in 1981, followed by Kerala in 1983. In 2020, Kerala amended certain rules to streamline the registration and license renewal process by introducing an automation system.
<b>Aawaz Health Insurance Scheme</b>	State (Kerala)	This scheme targeted migrant workers with cover for health insurance up to INR 25,000 and accidental death cover of up to INR 2,00,000.	Started in 2017, over half a million migrant workers were registered under this scheme. Currently enrolment in the scheme has been discontinued
<b>One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC)</b>	National	Through inter-state portability of select categories of ration cards, this scheme enables migrants and their family members access to rations from the Fair Price Shop (FPS) anywhere in the country.	Launched in 2018, it has been implemented across all states & UTs. Ration card portability through an IT-driven system that installs Electronic Point of Sale (EPoS) devices in each FPS. Currently, out of 4,88,832 EPoS supplied to FPSs, 63,978 are active.
<b>Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHCs) For Urban Migrants/ Poor</b>	National	ARHCs aim at creating affordable rental housing avenues for urban migrants/poor with all civic amenities in proximity to their workplace.	Launched in 2020, the scheme was applicable for funding till Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) Mission period i.e. March 2022. As per the records, 5,648 vacant houses have been converted to ARHCs and 48,113 new units are under construction, but in select states and cities.

## 2.4

### Adaptive Social Protection

An important facet of migrant-sensitive social protection and policy is the portability and accessibility of interventions (Naik, 2015; Rajan, 2020; Singh et al., 2024). This includes access to programmes in destinations such as education for children of migrants, housing, formal employment opportunities and related benefits, and healthcare (Peter et al., 2020). Although most social protection interventions mandated by the constitution extend to all levels of the government, they are designed to benefit certain groups of people that are recognised as citizens in that domain of government, i.e. the administrative level like village, town, city, or state (Srivastava, 2020).

More recent policies are recognising and correcting these domicile-related issues, such as the One Nation One Ration Card, which enables migrant workers and their family members to access public distribution system (PDS) benefits from any fair price shop anywhere in the country, ensuring food security through the inter-state portability of ration cards under the National Food Security Act (2013). However, early assessments highlight gaps in scheme design and implementation—several states are yet to enact the scheme, there is limited awareness about the scheme, issues of biometrics failing/ malfunctioning, fair price shop dealers facing challenges in managing stocking requirements, and mismatches between state food provisions and migrant food choices (Dalberg, 2022; Paliath & Iqbal, 2023; Tumble & Jha, 2024).

In the context of growing risk of climate change and associated extreme events, the remit of social protection to manage such dynamic risks is essential. Davies et al. (2008) explore the links between sectors of social protection, climate change adaptation, and disaster risk reduction culminating in the Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) framework. The ASP framework (Figure 2) illustrates the potential of social protection to provide protection against current risk (disaster risk reduction) and future weather and climatic extremes (climate change adaptation). The complementarity between these three domains is put forth as a way to reduce poverty and enable people to move into productive livelihoods that are less prone to climate-related shocks (Davies et al., 2008).

The ASP framework has been applied to various contexts: in South Asia, (Davies et al., 2013) examine 124 programmes on rural-based livelihoods and find that only 16 per cent projects cover social protection, climate change adaptation, and disaster risk reduction (58 per cent had at least two components). The study highlights the siloing of these three sectors in most countries has led to a lack of effective collaboration, duplication of efforts and competition for (Béné & Newsham, 2011; Davies et al., 2013). In Kochi, Surat and Mumbai, Jaswal et al. (2015) examine specific



*Awareness program by Jan Sahas NGO in a migrant colony, Bengaluru.*

*Credits: Swati Surampally, IHS, 2024*

interventions for migrant informal workers that deliver adaptive social protection. For example, the Suraksha<sup>1</sup> project in Kochi, originally aimed at combating HIV/ AIDS, was later broadened to address other infectious diseases such as malaria, leprosy, and tuberculosis, particularly among migrant workers. In Kochi, health and labour departments, activists, and NGOs have undertaken several initiatives such as multilingual awareness campaigns on health and hygiene, including door-to-door initiatives and street plays, to educate migrant workers on various diseases and promote early medical intervention. Surat’s Urban Health and Climate Resilience Cell (UHCR) included an end-to-end early warning system for floods, which significantly reduced the impact of floods on the city, particularly for migrant workers.

Understanding social protection in the context of climate change shows that most research focuses on instruments such as cash and asset transfers (Tenzing,

2020). Although such strategies aim to enable households to move from short-term coping to more future-facing adaptation, gaps remain in identifying interventions and pathways for transformative social protection (Figure 3), as envisioned by the early advocates of Adaptive Social Protection (ASP).

There remain gaps in leveraging social protection to reduce distress migration and enhancing adaptive migration (Schwan & Yu, 2018). Effective social protection requires flexible, climate-sensitive design and implementation, particularly in urban areas vulnerable to climate risks (Bhan, 2024; Chu, 2018; Chu & Michael, 2019; Mahadevia, 2010; Santha et al., 2016; Yenneti et al., 2016). Currently, most social protection interventions focus on enrolment, with poor performance on delivery of benefits (Bhan, 2024), especially for migrants (Peter et al., 2020; Srivastava, 2008).

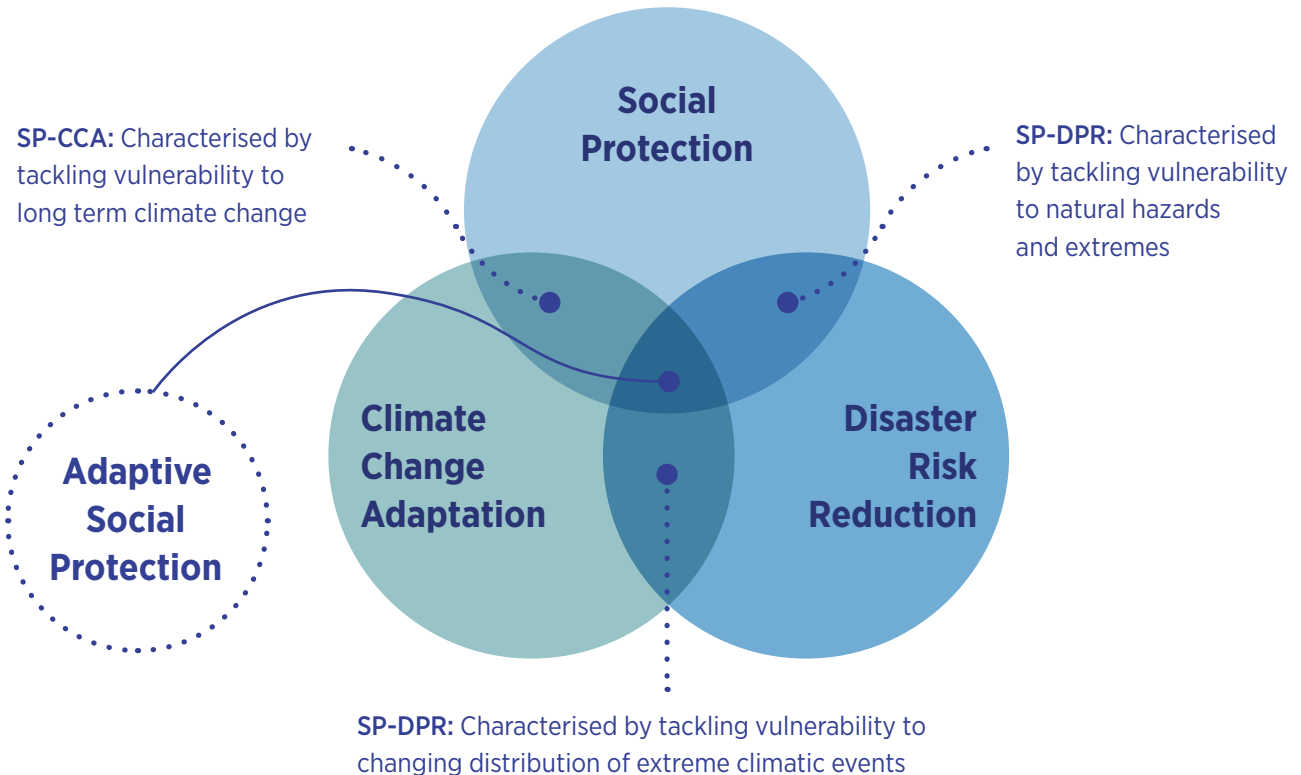


Figure 2: Conceptual representation of ASP,

Source: Davies et al., 2008, 2013.

<sup>1</sup> The Kerala State AIDS Control Society’s Targeted Intervention (TI) program, known as “Suraksha,” identifies interstate migrants as one of its key focus groups. Initially designed to address HIV/ AIDS under the National AIDS Control Programme, the initiative in Kochi was later expanded to encompass other infectious diseases by integrating existing projects run by partner NGOs.

## Social protection functions

Protection



Promotion



Prevention



Transformation

## Contributions to adaptation

- Enhances absorptive capacity, enabling short-term coping strategies to buffer shocks
- Enhances adaptive capacity, facilitating longer-term but incremental adjustments for dealing with shocks
- Enhances transformative capacity, to effect structural changes that reduces entrenched social inequalities

Figure 3: Social protection and its links to climate change adaptation.

Source: Modified from Tenzin 2020.

### Box 2. Social protection, climate change, and internal migrants in India

India is seeing three widespread transitions: urbanisation, migration and climate change. India's rate of urbanisation rose from 10 per cent to 31 per cent between the 1990's and 2011 (Tumbe, 2016) while internal migration rose from ~27 per cent in the 1990s to 37 per cent in 2011 (Census, 2011). Uneven urbanisation has concentrated economic opportunities in some cities, with metropolitan regions attracting large numbers of migrants. India is one of the top ten nations most impacted by climate change with significant increases in extreme weather events (Krishnan et al., 2020; Ray et al., 2021). These three transitions collide in rural areas where farm-based livelihoods are becoming less reliable, and in urban areas where migrants inhabit hazard-prone settlements and enter precarious work.

The domicile-based nature of social security and identity cards in India excludes poor migrants from basic safety nets perpetuating social exclusion and economic instability (Srivastava, 2011). Further, increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events is resulting in higher disease incidence, work disruptions, and riskier living conditions. These climatic risks coupled with settlement and livelihood precarity, dampen peoples' abilities to recover or 'bounce back' from adverse conditions (Leichenko & Silva, 2014). For migrants in the city, environmental marginality then becomes a new barrier to upward mobility and can be attributed to the lack of recognition of citizenship rights and informal livelihood strategies (Chu & Michael, 2019).

Thus, it is necessary to integrate social protection, disaster risk reduction, and climate change adaptation interventions to enhance resilience among the poorest and most vulnerable to climate change (Arnall et al., 2010). Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) requires a multidisciplinary, rights-based approach focusing on transforming, promoting and protecting livelihoods of the poorest and most vulnerable groups (Davies et al., 2009). Recognition of migrants as a particularly vulnerable and resilient group, remains uneven and inadequate, in rural and urban India.

Overall, the social protection scholarship recognises that to reduce vulnerability and risk among low-income households, various forms of social protection—preventive, promotive, and transformative—are required. When applied to migrants and households

spanning rural and urban areas, this means that social protection in India must overcome its sedentary bias. Further, flexible mechanisms that also climate-proof access to and delivery of basic services and infrastructure is necessary for adaptive social protection.

# 03

## Methodology

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*Image Credits:  
Swati Surampally, IIHS, 2024*

# 3.1

## Review of interventions

This study maps and examines a range of interventions at national, state, and city levels, to map the policy and practice landscape of climate migration in India. We focus on two states—Karnataka and Kerala—and two cities—Bengaluru and Kochi—which are prominent urban hubs experiencing high in-migration.

We define interventions to be ‘activities or processes (ranging from policies and legal instruments through to informal arrangements) with explicit (and predefined) aims that are implemented to achieve a desired outcome, are enacted by an individual actor or groups of actors operating at discrete scales (or in a multi-scalar way) and which will likely influence mobility behaviour in some way with impacts on target populations’ material, relational and subjective wellbeing’.

In climate change adaptation and development research, work around the governance and implementation of actions have engaged with ideas

of interventions, where they have been categorised by timing and stage (Araos et al., 2016), actor (Petzold et al., 2023), and intervention type.

We conducted a review of 94 interventions applying the following inclusion criteria: interventions must be relevant for low-income migrants, and/ or be explicitly focussed on building climate resilience.

Care was taken to include interventions that encompass various sectors such as health, education, labour, housing, food/ nutrition, disaster risk reduction, pensions, and insurance. We used online searches; national and state portals; and non-government sources to identify interventions. For example, for climate change-related interventions, we examined the State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCC) for Karnataka and Kerala. For migration-related interventions, we started from the Report of The Working Group on Migration (2017) by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (now Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs). Table 3 lists the categories of sectors and actors used in this study.

Table 2: Categorisation of interventions.

By timing and stage	By actor	By intervention type
Planning stage: evidence of adaptation policy making (policy process) but not reporting any adaptation initiatives	State actors: government at national, subnational, highly local scales	Policies
Piloted: trailing of discrete actions in one sector or one population	Civil society: international, domestic, local	Schemes, projects
Implemented (small or large): undertake concrete actions explicitly aimed at reducing climate change vulnerability	Private sector, market: large corporations to Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)	NGO/ CSR interventions
		Legal instruments, rules, Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)
Completed	Collectives: e.g. labour unions, Self Help Groups (SHGs)	Stewardship, collectives, informal arrangements

Table 3: Categorisation of sectors and actors.

Sectors	Actors
Labour & Livelihoods	National Government
Education	State Government
Health, Food & Nutrition	Urban Local Bodies
Climate Change & Disaster Risk Reduction	Non-Governmental Organisations
Insurance, Pensions & Loans	Private Organisations
Urban Development & Housing	Multiple Actors
Migration	
Multiple Sectors	

## 3.2

### Data analysis

We analysed each intervention using a structured framework along four thematic areas (detailed in Annex I) as well as information on the intervention's sector, scale of implementation (national/ state/ city level), actors involved, beneficiaries targeted, intervention type, and year of implementation. The analysis examined specific issues targeted by each intervention and determined whether and how they incorporate climate change and disaster risk reduction strategies. The four themes were:

- **Strategies employed:** These included measures providing a basic safety net for migrants, strategies for documenting migrant workers (such as registration on portals and issuing ID cards), legal aspects (including entitlements and changes in labour codes), relief and compensation measures, and measures to build climate resilience.
- **Processes:** Interventions were assessed on their stage of implementation (planning/ piloted/ implemented) and whether they reported any evidence of stakeholder engagement and participation from target groups.

- **Climate change/ migration considerations:** Each intervention was evaluated to determine whether it incorporated any climate or climate change-related aspects, such as impacts, adaptation or climate-responsive strategies. Additionally, we assessed whether the intervention specifically targeted migrants, was inclusive of migrants within the general population, or excluded migrants.
- **Tone of language and narratives:** We assessed how interventions portrayed migration, migrants, and climate change resilience. Specifically, interventions were coded to ascertain whether they portrayed migration as a challenge to be managed or as a strategic response to adapt to climate risks.

The intervention documents were coded according to these criteria, assigning labels to each data segment. A subset of interventions was used to test and refine the coding, allowing us to identify any missing aspects. Subsequently, we applied the finalised data extraction sheet to systematically code a total of 94 interventions.

Next, we applied examined whether the 94 interventions are leading to adaptive social protection or not, building a framework developed from Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler's (2004) conceptualisation of Transformative Social Protection and Davies et al.'s (2008, 2013) framework for Adaptive Social Protection.

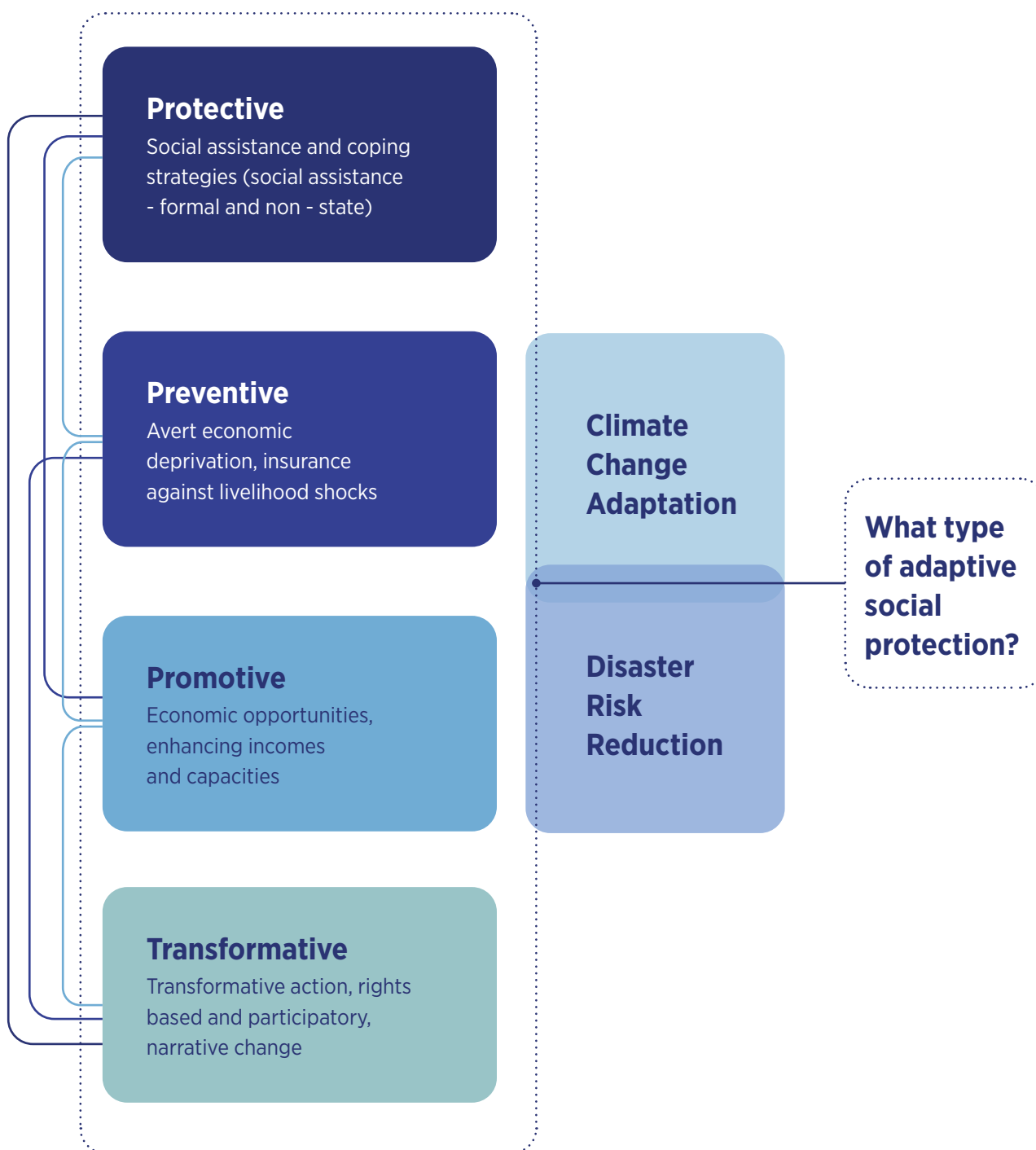


Figure 4: Social protection and its links to climate change adaptation.

Source: Adapted from (Davies et al., 2013; Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004).

Drawing upon Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler's (2004) definitions for the four types of social protection; protective, preventive, promotive, and transformative; a framework was developed. This framework broke down each definition into three indicators and each intervention was analysed against the indicators using a data extraction sheet (0=No, 1=Yes) to assess whether the criteria were met. After the coding, interventions

were classified as protective, preventive, promotive, or transformative or combinations of the four social protection types. The second step looked at the integration of climate change and disaster risk and resilience to assess whether the interventions included climate change and disaster risk resilience features.

# 04

## Findings

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Are current policies and interventions providing adaptive social protection in India?



*Image credits:  
Swati Surampally, IIHS, 2024*

# 4.1

## Sectoral distribution of policies and interventions assessed

Most interventions focus on labour and livelihoods, followed by social welfare interventions on housing and food security. This focus also varies by scale—insurance and pensions are primarily national in scope, whereas labour, livelihoods, health, and nutrition initiatives span multiple scales. At the state and city scales, sectoral priorities vary: Kerala and Kochi focus on labour and health, while Karnataka and Bengaluru place greater emphasis on urban development, housing, education, and climate resilience.

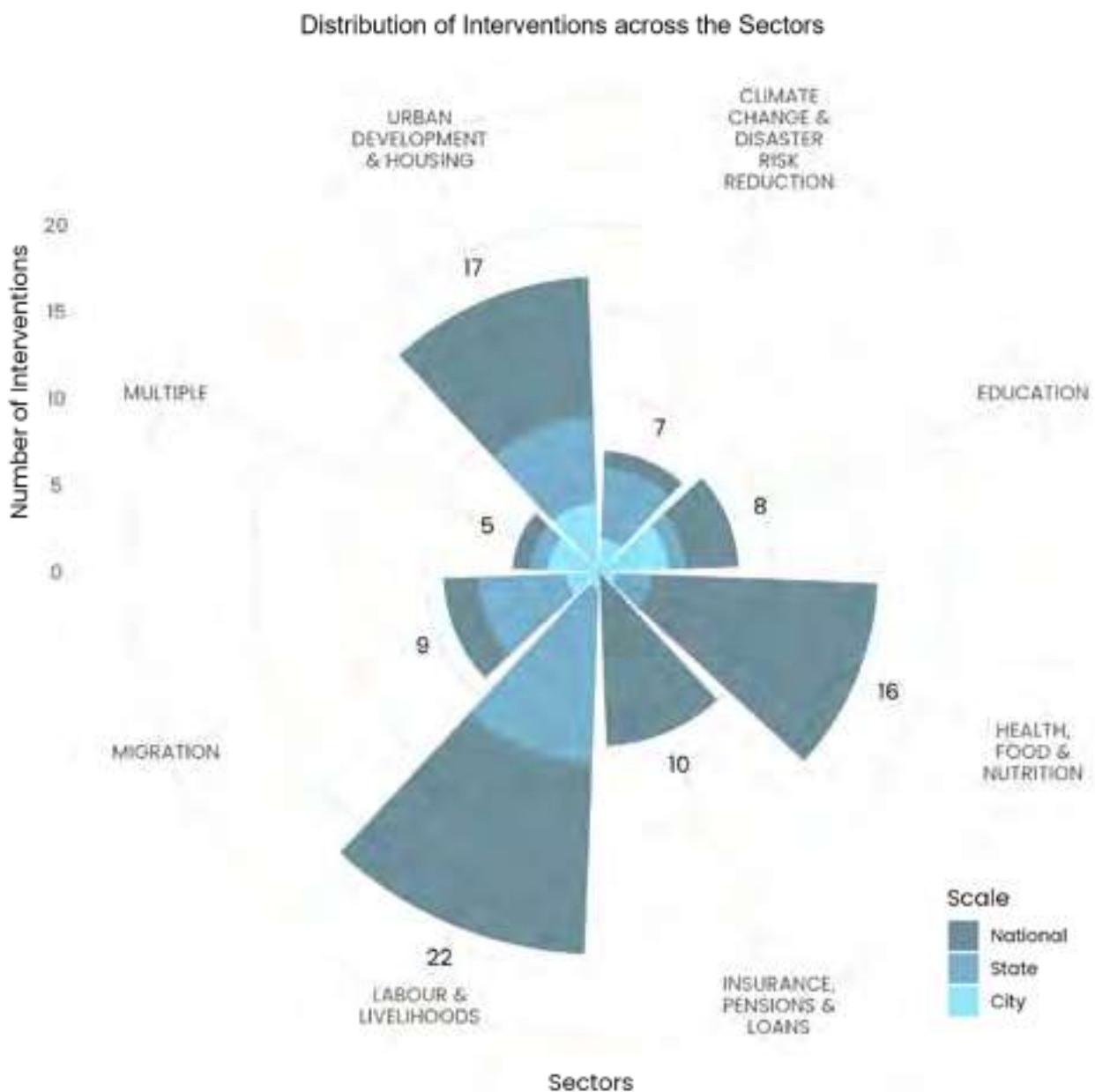


Figure 5: Sectoral distribution of reviewed interventions.

## Labour and livelihoods

Labour and livelihoods-focused interventions are primarily national, with implementation through state labour departments. Urbanisation favours skilled labour, limiting options for unskilled migrants (Naik, 2009; Sangita, 2017). Migrants face barriers in accessing formal jobs due to weak social networks and bargaining power, resulting in insecure work and urban poverty (Rajan & Sumeetha, 2019; Sangita, 2017). Climate impacts through heat stress intersect with poor worksite design to reduce productivity and raise health risks (Lundgren-Kownacki et al., 2018; Venugopal et al., 2016). Key interventions such as the Building and Other Construction Workers (BoCWA) Act and the Minimum Wages Act aim to regulate wages, workplace conditions, and welfare provisions.

**However, migrant workers, despite comprising a significant portion of the labour force, often remain excluded due to registration and documentation challenges. There is little emphasis on climate-sensitive workplace policies and occupational safety and health guidelines, despite growing evidence of climate-exposed worksites.**

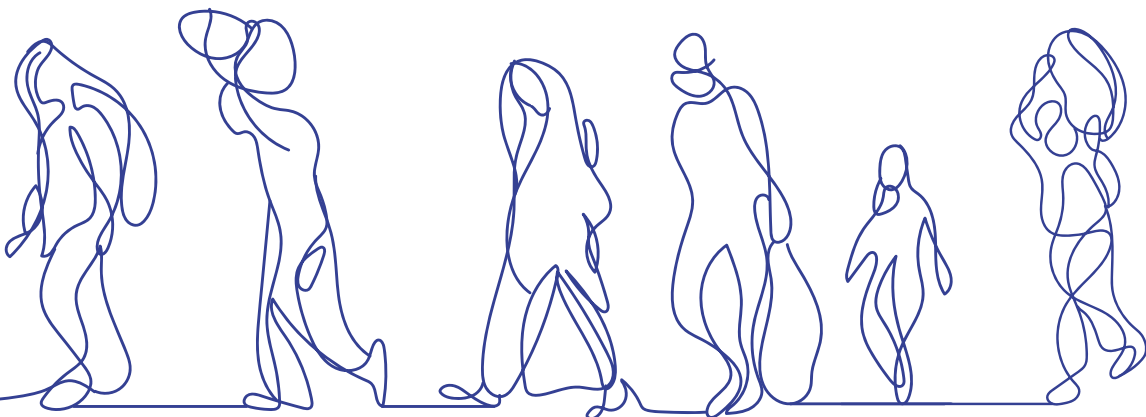
An example of a comprehensive and holistic approach to social protection includes the National Scheme for Welfare of Fishermen (2015-2020) by the Ministry of Fishers, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Government of India. The scheme aims to provide financial assistance to fishers for the construction of houses, community spaces for recreation and festivities, and sanitation and drinking water infrastructure. The scheme offers up to Rs. 5 lakh insurance for accidental death or disability

and supports savings during lean fishing periods. It briefly acknowledges climate impacts on these periods, allowing state officials the discretion to decide lean months. Funded jointly by the centre, state, and fishers, **it excludes those who migrate for other income during lean seasons.**

”

*“an eligible inland fisherman means a person who is professionally engaged in full time fishing in the inland waters, is below 60 years of age and lives below the poverty line. Further, he should be a member of the Cooperative Society/ Federation/ Welfare Society that has fishing rights in water bodies controlled by the State. If any member of fishermen family has regular employment or indulges in any other income generating activity, such family will not qualify to be beneficiary under this component”*

Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Centrally Sponsored National Scheme of welfare of Fishermen, Saving-cum-Relief section



### **Box 3. Case Study | The Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996**

The Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996 (BoCWA), was enacted under the Ministry of Labour & Employment to safeguard the health, welfare, and working conditions of construction workers in India. It applies to establishments employing ten or more workers and involving projects valued over ₹10 lakh. While the law targets all construction workers, which typically includes migrants, the lack of an explicit mention of migrant workers often leaves them outside the purview of the law. Components under this scheme include state-level welfare boards for construction workers — The Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Cess Act (1996), and The Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Cess Rules (1998).

The state welfare funds levy a cess of 1-2 per cent on construction projects which are used to pay for social security benefits to registered construction workers. Workers aged between 18 and 60 who have worked in building and construction for at least 90 days in the preceding year are eligible for registration. Benefits offered include pensions, accident compensation, housing loans, group insurance premium payments, medical care, maternity assistance, and support for education and nutrition. The Act also mandates employers to ensure on-site provisions such as drinking water, latrines, creches, canteens, first aid, and temporary living accommodation. It regulates working hours, ensures weekly rest, and mandates safety protocols.

Often, existing local state schemes in healthcare and education are integrated into the board's services. In Karnataka, free BRTC passes for registered workers, KSRTC bus passes for their children, and access to healthcare through schemes like Karmika Aarogya Bhagya and Karmika Chikitsa Bhagya are provided. Support for children's education and nutrition is also extended via the Thayi Magu Sahaya Hastha scheme (Shamala & Prasad, 2020). Karnataka leads in both the collection and expenditure of welfare cess. Between 2006 and 2020, although ₹9262 crores were collected, only 8% was spent, with education accounting for the highest share of expenditure, followed by marriage and funeral assistance. The COVID-19 pandemic brought increased attention to this underutilised fund. Karnataka provided direct benefit transfers (DBTs) of ₹5,000 initially, followed by an additional ₹3,000, using ₹562 crores between April and June 2020 alone—almost equal to the total expenditure over the previous 13 years.

However, the implementation of BoCWA remains inadequate. A study by Aajeevika Bureau found that 80% of 300 medium-to-large construction sites in Ahmedabad and Surat failed to meet BoCWA's basic standards (Jayaram & Varma, 2020). Moreover, the Act does not address emerging risks such as climate change or offer post-disaster relief, despite the vulnerability of outdoor construction workers to heat stress, floods, and cyclones. During COVID-19, many workers missed out on DBTs due to issues like non-registration and failure to link bank accounts with Aadhaar (Jha, 2021).

Migrant workers, who constitute more than half of the construction industry's labor force, often remain excluded from social security benefits under the cess. Their registration with the welfare board is rarely done when they relocate to a new state, leaving them without access to crucial social security provisions.

## Urban development and housing

Interventions in urban development and housing (n=17) range from national rental housing policies to state-specific affordable housing schemes. Urban poor, including migrants, often live in dense, informal housing made of cheap materials to cope with high rents and eviction risks (Kumar, 2001; Vellingiri et al., 2020). These settlements are usually in flood-prone areas with poor infrastructure, heightening health and climate risks (Habeeb & Javaid, 2019; Santha et al., 2016). Migrants also face housing insecurity due to frequent evictions and weak legal protections (Bhan, 2009).

Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Rural Mission (JNNURM, 2005), two sub components – Integrated Housing and Slum Development Plan (IHSDP), Basic Services for Urban Poor (BSUP), and the Kochi Resilience Plan (2020), aim to provide affordable housing for the urban poor. While IHSDP and BSUP include slum populations with migrants, they don't explicitly mention migrants. Led by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and state bodies like Karnataka's Rajiv Gandhi Housing Corporation, these schemes often involve public-private partnerships. Policies such as Rajiv Rinn Yojana (2013), Working Women's Hostel

Scheme (2017), Apna Ghar (2019, Kerala), and the Karnataka Affordable Housing Policy (2016) focus on Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) and Low Income groups (LIG). The Model Tenancy Act (2021) is yet to be implemented. Schemes like Working Women's Hostels and textile worker hostels target specific labour groups, while DLF Foundation provides onsite housing for its workers. In Karnataka, Dr BR Ambedkar Nivas Yojana (2017), Urban Ashraya/ Vajpayee Urban Housing Scheme (2011), and Devraj Urs Housing Scheme (2014) cater to specific social groups, but exclude inter-state migrants due to eligibility criteria like caste certification and ration cards.

**The COVID-19 pandemic underscored gaps in housing provisions for migrant workers, with schemes like the Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHCs) struggling to address migration-related vulnerabilities. Many interventions fail to explicitly integrate climate resilience, with only limited provisions for sustainable housing practices.**



*Construction labour colony, Bengaluru.  
Credits: Swati Surampally, IIHS, 2023*

#### **Box 4. Case Study | Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHCs) for Urban Migrants/ Poor**

India's rapid urbanisation has led to a surge in the demand for affordable housing. However, traditional approaches to housing provision often fall short in meeting this demand, leaving a significant portion of the population vulnerable to inadequate living conditions (Naik et al., 2021). This was brought to notice during the COVID-19 pandemic when India saw an exodus of people from cities, which prompted the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA), Government of India to launch ARHCs in 2020. It is a sub-scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U) and its primary objective is to provide affordable rental housing options to migrant workers/ urban poor. Two models exist under this scheme:

**Model-1:** Converting existing government-funded vacant houses in cities into ARHCs through concession agreement for 25 years.

**Model-2:** Construction, operation and maintenance of ARHCs by private entities (industries, industrial estates, institutions, associations)/ public agencies on their own available vacant land.

Target beneficiaries include labour, the urban poor (street vendors, rickshaw pullers, other service providers etc.), industrial workers, and migrants working with market/ trade associations, educational/ health institutions, hospitality sector, long term tourists/ visitors, students or any other persons of such category. The scheme gives preference to people belonging to Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes/ Other Backward Classes, widows and working women, persons with disabilities, and minorities.

In terms of considerations for climate change adaptation and mitigation, Model-1 guidelines mention that the project design may include innovative systems for rainwater harvesting, waste management including wastewater treatment, renewable resources with a specific focus on solar energy. For Model-2, MoHUA has provisioned for an additional grant in the form of Technology Innovation Grant (TIG) under PMAY (U) through the Technology Sub-Mission (TSM) for projects using innovative & alternate technology for speedier, sustainable, resource efficient and disaster-resilient construction. TIG will be applicable only for constructing new buildings under ARHCs and grants will not be given to any public/ private entities for enhancing existing buildings, which is a missed opportunity for incorporating climate-resilient features in existing building stock. Apart from disaster-resilient features, rainwater harvesting/ recharge and solar energy systems, the approval form to be submitted to MoHUA also evaluates if any other sustainable/ green practices are being adopted.

Projects under ARHCs were applicable for consideration and funding till PMAY (U) Mission period i.e. March 2022. As per the online dashboard of MoHUA (August 2024), the scheme had proposals for conversion of 7,413 vacant houses under Model-1 in the states of Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, out of which 5,648 houses have been converted to ARHCs for urban migrants/ poor. Gujarat has the highest number of ARHCs, specifically Ahmedabad city where 1376 vacant houses have been converted. Under Model-2, construction of 82,273 units is underway in Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, with 35,425 units completed (MoHUA, 2024). Karnataka and Kerala signed the MoU with the central government for the scheme but did not implement it.

## Education

Educational interventions (n=8) include national programmes such as the Right to Education (RTE) Act and state-led literacy and integration schemes like Kerala's Changathi and Roshini initiatives. Short-term migration, including by women and children, leads to academic disruptions due to frequent movement, language barriers, and poor access to quality education, negatively impacting children's mental and emotional wellbeing (Coffey, 2013; Kundu & Sarangi, 2019; Roy et al., 2015).

The Right to Education (RTE) Act (2009) and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan ensure free elementary education for children aged 6-14, including migrants. The RTE mandates NCPCR and SCPCR to track and support out-of-school children, including "children who are permanent migrants, who migrate seasonally with their parents" (Chapter VI, Section 31).

Kerala's Changathi (2018) and Roshini (2017) aim to integrate migrant workers and their children. Changathi states:

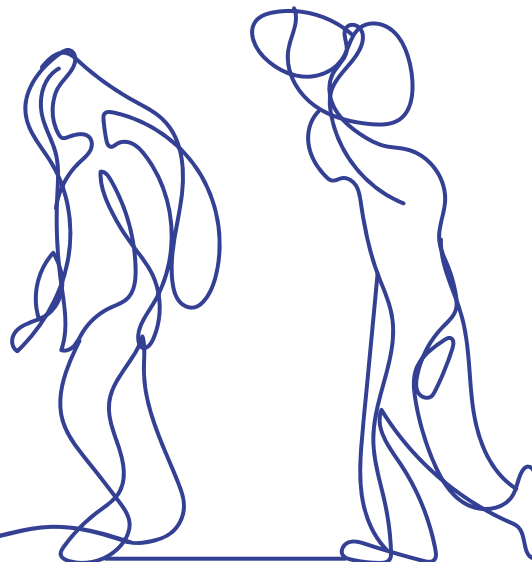


*“The objective is to enhance the literacy of migrant workers in language, culture, health, and hygiene, using the Hamari Malayalam curriculum, with study classes conducted in Sreekaryam. The curriculum covers reading and writing and includes topics such as health, hygiene, anti-drug education, constitutional values, and the cultural background of Kerala and India”*

Noticeboard Portal, Government of Kerala, Changathi Project: Migrant Workers Help Desk Launched

Roshini provides language support and extra classes to reduce dropouts among migrant children. However, neither addresses climate change. NGOs like Samriddhi (2009), Gubbachi (2015), and Diya Ghar (2016) offer bridge learning and preschool support in Bengaluru. AIF's LAMP (2004) runs hostels in source areas to reduce disruptions due to migration. Most programmes frame migration as a barrier to education.

**Migration is often framed as a disruption to education, leading to targeted interventions aimed at mitigating learning gaps. However, these efforts remain limited in scale, and provisions for climate-induced displacement of school-going children are largely absent.**



### Box 5. Case Study | Bridge Learning Programmes by Gubbachi Learning Community

Gubbachi Learning Community is a non-for-profit organisation dedicated to addressing the educational needs of marginalised children, particularly those from migrant families in urban areas. Founded in response to the challenges these children face, such as educational exclusion and language barriers, Gubbachi works to reintegrate them into the formal school system. Gubbachi's Bridge Learning Programmes aim to reintegrate these out-of-school children into mainstream education and support different age groups, helping them bridge learning gaps and transition back into formal education. Their programmes include:

**Gubbachi Buds** (for 3- to 6-year-olds): provides sibling support for bridge learning programmes by using the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) model.

**Gubbachi Connect** (for 6- to 9-year-olds): focuses on identifying out-of-school children and providing the first step towards education. The curriculum is designed in accordance with the child's migratory lifestyle.

**Gubbachi Proactive** (for 10- to 17-year-olds): addresses learning gaps in adolescent and preadolescent children wherein they prepare them for mainstream schooling, National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) or vocational training.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, launched in 2001, is an Indian Government initiative that aims to provide free and compulsory education to children aged 6-14, making it a fundamental right. The programme outlines specific strategies for migrant children, including seasonal hostels or residential camps, transportation services, work-site schools, peripatetic educational volunteers, and tracking systems like migration cards to ensure continuity in their education. The Gubbachi Learning Community and NGOs alike reintegrate out-of-school children and focus on addressing the systemic issues that lead to educational exclusion.

Bhor (2020) discusses the advantages and disadvantages of establishing schools at worksites for migrant children. On the positive side, these schools provide an inclusive environment for children of all ages, allowing those with younger siblings to focus on their education without being separated from their family responsibilities. However, these schools are often limited to migrant families employed by specific builders or corporations, restricting broader access. Additionally, the lack of textbooks in native languages and communication challenges with teachers create obstacles for these children when transitioning from bridge schools to government schools. Gubbachi Learning Community's approach, which includes interventions within government schools and dedicated community learning centres, can have better success rates.

Nutritional and health check-up camps are standard in government schools, and it is essential to extend these services to bridge schools, as many migrant children are at risk of malnutrition. Integrating these services would support their overall well-being and enhance their educational outcomes (Bhor, 2020).

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*Note: In 2022-23 Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE) were subsumed under Samagra Shiksha - an overarching programme for the school education sector extending from pre-school to class 12.*

## Health, Food and Nutrition

Despite 16 interventions in the Health, Food and Nutrition sector, only four directly target migrants, such as Kerala’s Awaz Health Insurance and the National AIDS Control Programme. Migration impacts health outcomes, with migrants at higher risk of disease due to poor living conditions, limited healthcare access, and discrimination (Ravindranath & Mohan, 2022; Somasundaram & Bangal, 2012). Barriers like exclusion, language, and cost further restrict care (Ravindranath & Mohan, 2022). Though remittances and long-term migration can improve access, health risks—especially under climate stress—remain significant (Michael et al., 2019; Pandey et al., 2018).

Key national schemes include One Nation One Ration Card (2019), which enables migrant workers and their families to access rations across states:



*“Through this facility, while a migrant beneficiary is enabled to get his/her ration through portability in the destination State/ UT, at the same time, the family back home is also allowed to get their part of the entitled ration to support itself. The usage of portability can be seasonal or long-term”*

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 2021

Kerala’s AAWAZ Health Insurance Scheme (2017) offered migrant workers up to INR 25,000 in medical services and INR 2 lakh for accidental death (State Health Agency Kerala, 2022). The National AIDS Control Programme (1999) expanded to include migrants, viewing their health as essential to “safeguard” local populations. Universal schemes like ICDS (1975), Mid-Day Meal (1995), Annapurna (2000), Ayushman Bharat (2018), and Janani Suraksha Yojana (2005) though not migrant-specific, may include them through some portable provisions of these schemes. Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (2016) initially excluded urban migrants, but PMUY 2.0 (2021) allowed them to self-declare for connections. In 2023, 5.43 lakh migrant households received LPG connections (MoPNG, 2023).

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Many health and nutrition schemes, including the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and the mid-day meal programme, **indirectly benefit migrants but lack explicit provisions for their unique vulnerabilities. Portable health services and food security schemes like One Nation One Ration Card are steps toward inclusion but require better implementation to address access barriers.**



### Box 6. Case Study | The Bandhu Clinic Model of National Health Mission, Ernakulam District, Kerala

The Bandhu Mobile Clinic is a Public Private Partnership (PPP) initiative between the National Health Mission of the Ernakulam district of Kerala and the Centre for Migration and Development (CMID). It offers a nationally scalable model to enable access to quality primary healthcare services for migrant workers in India's urban centres. Two active mobile units currently work across multiple locations, ranging from residential areas to migrant workplaces and provide services to over 80,000 migrants across the city. The first Bandhu Clinic was rolled out in March 2020 as the first mobile COVID screening unit for migrants.

Migrants across cities and in Ernakulam are typically employed in labour-intensive sectors and the clinics currently cover some of the most vulnerable among the migrant workers including brick kiln workers, migrant women in fish processing units, migrant fishers who live on boats, nomadic communities, footloose migrant labourers and migrant families. Healthcare access is hampered by language barriers, long work hours, and poor living conditions. In light of these challenges, the Bandhu Mobile Clinic offers consistent, primary healthcare services uniquely tailored to the needs of migrants. For migrant workers who cannot afford to miss a day of work, accessibility to healthcare outside of work hours and on holidays is crucial, and so, services are provided outside of the regular 9-5 working hours from Friday to Sunday. Each clinic is also staffed by a multilingual team including a medical officer, nurse, and assistant, serves about 40,000 migrants annually, delivering around 15,000 treatments at an average cost of ₹250 per patient.

The clinic provides essential medical care, maternal and child health services, rapid diagnostic testing, and referrals to public hospitals. While targeting migrant workers, the service remains open to local residents, fostering inclusivity. Vehicle costs and operations are funded through CSR initiatives (including support from Wipro Foundation and BPCL Kochi Refinery). The Bandhu Clinic was recognised by the World Health Organisation as one of 140 global best practices in migrant health in 2025, underscoring its impact.



Mobile medical unit – Bandhu Clinic, Kochi.

Credits: Yashodara Udupa, IIHS, 2025

## Insurance, Pensions and Loans

Interventions in the Insurance, Pensions and Loans sector (n=10) primarily focus on financial security through life insurance, health coverage, and pension schemes for the next of kin. An exception is the PM Svanidhi Scheme (2020) which aims to provide loans specifically to street vendors to empower them and provide holistic development and economic upliftment.

Policies such as the Employee State Insurance Scheme and Act (1948 and 1952) provide some benefits in cases of illness or accidental death; however, **the eligibility criteria often exclude informal and migrant workers and units with less than 10 workers where we often find such workers.** The Aam Aadmi Bima Yojana, explicitly includes climate-related risks like floods and earthquakes.

**A small number of interventions (n=5) adopt a holistic approach, addressing multiple vulnerabilities simultaneously.** These include slum-based interventions providing education, healthcare, and housing support. For example, the Munnekollal Slum Intervention (2018) by Links Charitable Trust in Bengaluru works in a slum settlement in Munnekollal, Bengaluru educating children with gaps in their formal education, providing them adequate nutrition, and protecting them from entering the market as child labour. The intervention also supports healthcare and funds life-saving surgeries covering a range of sectors. Three out of five of these interventions exist at the city scale in Bengaluru.

The Vathsalya Charitable Trust (1998) and Selco Foundation (2022) both work on enabling education for migrant children. Both acknowledge the vulnerability and the need to strengthen the identity and visibility of internal migrant workers and their families. Selco foundation additionally also engages in climate-responsive built infrastructure work. The Kerala's State Policy for Children incorporates disaster resilience measures for child migrants apart from healthcare and education.

**However, such approaches remain limited in scale and often rely on non-government actors for implementation.**

## Migration

Migration-focused policies remain scarce, with only one national-level intervention Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979. Kerala leads in migrant-inclusive schemes (Remya, 2021), with interventions like Inter-State Migrant Workers Welfare Scheme (2010) and Activities for Guest Labourers (2020). India Migration Now's Interstate Migrant Policy Index (IMPEX) ranked Kerala, highest for the number of migrant-friendly policies in 2019 (Remya, 2021).

NGOs/ CSOs play a significant role in addressing migrant vulnerabilities and tend to be more holistic, e.g., Sampark's construction worker programme, Migrant Resilience Collaborative (Jansahas, Global Development Incubator), CMID's Bandhu Shramik Seva Kendras and India Labourline. Consortiums of NGO/ CSOs such as CMID, PDAG Consulting LLP, PHIA Foundation, and ISB along with the Department of Labour, Employment, Training and Skill Development have come together to form the Safe and Responsible Migration Initiative. In a similar vein, the Safe and Dignified Migration Programme (Gram Vikas, CMID, Prachodhan Development Society, ESAF Small Finance Bank) ensures holistic support for migrant workers and their families across the Odisha-Kerala corridor. The National Coalition of Organisations for Security of Migrant Workers (2010), a coalition of 20+ NGOs led by Aajeevika Bureau and the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) was formed to facilitate registration and inclusion of migrant workers in the Aadhaar scheme. However, this was criticised for "exclusionary logic embedded within the scheme's implementation processes" (Baxi, 2019) which contributed to the failure of Aadhaar as an identity solution for migrant workers to be included in the formal structure of citizenship.

**However, most efforts remain localised or specific to certain migration corridors and are undermined by unclear policy articulation at the national level.**

### Box 7. Case Study | Consortia of Civil Society Organisations: India LabourLine, Safe and Dignified Migration Programme

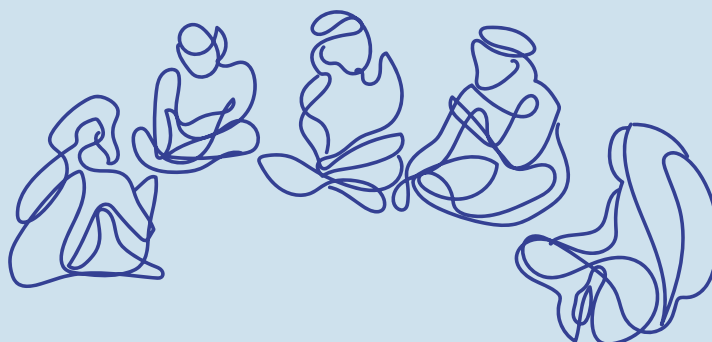
In the context of internal migration—where issues are complex, cross-sectoral, and often span multiple jurisdictions—consortia play a crucial role in enabling more coordinated and systemic responses. By bringing together organisations with complementary expertise, on-ground presence, and policy engagement capacities, consortia are able to design and implement holistic interventions that are both locally grounded and scalable. The following examples illustrate how collaborations among NGOs and CSOs are operationalising multi-stakeholder, evidence-based approaches to support migrant workers.

**India Labourline:** A labour helpline offers vital support to workers by providing legal advice, resolving workplace issues, raising awareness of rights, and connecting them to government schemes. Run by governments, NGOs, or unions, such services are particularly important for migrant and informal workers, offering complaint redressal, emergency help, and empowerment through information and access.

India Labourline, launched in 2021 by the Working Peoples' Coalition in collaboration with Aajeevika Bureau, is a national helpline addressing labour grievances such as wage theft, unsafe conditions, and wrongful termination. It operates in multiple states and leverages trained volunteers and local partnerships to extend its reach. By 2024, it had assisted over 115,000 workers, resolved more than 1,100 cases, and helped recover INR 3 crore in dues. The initiative demonstrates how collective action and legal aid can address both immediate and systemic vulnerabilities in the informal labour sector.

**Safe and Dignified Migration Programme:** Implemented in 2021–22 in the Odisha–Kerala migration corridor, the programme by Gram Vikas, CMID, ESAF Small Finance Bank, and Prachodhan Development Society aimed to ensure the occupational, emotional, financial, and social security of migrant workers and their families. It centred around two key components: the Community Champions Network, which coordinated with local governments to improve access to entitlements and services, and a network of one-stop facilitation centres—Shramik Bandhu Seva Kendra in Odisha and Bandhu Shramik Seva Kendra in Kerala—located at key transit and destination points.

The programme supported 7,486 individuals, resolving 16 of 52 registered grievances related to wage theft and labour rights, resulting in INR 3.05 lakh in settlements. It also facilitated insurance enrolment for 404 workers in Kerala. At the source, 95 women's self-help groups were formed or revived across 138 villages, enabling women from migrant households to access government schemes and improve financial resilience. The programme highlights how coordinated, corridor-based interventions can strengthen support systems for migrants at both source and destination.



## Climate change and disaster risk reduction

These interventions (n=7) are largely frameworks such as the National and State Action Plans on Climate Change (NAPCC, SAPCCs) guiding adaptation and mitigation efforts. While the plans are ambitious, they lack legal enforceability and accountability. Unlike environmental laws, the lack of a Climate Change Act which could mandate emission cuts, adaptation and financial commitments renders it to a mere document.

There is also minimal acknowledgement of migration in these policies, with most acknowledging it as an impact/ consequence of climate risks but none acknowledging it as an already existing phenomenon that is being impacted. The Karnataka SAPCC (2021) acknowledges the migration of coastal communities, including fisherfolk, due to climate-induced factors like sea-level rise and storms. While the Karnataka State Disaster Management Policy (2020) does not mention migrants at all, the Karnataka State Disaster Management Plan (2020) however includes migrants in the framework for disaster risk management at the local level, identifying them as a vulnerable group in the flood management plans templates for urban and rural areas<sup>2</sup>. In contrast, the NMSH is silent on migration-related aspects, while the Kerala SAPCC (2014) largely overlooks migrants, only briefly mentioning the migration of local populations in coastal regions due to sea-level rise, without integrating this issue into broader policy frameworks or offering targeted interventions.

The 2011 census recorded 450 million internal migrants for reasons like employment, education and marriage which is 37% of the Indian population. Projections only show increases. City-level climate action plans, such as Bengaluru's Climate Resilience Plan, are emerging but still lack concrete implementation strategies for migrant populations.

### Key takeaways

Labour and livelihoods remain the primary focus, but climate change considerations in workplace policies are lacking. Urban housing policies fail to address the unique vulnerabilities of migrant workers, with limited emphasis on climate resilience. Health and education interventions acknowledge migration-related challenges but are not systematically designed for mobile populations. Financial security schemes rarely account for the informal nature of migrant work, leading to exclusion. Migration-specific policies are limited. Climate policies acknowledge migration but do not integrate migrant-inclusive adaptation strategies.



*Migrant cluster next to a drain in Bengaluru.  
Credits: Hemant Kumar, IIHS, 2025.*

<sup>2</sup> In 2025, the KSDMA has released an exclusive guideline on migrant workers to address their unique vulnerabilities and include them in Kerala's disaster management framework. For more: [https://sdma.kerala.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/labour\\_new.pdf](https://sdma.kerala.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/labour_new.pdf)

## 4.2

### Stages and scales of these interventions

National interventions date back to the 1940s, primarily focusing on wages and employee insurance. State-level initiatives in Karnataka and Kerala emerged in the 1970s, while city-level efforts in Kochi and Bengaluru began in the early 2000s. Early interventions in insurance, health, and labour alluded to migrants but did not specifically target them. The Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act (1979) was one of the first migrant-specific policies but applied only to contract-based inter-state migrants ignoring a large majority of those working in the informal sector. Until the 1990s, migrant-focused interventions mainly addressed labour conditions. Later, states and urban bodies expanded efforts to include education, health, and housing, alongside growing NGO-led initiatives, which mostly operate at the city level. Climate change and disaster risk interventions are recent (post 2008). Only five interventions addressed both migration and climate change including the National Action Plan on Climate

Change, the Affordable Rental Housing Complex's scheme for urban migrants. Eleven interventions have ended, most remain active, and data is missing for two NGO-led initiatives.

#### Key takeaways:

Migration-specific policies were historically weak and limited to labour issues but have expanded to other sectors in recent years. NGOs and urban governments are playing an increasing role in migrant-inclusive interventions with more recent interventions. Very few policies integrating both issues of climate change and migration making it an under addressed issue. Data gaps remain in tracking the status and implementation of certain interventions.



Daycare by Samagra NGO in a migrant colony in Bengaluru.

Credits: Swati Surampally, IIHS, 2024.

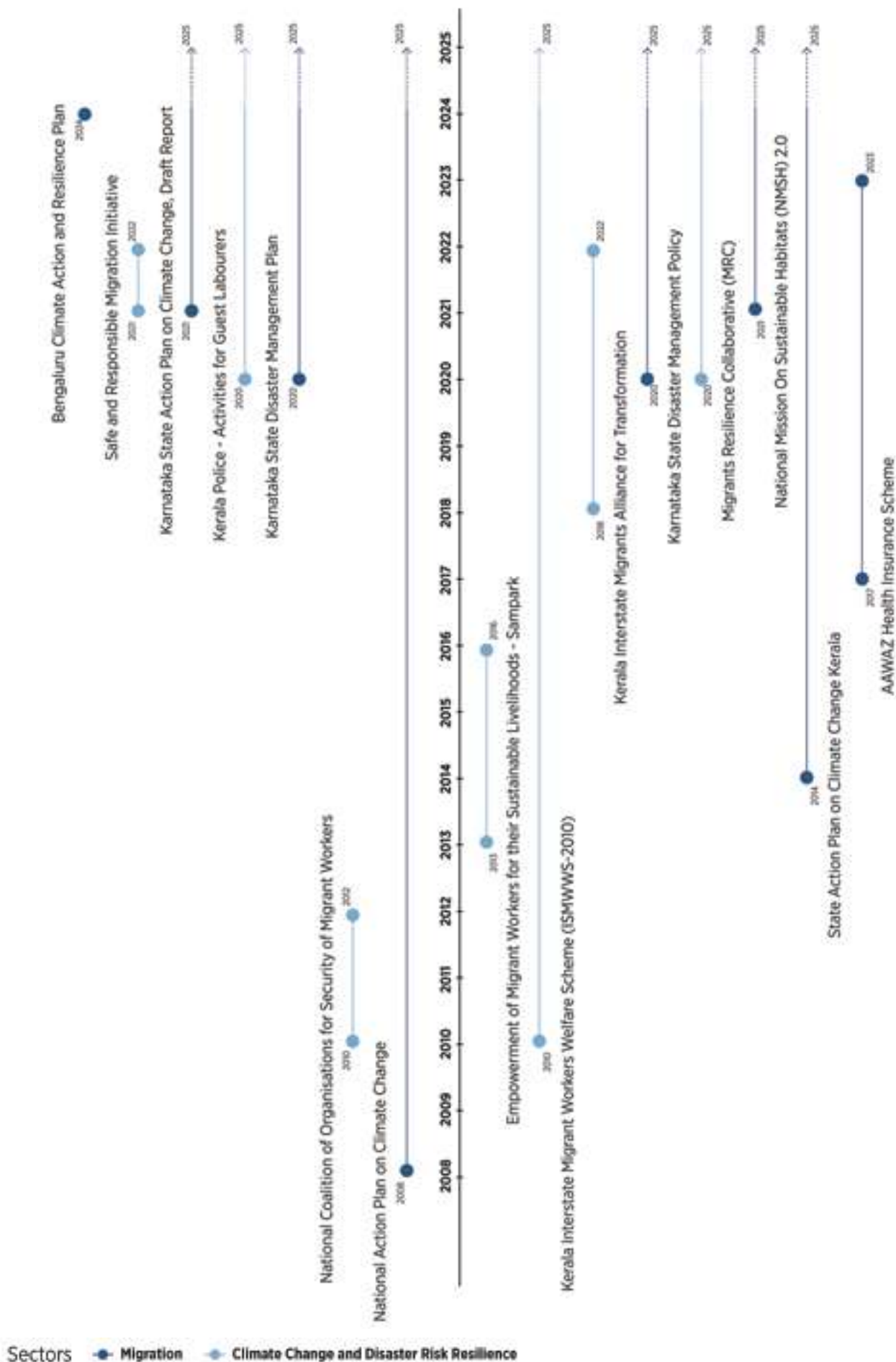


Figure 6: Timeline of assessed interventions

## 4.3

### Actors, target groups of interventions

**Central and state governments play a dominant role especially at a national level, with some interventions partnering with NGOs for implementation or technical assistance.** Ministries such as the Ministry of Labour & Employment, Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs, Ministry of Women & Child Development, and Ministry of Finance are key stakeholders.

Some very essential interventions like the National Food Security Act (NFSA, 2013) and Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), exclude migrants due to eligibility requirements like domicile-based access

and cooperative membership. Very few of these interventions (8 out of 49) explicitly target migrants, such as the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act (ISMWA, 2010), Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHC, 2021), and One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC, 2024) tackling problems of domicile-based accessibility. **The rationale behind targeting migrant populations can have effects on the perceptions of these populations among the local people.** Some interventions like the Phase III of the AIDS control program specifically addresses migrant populations to mitigate the spread of HIV/ AIDS due to their mobility, risks associated with informal work, and vulnerability to exploitation. This, however, highlights how there's a risk of reinforcing stereotypes of migrants as disease carriers, potentially increasing their vulnerability in receiving communities.

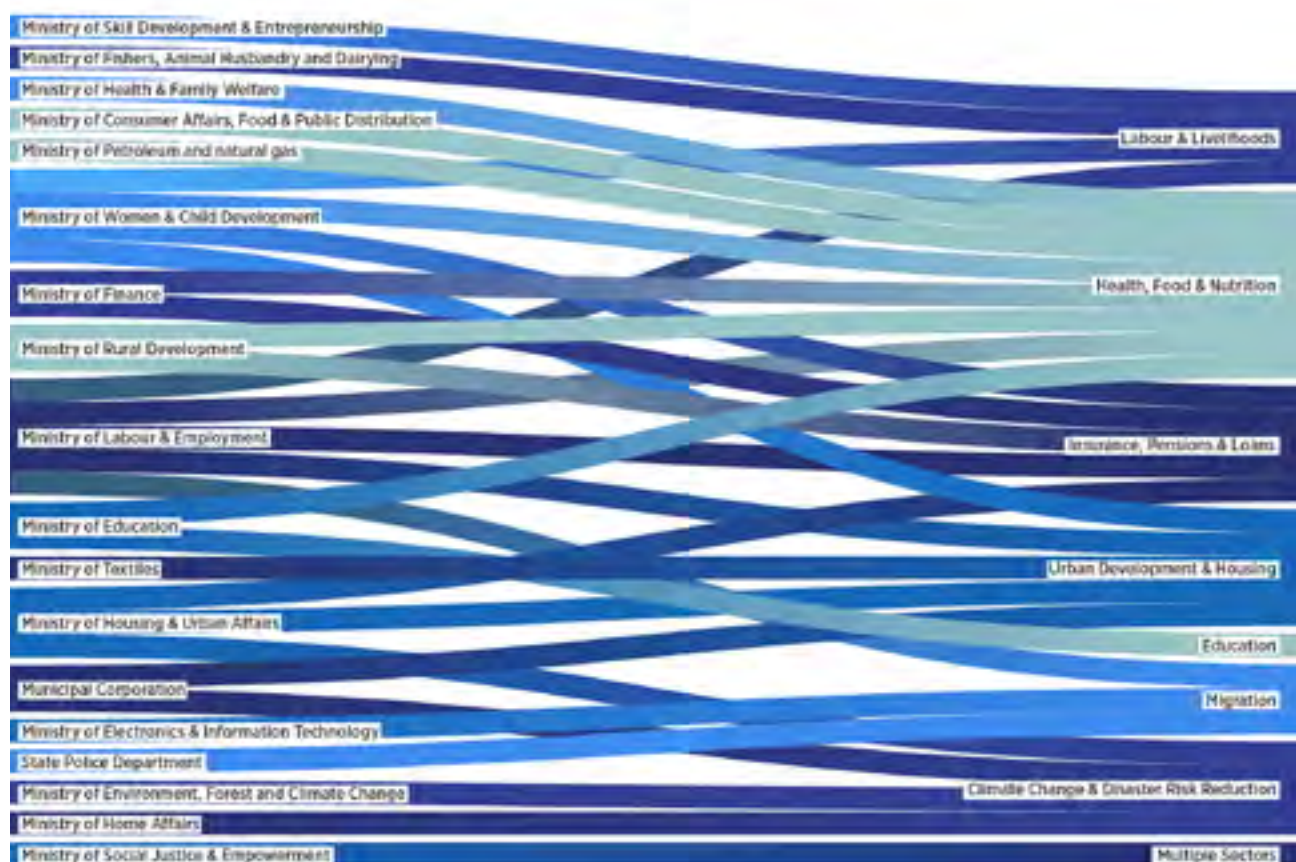


Figure 7: Interventions by government bodies in different sectors.

**Many interventions target vulnerable groups (e.g., construction workers, street vendors, sanitation workers, women, children, EWS/ LIS households) which we know include migrants however the intervention makes no explicit reference.** In three out of five schemes under the National Social Assistance Programme, gram panchayats/ municipalities are expected to identify beneficiaries within their jurisdiction. However, migrants may be overlooked due to their absence from the location. In some cases, **the broad definition of target groups as vulnerable may inadvertently overlook marginalised groups like migrants within the larger group.**

**Karnataka and Kerala have differing levels of focus on migration and migrants.** Kerala has a strong focus integrating migrant workers into housing, education, and health initiatives including those through Public-Private Partnerships (PPP). Karnataka has fewer migration-focused interventions, with most interventions targeting disadvantaged groups rather than migrants explicitly. Multi-state interventions, such as the Safe and Responsible Migration Initiative and the Pravasi Bandhu program, focus on migrants across both source and destination states but receive minimal government support and are largely NGO-driven.

**NGO involvement is significant at the city level.** This could be due to the typically smaller scale of action that NGOs operate in. Bengaluru has a high concentration of migrant-focused interventions. With Bengaluru being a top destination for migrants both across the state and country, **the prevalence of migration/ migrant-specific interventions in Bengaluru may reflect the lack of broader interventions at the state level.** The Bengaluru Climate Action Plan (BCAP) recognises migrants as a vulnerable group but lacks specific action points. On the other hand, Kochi’s interventions, such as the Kochi Resilience Plan (2020) which aimed to build urban resilience in public transport systems during the COVID-19 Pandemic, initially focused on migrants but later shifted away from migration concerns. Other broader government interventions targeting cities across the country like IHSDP, BSUP under JNNURM, and NMSH again target the general population with a focus on the urban poor and slum dwellers. Bridge schools for migrant children, run by NGOs like Samridhdhi Trust, operate in cities like Bengaluru, Pune, and Delhi to address educational disruptions caused by migration.

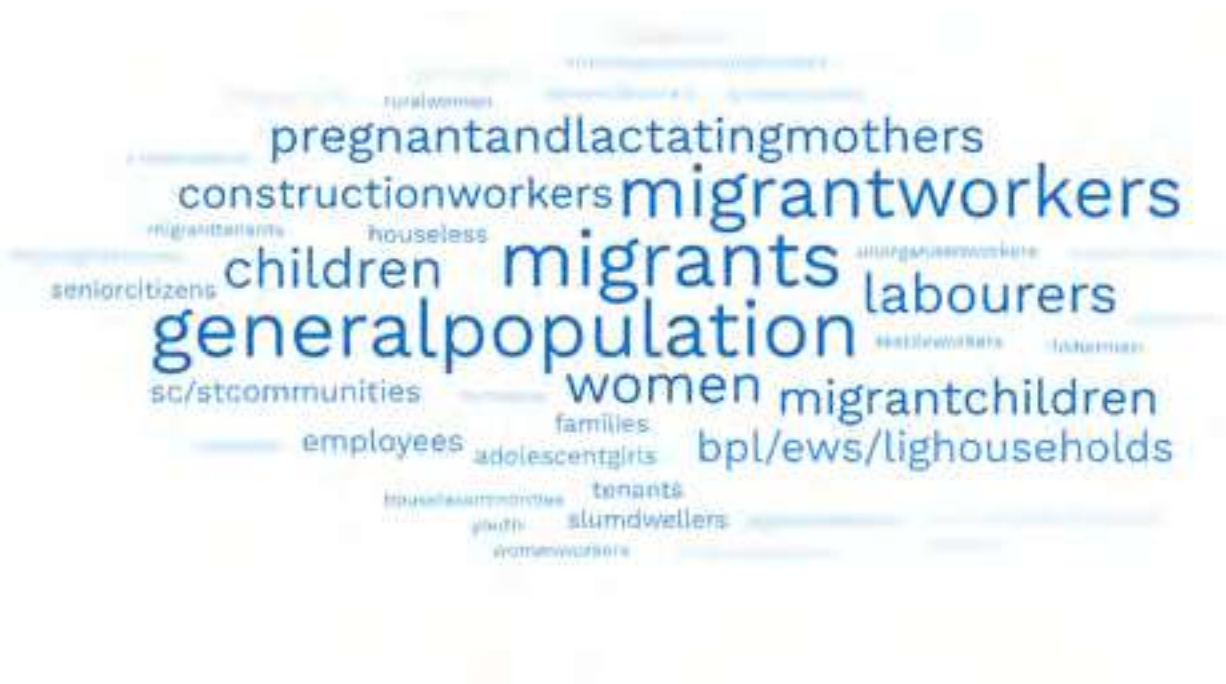


Figure 8: Target groups specific by the interventions reviewed.

**There is a skewed focus on only some of the sectors that employ migrants.** Most migrant-specific interventions focus on labour and livelihoods, while education, housing, and healthcare policies remain exclusionary due to rigid documentation and registration requirements. Construction workers receive the most policy attention, but other sectors employing migrants (e.g., manufacturing, domestic work, services) remain underrepresented. **Informal migrants remain out of the purview of most of the interventions.** Key labour laws, such as the Contract Labour Act and ISMWA, do not apply to informal workers, leaving a significant portion of migrant labourers unprotected.

**There hasn't been enough focus on developing mechanisms to help highly mobile population access services.** Many interventions rely on fixed-location identification (e.g., ration cards, residence proof), making them inaccessible to highly mobile migrant populations. Some social welfare schemes exclude migrants indirectly due to eligibility criteria. For example, the Janani Suraksha Yojana requires women to register for maternal care at the same clinic for months, which is impractical for migrant women.

### Key Takeaways:

Government-led interventions dominate, but most fail to specifically target migrants due to eligibility restrictions and rigid documentation requirements. NGOs play a critical role at the city level, in Bengaluru and Kochi, where most migrant-inclusive initiatives exist. Kerala leads in migrant-friendly policies, while Karnataka has fewer targeted interventions. Multi-state and NGO-led efforts address migration challenges, but they lack sustained government support. Migrants remain largely excluded from health, education, and housing policies, highlighting the need for portable entitlements and inclusive social protection.



*A waste worker in Bengaluru.*

*Credits: Hemant Kumar, IIHS, 2025.*

## 4.4

### How are migrants and migration discussed?

**There is limited but increasing recognition of migration** with 31 out of 94 explicitly address migration of majority of them coming out after 2010 (~23) showing an increase in the recognition. Many interventions cater to sectors heavily reliant on migrant labour, particularly construction, or focus on migrant children's education to prevent cycles of poverty.

**There exist diverse perceptions of migration and migrants among the interventions.** Migrants are generally seen as **vulnerable but essential to the economy**, with a focus on improving their access to services in urban centres. Some interventions, like Sampark's Empowering Migrant Construction Workers program, **view migration as a livelihood choice**, while others, like LAMP and Gubbachi's Bridge Learning Programs, see it as **distress driven**. These framings can be highly influential for policy design as they determine whether migrants are seen as capable economic actors or passive victims in need of protection.

On the other hand, some interventions frame **migration as a problem and aim to control and managing migrants**. For example, interventions, like ARHCs and Kerala's Apna Ghar scheme, although designed to improve migrant living conditions imply concerns over disease spread among local populations through the movement of migrants. They also include security measures, such as CCTV installations, suggesting a **perception of migrants as a group to be managed and monitored rather than integrated**.

**There is an indirect inclusion of migrants in broader interventions** (~58) targeted at the general population. Most make a passing reference to migrants, indicating some acknowledgement, but their tone varies from positive to mixed or negative. However, the lack of concrete targets and mechanisms for moving populations to access place-based services could prove generally unhelpful.

**Most interventions that acknowledge migrants remain gender-blind.** They fail to address the specific needs of women migrants, particularly single mothers and female workers in informal sectors. Gendered language, such as "workmen" and "he/ him" in the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act (ISMWA), reinforces male-centric assumptions, ignoring women's housing, childcare, and safety concerns.

#### Key takeaways:

While migration is increasingly acknowledged in policies, the dominant focus remains on vulnerability rather than agency. Security concerns, gender blindness, and service portability issues highlight critical gaps in existing interventions. A more inclusive, rights-based, and gender-sensitive approach is needed to fully integrate migrants into urban development and social protection systems.

## 4.5

### How is climate change discussed in the interventions?

**There is limited integration of climate change in policies.** Only 21 out of 94 incorporate climate change considerations, while the majority (73) remaining climate-blind. **Interventions focusing on migrants and climate change together are rare**, with only five interventions addressing both issues.

**The climate considerations in most interventions are limited to built infrastructure aspects.** Interventions in housing, construction and urban development indicate addressing climate resilience through infrastructure improvements. For example:

- The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Central Rules (1971): “Restrooms or alternative accommodation to be so constructed as to afford adequate protection against heat, wind, rain and shall have smooth, hard and impervious floor surface. Adequate ventilation along with natural or artificial lighting should be there” (Chapter V, point 41).
- PMAY-U (Housing for All) and ARHCs (Affordable Rental Housing Complexes), which incorporate rainwater harvesting, disaster-resistant designs, and renewable energy solutions.
- Selco Foundation’s design for migrant housing and bridge schools: “accounts for unprecedented water levels during heavy rainfalls and rodent attacks, for which a raised plinth was provided. The walls are made of Bison board (a board made of a mixture of husk and cement) for good thermal performance. The roof is made with insulated and recycled tetra pack sheets to reduce heat entering the space.” (SELCO Foundation, n.d.)

**There exist gaps in addressing the vulnerability these climate risks create when it comes to occupational safety and health.** Some policies acknowledge stress from low temperatures (e.g., ISMW Act, 1979, which provides protective clothing for temperatures below 20°C) but fail to address extreme heat, which is a critical issue for outdoor workers. Labour-intensive sectors like construction, agriculture, and street vending remain highly vulnerable to rising temperatures, yet **workplace vulnerability to these climate risks remains under addressed.**

**Some interventions focus on environmental sustainability, but not necessarily on climate adaptation for vulnerable populations.** For example, PM Ujjwala Yojana (2016) promotes clean cooking fuels (LPG) over biomass, citing environmental and health benefits, but does not explicitly mention climate resilience for migrants or urban poor. Many urban development schemes (e.g., National Building Codes, Technology Sub-Mission under PMAY-U) encourage the use of eco-friendly materials.

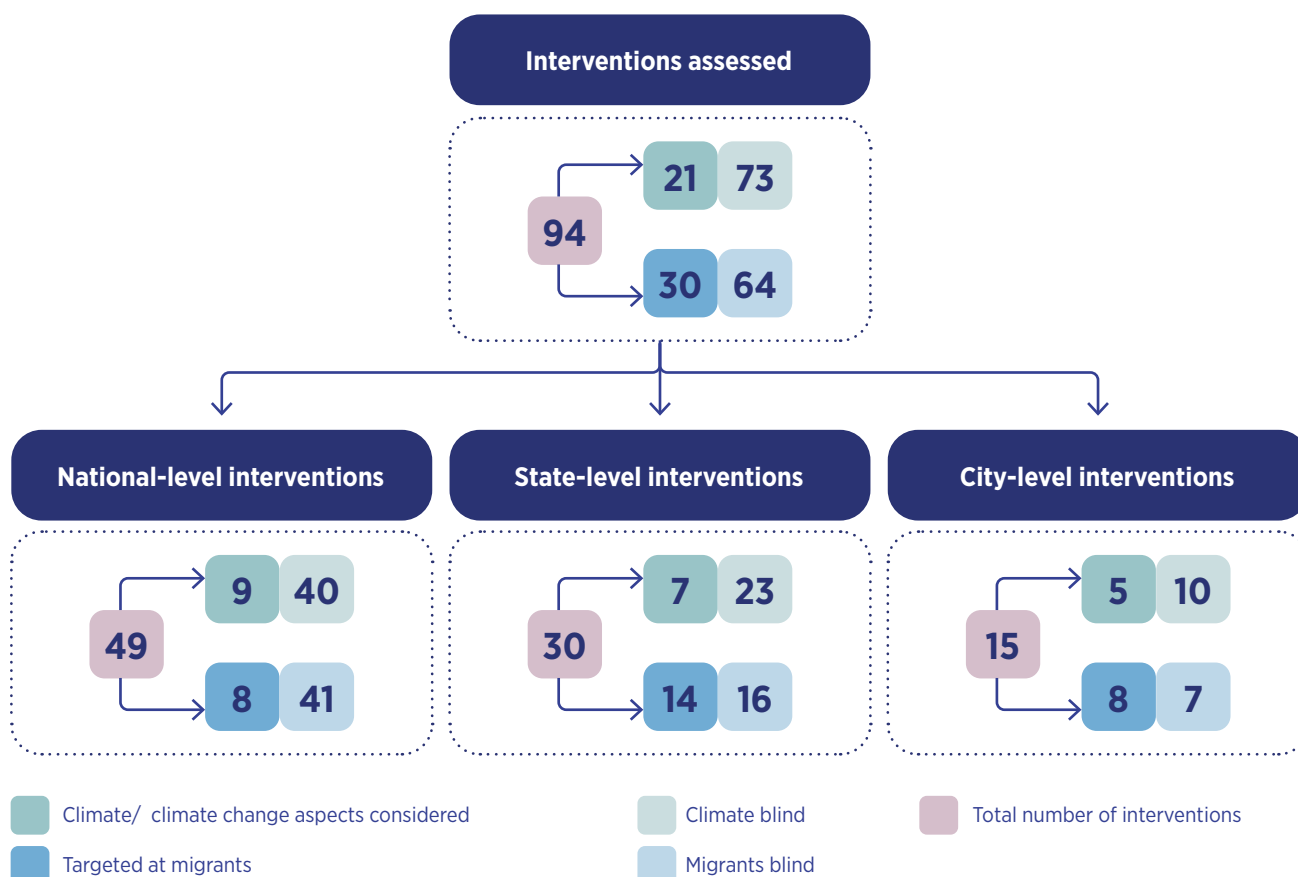


Figure 9: Climate/ climate change and migrant-specific interventions

**Climate action plans overlook migration. National and state-level climate policies largely ignore migration, despite growing evidence of climate-induced displacement.** The National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) claims to protect the “poor and vulnerable” but does not explicitly mention migrants in any of its eight missions. Similarly, at the state levels, the Karnataka SAPCC briefly acknowledges migrants while discussing Bengaluru’s population density but offers no targeted interventions.

### **Key Takeaways:**

Climate considerations in interventions are limited and sector-specific, mostly tied to infrastructure improvements rather than comprehensive adaptation strategies. Labour-intensive sectors remain highly exposed to climate risks, yet policies fail to provide protection against heat stress and extreme weather conditions. National and state climate policies do not meaningfully address migration.

## 4.6

### Types of Social Protection

**Most interventions are a combination of two or more types of social protection approaches (64 out of 94 or 70%).** Interventions with transformative elements that target a long-term change particularly those that address systemic inequalities which are the root causes of vulnerability were largely absent. **Interventions that provide short-term relief or incremental improvements dominate the space.**

**Preventive (9% of interventions) social protection that aims to avert deprivation by helping economically vulnerable groups manage livelihood shocks, dominates the space.** Examples include the Minimum Wages Act, Karnataka Labour Welfare Fund (Amendment) Act, and Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act. Some housing schemes, such as Workers Hostels (Ministry of Textiles) and Apna Ghar (Kerala), address homelessness and unsafe living conditions but fail to tackle systemic causes of vulnerability because it does not provide accommodation to the families of footloose migrants. Even among the interventions which provide a combination of different types, preventive social protection is the most common, appearing in 67 interventions.



*A migrant fetching water from a public tap.  
Credits: Sushmita Rai, IIHS, 2025.*

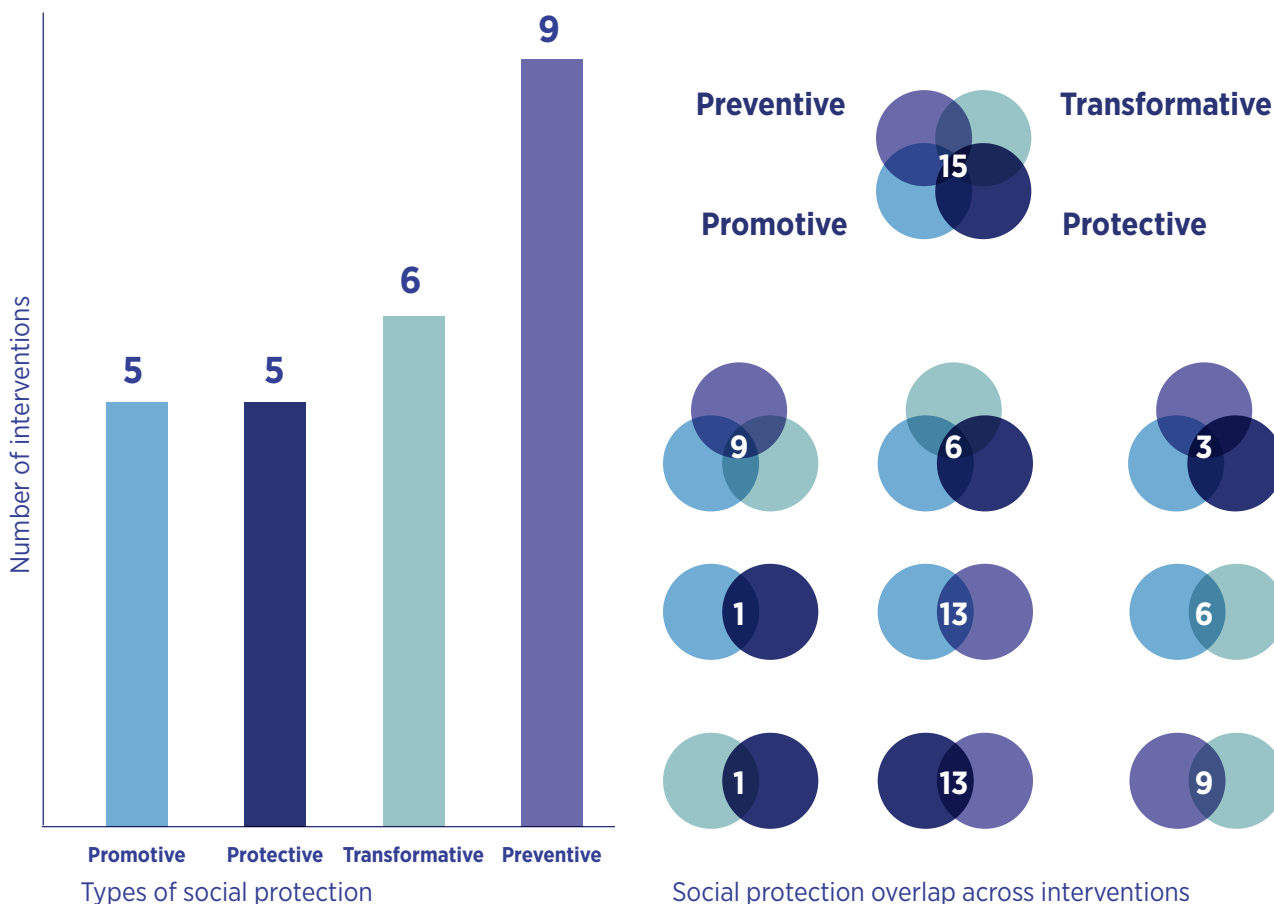
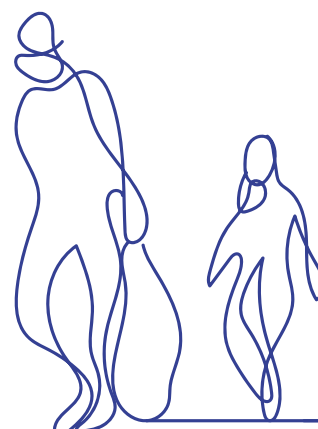


Figure 10: Social protection combinations from the interventions assessed.

**Protective (5% of interventions) social protection provides relief from deprivation for groups unable to work or living in extreme poverty.** Some of the interventions include housing schemes like Gift a Home by the United Foundation and Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme (IHSDP). Other interventions like the Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) provides maternal healthcare and nutrition but lacks portability, excluding migrant women from continued healthcare access.

**Promotive (5% of interventions) social protection focuses on enhancing capabilities through education, health, and employment.** More than half of these interventions target children. For example, the RTE Act, PM Poshan, Kerala State Policy for Child. Other interventions like the Working Women’s Hostel Scheme and DLF Foundation’s Labour Welfare Initiative aim to improve worker conditions through housing, sanitation, and childcare services.

**Transformative (6% of interventions) social protection seeks to challenge systemic inequalities through legal protections and empowerment.** Some interventions like SC/ ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, and India Labourline come under this. Only two interventions explicitly target migrants: Kerala Interstate Migrants Alliance for Transformation (KISMAT) and Changathi – Literacy Programme for Migrants.



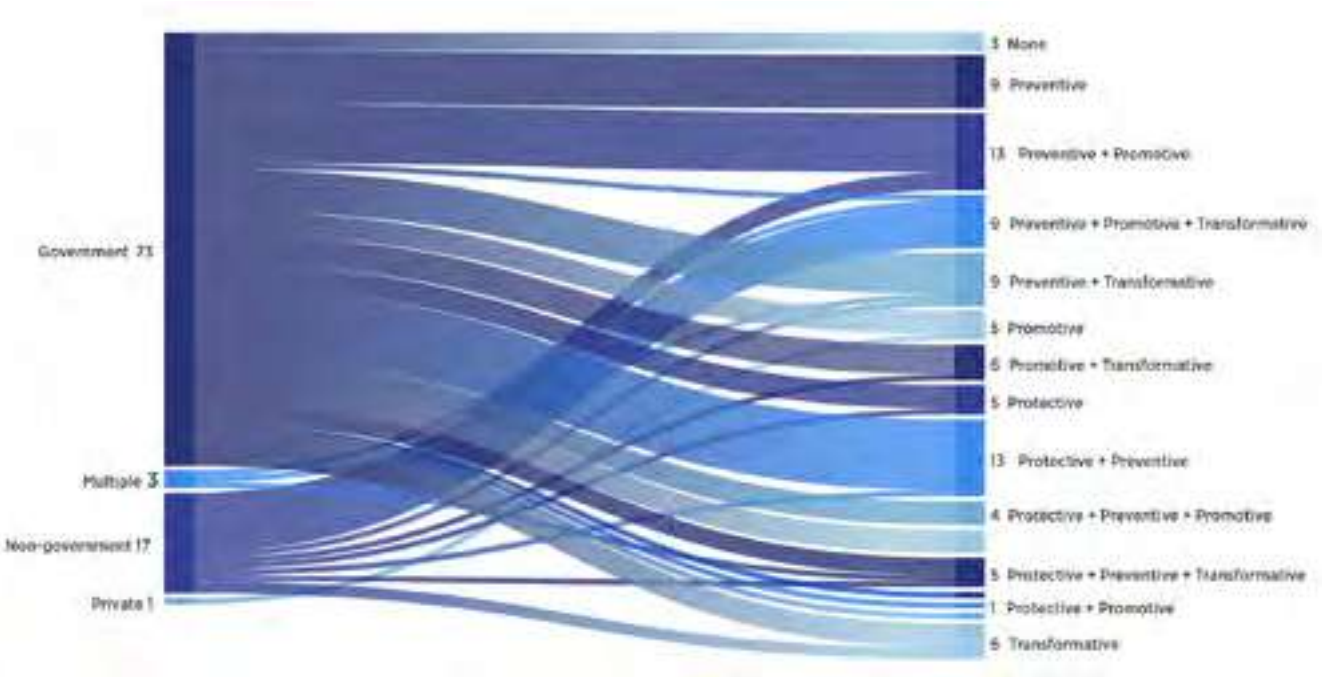


Figure 11: Types and combinations of social protection by actors.

### Key Takeaways:

Most interventions focus on short-term relief rather than systemic change, with preventive social protection being the most common approach. Transformative interventions are rare, particularly for migrants, limiting long-term empowerment. NGO-led interventions tend to be more transformative, focusing on empowerment rather than just relief. Government interventions prioritise preventive measures (e.g., wage regulations, labour laws) and tend to be less transformative than NGO efforts. Migrant populations remain underserved, as most interventions are not designed with mobility in mind, limiting their accessibility and impact.

## 4.7

### Adaptive Social Protection

**Only 4 out of 94 interventions meet the criteria for Adaptive Social Protection (ASP), despite 21 addressing climate change and 11 considering disaster risk.** ASP integrates social protection with climate and disaster resilience to build adaptive capacity. The few qualifying interventions—like the Aam Aadmi Bima Yojana, Karnataka Disaster Plan, and Kochi Resilience Plan—include a mix of preventive, protective, and promotive elements. However, migrants are rarely acknowledged explicitly. Government efforts mostly focus on preventive approaches, while NGOs offer more holistic, transformative support. **Overall, transformative and adaptive components remain underdeveloped, highlighting a gap in climate-resilient social protection planning.**

Table 4: Interventions that provide Adaptive Social Protection.

<b>Aam Aadmi Bima Yojana</b>	
<b>Sector</b>	<b>Insurance, Pensions and Loans</b>
Climate Change and Disaster Risk Resilience elements?	Yes
Social Protection type	Protective + Preventive
Key Features	Financial support for bereaved families of rural landless agricultural labourers, covering death and disability; Also covers natural calamities
Vulnerable Groups Addressed	Socially and economically vulnerable groups, particularly rural landless agricultural labourers
Migrant Inclusion?	Indirectly, as part of economically vulnerable groups
<b>Karnataka State Disaster Management Policy / Karnataka State Disaster Management Plan</b>	
<b>Sector</b>	<b>Climate Change and Disaster Risk Resilience</b>
Climate Change and Disaster Risk Resilience elements?	Yes
Social Protection type	Preventive + Promotive
Key Features	Focus on prevention, preparedness, and resilience; links DRR investments to climate adaptation; promotes hazard-resilient buildings and alternate livelihoods
Vulnerable Groups Addressed	Women, gender minorities, SC/ ST communities, elderly, and children
Migrant Inclusion?	Not explicitly recognised, but relief camps, food, and temporary livelihoods could benefit them
<b>Kochi Resilience Plan</b>	
<b>Sector</b>	<b>Urban Development &amp; Housing</b>
Climate Change and Disaster Risk Resilience elements?	Yes
Social Protection type	Preventive
Key Features	Enhances public transport accessibility post-COVID-19, ensures safety and security, promotes innovative financing and urban resilience strategies
Vulnerable Groups Addressed	General public, healthcare workers
Migrant Inclusion?	Explicitly acknowledged in Phase I for essential transport services during lockdown

# 05

## Discussion

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*Image Credits:  
Chandni Singh, IIHS, 2023*

## 5.1

### Summary of key findings

#### **Interventions are overwhelmingly climate-blind:**

Of the 94 interventions reviewed, 22 focus on 'Labour and livelihoods', 17 on 'Urban development and housing', and 16 on 'Health, food and nutrition'. 78 per cent interventions are climate-blind. While migrant-specific interventions (32% of 94) acknowledge climate change, they do not fully account for climate risks. For instance, the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act (1971) and Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act (2010) mandate adequate ventilation and protection against heat, rain, and wind for workers' accommodation but lack provisions to address intensifying climatic events or long-term changes like rising temperatures<sup>3</sup>. While PMAY-U has established a Technology & Innovation Sub-Mission to assist States/ UTs/ Cities in deploying climate-smart and resilient housing, its implementation remains to be seen. Even innovative programs like ARHCs for Urban Migrants/ Poor, which emphasise rainwater harvesting, waste management, and renewable energy, fail to integrate risk reduction (adaptation) measures.

#### **Migrant-specific interventions are overwhelming from non-state actors:**

Of the 94 interventions analysed, 32 per cent specifically target migrants as beneficiaries, with the majority of these being driven by NGOs or the private sector. These interventions primarily operate at city or state levels, addressing key issues such as employment rights, healthcare, housing, and education for migrants. NGOs/ CSOs play a critical role in bridging gaps in migrant wellbeing and climate resilience, but interventions explicitly focusing on climate resilience remain limited (n=2). Moreover, these efforts often portray migrants through narratives emphasising their vulnerabilities and risks, neglecting their adaptive capacities and contributions to building resilience.

#### **Interventions are mostly domicile-linked:**

Portability of benefits, as seen in schemes like the ONORC and PMUY 2.0, is crucial for ensuring access to social protection for mobile populations. However, some interventions still lack the flexibility to adapt to dynamic

needs of migrants. For example, welfare boards under BoCWA (1996) require workers to register in a specific state and do not allow inter-state portability for inter-state migrants.

Only three interventions explicitly involved multiple actors. Government interventions have NGO implementing partners, but they are not necessarily present at the planning or formulation stages. More recent interventions involve collaborations between government entities, NGOs, and private actors. However, siloed approaches and inadequate coordination across sectors often hinder the effective delivery of benefits.

#### **Adaptive Social Protection remains missing:**

Most interventions (71 per cent), addressing vulnerabilities through short-term, incremental measures. Migrants remain largely excluded from mainstream social protection, with limited recognition of their unique vulnerabilities. Adaptive social protection is rare with only four interventions of 94 (four per cent) integrating climate change and disaster risk reduction.

## 5.2

### Implications for policymakers, migrants, and researchers

There is a pressing need for more comprehensive, migrant-inclusive interventions that go beyond current social protection programmes. Policymakers must prioritise designing interventions that specifically cater to the unique needs and vulnerabilities of diverse migrant groups, considering factors like livelihoods, length of residence, exposure to environmental/ climate hazards, and gendered vulnerabilities.

Migrants often face significant barriers in accessing essential services and support at destination areas, particularly those who migrate for short durations or lack formal documentation. While initiatives like the ONORC demonstrate progress in improving

<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that current issues like extreme heat and flooding in urban centers were not as prominent when these acts were first developed. This underscores the need for revisiting the acts in the light of changing climate risks.

the portability of services, dedicated and targeted programmes for internal migrants remain scarce across India. The implementation of ONORC faces several challenges on ground. These include a lack of awareness among migrants, discriminatory practices that favour local ration card holders, and instances of corruption in the fair price shops, such as black-market activities, which further marginalises migrants and limits their access (Gupta et al., 2023).

The findings reveal a critical need to rethink social protection frameworks to address both immediate vulnerabilities and underlying systemic challenges. While preventive measures dominate, they cannot build long-term resilience. The limited presence of transformative approaches and the lack of inclusion of migrants highlights the blind spots in the system. Adaptive social protection, which combines climate change adaptation with disaster risk reduction, holds significant potential but is side-lined. Addressing these gaps requires designing inclusive and holistic interventions that prioritise empowerment, equity, and sustainability focussing on transformative change for vulnerable populations.

## 5.3

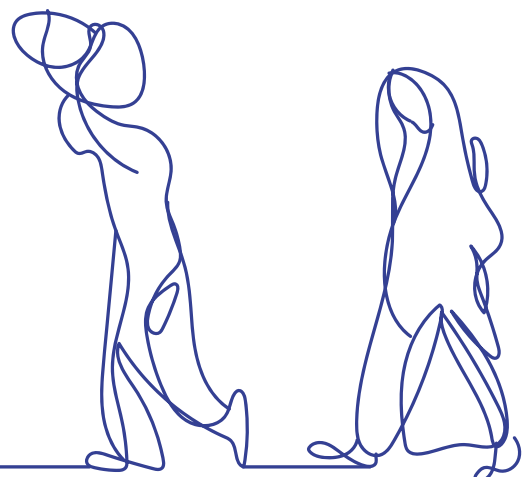
### Ways to improve interventions for internal migrants in India

As internal migration in India continues to rise, the complexities surrounding migrant needs become increasingly evident. Addressing these challenges requires a nuanced understanding of the gaps in current interventions. Bhan (2024) discuss an inclusive approach to urban employment programmes stressing that clearly defining who qualifies as an “urban resident” is vital as it determines eligibility and influences whether these programmes reach the most vulnerable populations. Current definitions used by programs like the Indira Gandhi Shehari Rozgar Yojana in Rajasthan, Ayyankali scheme in Kerala, the Tamil Nadu Urban Employment Scheme, often rely on restrictive criteria

such as length of residence in an urban area and proof of residence documentation. **Such restrictive definitions of urban residents can exclude the most vulnerable urban residents, such as recent migrants.**

As climate change impacts intensify, policymakers must **strengthen the linkages between climate adaptation and migration policies.** Migration serves as an adaptation strategy for many low-income migrants, and effective management is essential to leverage its benefits in urban areas while addressing the associated challenges. This approach could involve the development of dedicated programs that enhance the resilience of migrant populations to environmental and climate hazards, provide access to disaster risk reduction strategies, and ensure the availability of climate-resilient infrastructure in both workplaces and living spaces.

**Non-governmental interventions often showcase innovative approaches that address complex challenges in ways that can serve as valuable models for broader application.** For instance, Gubbachi’s Bridge Learning Programmes and Selco Foundation’s climate-responsive school design offer critical insights into how targeted, community-focused strategies can effectively address the unique needs of vulnerable populations. CMID’s Bandhu Shramik Seva Kendra in Kochi facilitates the enrolment of migrant workers in various social security schemes. The centres operate hours that align with the migrants’ working schedules, ensuring convenient access. By learning from such best practices, governments can better design and scale up successful interventions, ensuring that policies and programs are both effective and inclusive.



# 5.4

## Policy imperatives

- 1** *Mainstream migration into climate and urban policy frameworks at national, state, and city levels.*
- 2** *Design portable, inclusive, and adaptive social protection systems that respond to the realities of internal migration and climate stress.*
- 3** *Prioritise migrant-responsive housing, health, education, and occupational safety measures with climate resilience embedded.*
- 4** *Invest in gender-sensitive and multi-sectoral interventions, scaling up successful NGO models through government partnerships.*
- 5** *Shift the narrative from controlling migration to leveraging it as a proactive adaptation and development strategy.*

*Migrants living in precarious housing conditions in Bengaluru.  
Credits: Hemant Kumar, IIHS, 2025.*



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Image Credits:  
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## Annexure Table 1: List of interventions reviewed

S.No.	Intervention
1	Aam Admi Bima Yojana
2	Aawaz Health Insurance Scheme
3	Affordable Rental Housing Complexes for Urban Migrants/ Poor
4	Affordable Rental Housing for Migrants - Apna Ghar
5	Annapurna Scheme
6	Ayushman Bharat
7	Bandhu Clinic
8	Basic Services to the Urban Poor
9	Summary of the Bengaluru Climate Action and Resilience Plan
10	Bridge Learning Programmes by Gubbachi Learning Community
11	Bridge School and Labour Colony by SELCO Foundation
12	Bridge Schools for Migrant Children by Samriddhi Trust
13	Changathi - Literacy programme for migrants
14	Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act
15	Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Karnataka Rules
16	Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Kerala Rules
17	Devaraj Urs Housing Scheme Urban
18	Diya Ghar Centre
19	Dr B R Ambedkar Nivas Yojana Urban
20	Education and Livelihood initiatives by Vathsalya Charitable Trust
21	Employee State Insurance Act
22	Employee State Insurance Scheme
23	Empowering Migrant Construction Workers by Sampark
24	Empowerment of Migrant Workers for their sustainable Livelihoods by Sampark
25	Equal Remuneration Act
26	Gift a Home by The United Foundation
27	India Labourline by Aajeevika Bureau
28	Integrated Child Development Services Scheme
29	Integrated Child Development Services Scheme - Karnataka
30	Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme
31	Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and conditions of service) Act
32	Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and conditions of service) Karnataka Rules
33	Janani Suraksha Yojana
34	Karmika Seva Kendra under Ambedkar Karmika Sahaya Hasta Scheme
35	Karnataka Affordable Housing Policy
36	Karnataka Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board
37	Karnataka Labour Welfare Fund (Amendment) Act

S.No.	Intervention
38	Karnataka Migrant Worker's Union by The Concerned for Working Children
39	Karnataka State Disaster Management Plan
40	Karnataka State Action Plan on Climate Change, Draft report
41	Karnataka State Disaster Management Policy
42	Kerala Interstate Migrant Workers Welfare Scheme
43	Kerala Interstate Migrant Workmen (regulation of employment and conditions of service) Rules
44	Kerala Interstate Migrants Alliance for Transformation by BREADS Bangalore
45	Kerala Police - Activities for Guest Labourers
46	Kerala State Action Plan for Climate Change
47	Kochi Resilience Plan
48	Labour Welfare Initiative by DLF Foundation
49	Learning and Migration Program by American India Foundation
50	Migrants Resilience Collaborative with Jan Sahas, Global Development Incubator and EdelGive Foundation
51	Migration and Urban Habitat by Tata Trusts
52	Model Tenancy Act
53	Munnekollal Slum intervention by Links Charitable Trust
54	National Action Plan for Climate Change
55	National AIDS Control Programme III - HIV Intervention for migrants
56	National Coalition of Organisations for Security of Migrant Workers
57	National Family Benefit Scheme
58	National Food Security Act
59	National Mission on Sustainable Habitats 2.0
60	National Scheme for Welfare of Fishermen
61	National Social Assistance Programme, 1995 Sub-Schemes under NSAP: (i) Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS) (ii) Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS) (iii) Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS)
62	National Urban Rental Housing Policy
63	One Nation One Ration Card Scheme
64	Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana
65	PM SVANidhi Scheme
66	Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana
67	Poshan Tracker App
68	Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana
69	Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana
70	Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana
71	Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana
72	Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN) / Mid-Day Meal Scheme
73	Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan Yojana
74	Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana
75	Pravasi Bandhu by Caritas India
76	Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG) – SABLA

S.No.	Intervention
77	Rajiv Rinn Yojana
78	ROSHNI project
79	Safe and Responsible Migration Initiative by PDAG Consulting LLP, PHIA Foundation, CMID, and ISB
80	Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0
81	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan
82	Skill Development Program by MAARGA
83	State Policy for Child-2016
84	The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act
85	The Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act
86	The Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Cess Act
87	The Minimum Wages Act
88	The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act
89	The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act
90	The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act
91	Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act
92	Urban Ashraya/Vajpayee Urban Housing Scheme
93	Workers Hostels by Ministry of Textiles
94	Working Women's Hostel Scheme



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