

# Socio-Economic Condition of Migrant Workers in Itanagar Capital Region, Arunachal Pradesh

**Minjum Lollen**

Research Scholar, Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills, Doimukh, Arunachal Pradesh

## **Abstract**

Migration is the movement of a population from one place to another. Both the push factors and pull factors act as a driving force for migration. In India, the low socio-economic conditions in rural areas become a major reason for migration to the urban areas. From time immemorial, both the socioeconomic status of human life and the socioeconomic status of the region have been positively or negatively impacted by human movement, changing the socio-economic fabric as well as the population dynamics of the places of origin and destination.

Migration has emerged as a significant driver of urban growth in the Itanagar Capital region of Arunachal Pradesh, particularly in the context of rapid administrative expansion and developmental activities. Arunachal Pradesh has witnessed an influx of migration in the last three decades due to recent but rapid urbanisation in the state from various parts of India. The migrant population is predominantly engaged in the informal sector of the economy, undertaking occupations that are often avoided by the local population due to their physically demanding nature, low wages, and lack of social security benefits. The present study aims to examine the socio-economic condition of the migrants in the Itanagar Capital Region and how these migrants are contributing to the economic growth of the region based on primary sources.

**Keywords:** Migration, Socio-economic, Migrants, Urbanisation, Population

## **1. Introduction**

Migration is an important aspect of human studies. It focuses on the movement of population from one place to another, as well as on the influence on the livelihood aspects of individuals and the masses in general. Migration is the “instinct for survival that compels humans to pursue improved opportunities” (Sundari, 2005: 2295). Structural and demographic transformations, alongside the appeal of urban areas and job opportunities in lower tiers, are the main factors driving labour migration. Individuals move for a variety of reasons, particularly for economic motives such as enhanced employment prospects, increased wages, and job availability. Migration is fuelled by the strain that a large population places on finite resources, whereas urbanisation and rural-urban migration are inevitable byproducts of the shift from an agro-based to an industrial economy.

According to a study on "Inter-state migration and regional disparities in India" by Mukherjee (1991: 203–45), poverty, underdevelopment, spatial disarray, regional and social disparities, and rural stagnation, among other factors, are the main causes of inter-state population migration in India. Migrations are generally the result of both push and pull factors combined, and it can be challenging to determine which is responsible for which. Push factors are prevalent in rural areas and are typically associated with poverty,

landlessness, and the recurrence of natural disasters. At the urban destination, the pull factors such as better employment, greater wages and better standard of living are operational.

The emergence of globalisation has altered the demand for labour, resulting in a shift in the composition of the national and international labour market, particularly in the context of accelerated urbanisation. Labour migration has a significant impact on and influences the country's socioeconomic development. This labour migration has always played an important, if not primary, role in the processes of urbanisation (Mitra, Arup, and Mayumi Murayam. 2011: 25-51), because migration for employment is the key driver for migration, particularly from rural to urban regions.

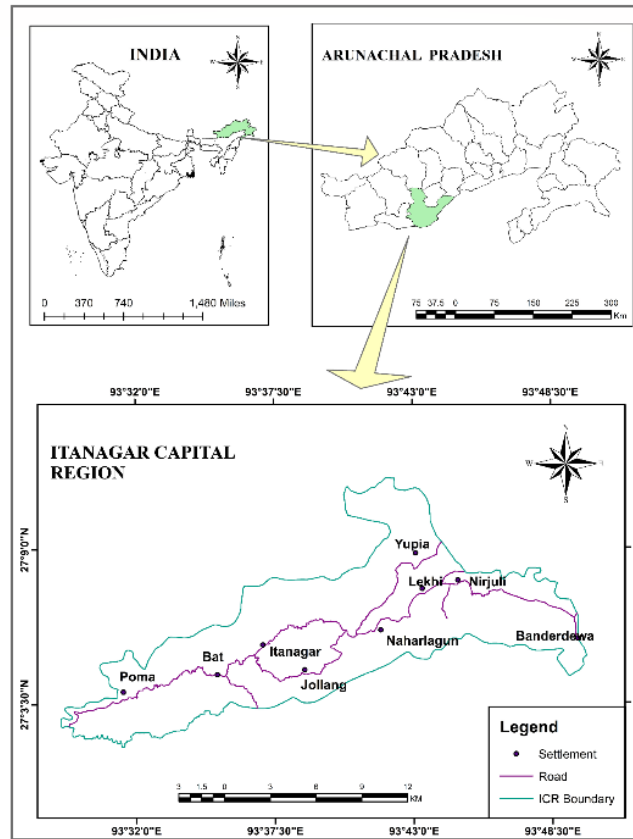
The Northeast region, in general and Arunachal Pradesh in particular, have been affected by migration to a remarkable extent. Naturally, the impact of migration has been heavier on urban areas as these are more accessible and attractive to migrants. This is because migration is seen to be most effective around Itanagar Capital Region (ICR) due to an increasing speed of developmental work. Most of the people migrated from Shillong after the shifting of the capital. Thus, it is observed that the people of Arunachal Pradesh have started moving out of their villages to urban work sites. This supports the inference that, as the urbanisation in Arunachal Pradesh is the outcome of administrative expansion, it may be necessary to bring manpower from outside for the implementation of developmental programmes in Arunachal Pradesh.

The process of urbanisation in Arunachal Pradesh, while recent, is quite rapid, as evidenced by several indicators such as population growth in urban areas, expansion of urban centres, infrastructure development, economic diversification, government initiatives, and subsequent social and cultural changes that are becoming apparent in the form of changing living choices and approaches. Globalisation has recently accelerated this process by emphasising the creation of new economic prospects for the state, particularly in sectors such as tourism, agriculture, and hydropower. Increased connectivity and integration with global markets have resulted in more trade and investment opportunities, which have helped to drive economic growth and job creation. This, in turn, has drawn migrants from both within and beyond the state, with the influx of unskilled labour from rural areas seeking employment and higher earnings in metropolitan centres.

Thus, it is clear that urbanisation in Arunachal Pradesh has contributed to migration by creating economic, social, and cultural opportunities in urban centres that attract migration from rural areas seeking improved living standards and access to jobs in administration, tourism, construction, trade, and services.

While these cities are seen as the epicentres of development and economic expansion, they also provide a breeding ground for poverty, inequality, environmental risks, and communicable diseases. The Itanagar Capital Region (ICR), which encompasses the towns of Itanagar, Naharalgun, Nirjuli, and Banderdewa, serves as a hub for intra- and inter-state migration. Arunachal Pradesh's high per capita income serves as a significant draw factor for those who are being pushed from their area of origin, which includes both skilled and unskilled labourers. Most migrants work in the informal sector in low-skilled, low-productivity employment, making up the urban labour force. Within this background, the present paper is an attempt to understand such groups who are part of the urban area of Itanagar and assess the socio-economic condition of the migrant population of the area.

## 2. Study Area



**Fig 1. Location map of the study area**

*Source: Prepared from the map of India Admin using ArcGIS 10.3*

Itanagar Capital Region is the administrative capital city of the state of Arunachal Pradesh. It is located in the district of Papum Pare. ICR is divided into three administrative circles- Itanagar, Naharlagun and Banderdewa. Among the three circles Itanagar has the highest population i.e., 65,301, followed by Naharlagun with 49,106 and Banderdewa with 8523.

Itanagar was mentioned as a town in the Census of India, 1971 along with Naharlagun. In 2018, Itanagar was declared as a smart city among the 100 cities in the country added to the Smart City Mission. Ever since the declaration of area as city, there has been legal and illegal migration. However, as the city started expanding the consecutive census shows the migrant population coming into the area.

## 3. Database and Methodology

The analysis is based on a comprehensive questionnaire designed to collect primary data from migrant households. The questionnaire is divided into several domains: (A) social profile, (B) family details, (C) migration details, (D) economic profile. It includes quantitative questions (e.g., multiple-choice, numeric scales) and qualitative questions (e.g., open-ended responses) to capture the multifaceted experiences of migrants. A total of 70 households were surveyed in the study area.

A stratified random sampling method was used to ensure representation across key locations such as Itanagar, Naharlagun, and Banderdewa. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and qualitative interpretation to highlight patterns and key findings relevant to the migrant population.

The location map of the study area was prepared from the map of India Admin using ArcGIS 10.3. The data collected was computed and converted into tables, and appropriate diagrams were used for analysis.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The socioeconomic status of migrant families is a crucial factor to consider. Research indicates that inadequate family income is a significant factor driving large-scale migration. The study aims to determine if migrants are content with their living conditions in their new jobs, or if their living and socioeconomic status remain unchanged.

##### 4.1 Reasons for migration

Rural push factors are a major contribution to migration from rural regions to the Itanagar Capital Region (ICR), accounting for 55.71 per cent. Unemployment is the biggest motivation for movement, mentioned by 35.71 per cent of migrant workers, followed by low earnings in their previous places of employment (10%) and migration of parents (7.14 percent). Furthermore, the findings show that 44.29 per cent of migratory workers are impacted by urban push factors. Among them, 30% relocate to the ICR in quest of improved employment and income possibilities, while 7% are drawn by the perceived ease of access to the informal sector as a result of increased urbanisation in the area. Additionally, 2 per cent migrate to join family members already residing in the area, while 1 per cent relocate due to marriage.

**Table 1: Reasons for Migration among Inter-state Migrants in ICR**

Reasons	Reasons for Migration	No. of HH	Percentage
Push factors	Unemployment	25	35.71
	Low wages	7	10.00
	Migration of Parents	5	7.14
	Too many family members	2	2.86
	Total (Out of 70)	39	55.71
	Pull factors	Employment and better income	21
	Joining relatives	2	2.86
	Marriage	1	1.43
	Easy Access to the Informal sector	7	10.00
	Total (Out of 70)	31	44.29
	Total (Out of 70)	70	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

#### 4.2 Demographic Characteristics

**Table 2: Demographic conditions of the migrants**

Gender	Number of respondents	Percentage (n=70)
Male	55	78.57
Female	15	21.43
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Unmarried	8	11.43
Married	46	65.71
Divorced	4	5.71

Widowed	11	15.71
<b>Age Structure</b>		
Below 20	2	2.86
20-30	13	18.57
30-40	22	31.43
40-50	20	28.57
50-60	6	8.57
Above 60	7	10.00
<b>Family Type</b>		
Nuclear	47	67.14
Joint	10	14.29
Extended	5	7.14
Bachelors living together	8	11.43

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above indicates the demographic characteristics of the migrant population in the capital region of Arunachal Pradesh. The gender-wise distribution of migrant respondents across ICR reflects a distinctly male-dominated migration pattern, with males comprising 78.57% (55 out of 70) of the total respondents and females making up only 21.43% (15 respondents). This imbalance indicates that migration in the Itanagar Capital Region is primarily driven by economic factors, particularly employment opportunities that attract individual male workers rather than entire families. These gendered trends have important ramifications for social policy and urban planning, especially when it comes to adjusting housing, healthcare, and safety services to meet the unique requirements of both migrant families and male labourers. The table shows age as a significant factor in understanding the socio-economic conditions. The data collected reveals that the majority of the respondents are concentrated within the economically active age groups, particularly between 30–50 years. This suggests that migration to the capital region is largely driven by employment and livelihood opportunities. Individuals in these age groups are often engaged in income-generating activities and may also carry significant family responsibilities, which further motivates their movement in search of better socio-economic prospects. Married people make up a sizable majority of the respondents—46 people, or roughly 65.7%. This suggests that the majority of migrants are either accompanied by their families or have established family units after migrating, rather than working alone, which is also visible in the dominance of the nuclear family among the migrants. Such a development implies more financial responsibility, particularly with regard to dependents' housing, healthcare, and education. On the other hand, only 8 respondents (11.4%) are single, which might be a reflection of younger people or those who have just moved. Interestingly, 11 respondents (15.7%) are widowed, a significant percentage that suggests a vulnerable group that might not have enough financial or social assistance.

### 4.3 Socio-economic Characteristics

Table 3 represents the socio-economic conditions focussing on the occupation structure and average monthly income of the migrant workers.

**Table 3: Socio-economic conditions of migrant workers**

Occupation	Number of Respondent	Percentage
Unemployed	3	4.29
Self Employed	7	10.00
Daily Labour	39	55.71
Government	4	5.71
Househelp	7	10.00
Contractual	10	14.29
<b>Average monthly Income</b>		
1000-5000	6	8.57
5000-10000	21	30.00
10000-15000	27	38.57
15000-20000	11	15.71
20000 and above	5	7.14

**Source: Field Survey, 2024**

Most migrants are engaged in the informal sector, where work is typically irregular, low-paid, and devoid of social protection. Most migrants lack formal education or vocational skills, limiting their options to unskilled or semi-skilled jobs. These occupations are not only physically demanding but also offer no job security, health insurance, or legal recourse in cases of exploitation and are barely sufficient to meet basic needs in an increasingly expensive urban environment. The occupational distribution of the respondents provides a clear picture of the economic activity of low-income migrants in the Itanagar Capital Region and highlights their utter reliance on unskilled and informal labour to make ends meet. The most common occupation among migrants is daily wage labour, as evidenced by the startling 39 respondents (55.7%) who work in this capacity. This illustrates how susceptible these people are to erratic income, seasonal work, and unstable employment. Ten people (14.3%) are contract labourers, who frequently work in construction, maintenance, and contracted municipal services, highlighting the migrants' dependence on unstable employment. Only 4 respondents (5.7%), on the other hand, work for the government, demonstrating extremely limited access to formal and secure employment, most likely as a result of low educational attainment, a lack of permanent residency, or a lack of required papers. Seven respondents (10%) each reported working for themselves or as housekeepers, indicating that some migrants have established modest livelihoods through domestic work, small-scale retail, or informal vending. Three people (4.3%) are unemployed, which is a modest percentage, but it can be understated because of underreporting or temporary employment.

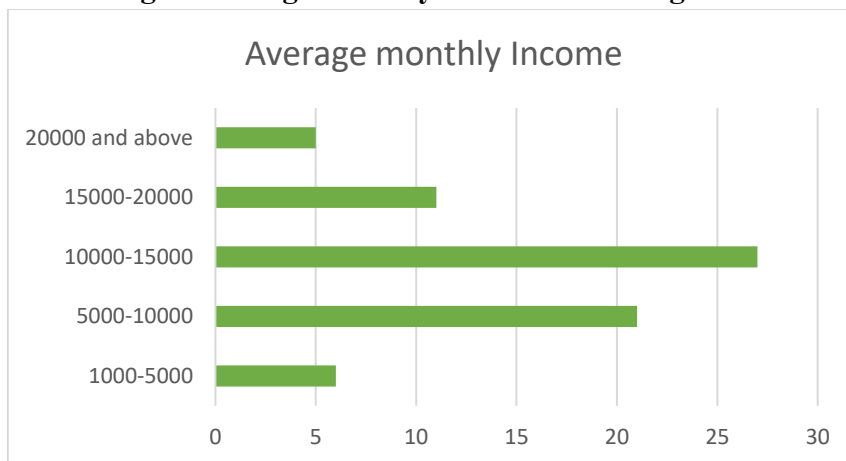
In addition to reflecting their overwhelming reliance on informal and unskilled labour, the occupational distribution of migrant workers in the Itanagar Capital Region also helps to explain the marked seasonal instability that defines their lives. Their employment is naturally linked to seasonal demand cycles because over half of the respondents are daily wage workers and a sizable portion are contract workers in the construction industry and related fields. Unlike formal sector jobs that offer year-round stability, informal occupations fluctuate in response to climatic conditions, infrastructure activity, and urban consumption patterns.

Due to their structural reliance on outdoor, labour-intensive work, migrants are especially susceptible to seasonal fluctuations. Winter brings more job prospects and a more stable income because of the increase

in market activity, road repairs, and construction projects. However, during the monsoon months, when landslides, waterlogging, and heavy rainfall impede transportation and building activity, the same labourers experience a sharp decline in their revenue. Thus, the precarious nature of occupational engagement directly translates into cyclical income insecurity. Seasonal fluctuation, therefore, is not merely an environmental phenomenon but a structural extension of migrants’ concentration in informal and climate-sensitive sectors of the urban economy.

The income distribution data of the surveyed migrant labourers in ICR highlights the economic precarity and modest earning patterns characteristic of informal urban employment. The majority of respondents—27 individuals (38.6%)—fall within the ₹10,000 to ₹15,000 monthly income bracket, indicating that while some manage to earn a relatively stable wage, they remain within the lower-income segment of urban society. A significant portion—21 respondents (30%)—earn between ₹5,000 and ₹10,000, while 6 respondents (8.6%) report earning as little as ₹1,000 to ₹5,000 per month. This lower-income group includes casual labourers, part-time domestic workers, or individuals with irregular employment, and are at the greatest risk of urban poverty, food insecurity, and exclusion from services. On the higher end, 11 respondents (15.7%) earn between ₹15,000 and ₹20,000, and only 5 respondents (7.1%) report a monthly income above ₹20,000, likely those with specialized skills, small businesses, or stable contractual roles.

**Fig 2: Average monthly income of the migrants**



These numbers highlight the low-wage informal sector's dominance in the urban economy and the restricted opportunities for upward mobility for most of the migrant workers. Even at the top of the income distribution, incomes are barely enough to sustain a family in a city where living expenses are on the rise. Over 50% of the respondents make less than ₹15,000 per month, which further implies that their dependents have restricted access to savings, healthcare, and education. In order to improve migrant workers' general socioeconomic circumstances, this income pattern highlights their structural vulnerabilities and encourages the implementation of inclusive financial and housing policies, better pay protections, and access to skill development.

**Conclusion**

The study explores the complex dynamics of migration in Arunachal Pradesh's capital township, illuminating its effects and related problems. The demographic and socioeconomic makeup of places throughout the world is still shaped by migration, a phenomenon that predates human civilisation. With

its varied indigenous populations and distinctive cultural legacy, Arunachal Pradesh has seen a surge in migration, mostly from nearby states and areas, due to a variety of reasons, including social and political dynamics as well as economic possibilities. Despite being relatively new, Arunachal Pradesh has seen a significant urbanisation trend driven by globalisation and more connectivity. In search of work, higher living conditions, and socioeconomic progress, a large number of migrants have moved into metropolitan areas such as the Itanagar Capital Region (ICR) as a result of this urbanisation trend. But this also presents a number of difficulties and problems that affect both the indigenous population and the migrant population.

The study highlights that the main factors influencing migration to ICR are perceived job prospects in the urban centre and economic hardship in rural regions. Migration does not, however, always imply increased socioeconomic security, even though it does open up employment opportunities. The results show that the majority of migrant workers are employed in the informal sector, specifically in contract and daily wage labour, which is characterised by low wage, no social protection, and unstable employment. Their incomes are still small, and most of them are in lower income levels, which restricts their ability to save, move up the economic ladder, and maintain long-term financial stability.

Seasonal fluctuations further intensify this vulnerability, as employment opportunities vary significantly between winter and monsoon months, leading to cyclical income insecurity. The dominance of nuclear families and married respondents also indicates increased financial responsibilities, particularly in housing, healthcare, and education.

Overall, the socio-economic condition of migrants in ICR reflects structural precarity embedded within informal urban employment systems. While urbanisation and developmental expansion have attracted labour, inclusive policies focusing on skill development, social security coverage, housing access, and employment stabilization are essential to ensure that migration translates into sustainable livelihood improvement rather than continued urban poverty.

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