

Goa's slums are full of Karnataka migrants: Study

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A study, conducted across 14 slums in Goa, found that the largest number of migrants are from Karnataka, especially the districts of Gadag, Vijayapura, Belagavi, Bagalkot, Haveri and Dharwad. A majority of them belong to the Lambani community, and are engaged in selling garments, working at construction sites, and as suppliers and helpers in hotels.

The second largest group of migrants has moved in from Uttar Pradesh, followed by Jharkhand and Maharashtra, while the remaining are from 15 other states across India, as well as from Nepal, the study titled 'Walking the Tightrope -Exploitation of Migrant Children in Tourism in Goa' found.

Although chief minister Siddaramaiah claimed that the government has already distributed nearly Rs 4,100 crore as relief to farmers who lost their crop, it's been a case of so near, yet so far. While many small farmers say they have not received the money as they have no access to banks, those who have received it complained that the government has granted drought compensation of Rs 2,500-Rs 5,000 to farmers who own up to five acres of land, and those with higher landholdings have received Rs 5,000-Rs 10,000.

"We cannot even sustain our families for a month with that money," said an official, quoting a poor farmer in Rai bag taluk of Belagavi. Although the district administration has been making efforts to provide jobs to people under MNREGA, they have been unable to stem the tide of farmers from the region.

"The much-hyped rural job guarantee scheme MNREGA, too, has apparently failed to stem migration. Our district (Koppal) has 8lakh registered workers, but at the moment only 40% are employed," says an official from the department of rural development and panchayat raj. They say MNREGA jobs have not reduced migration -not because of government apathy but because people were not ready to take up work.

"Summer is the time tourists throng Goa. It pays more than MNREGA work and they are able to get hefty advances, so they prefer it. Migrants have access to advance payments of up to Rs 1lakh per family at the beginning of the season, which helps many settle pending debts. Work fetches roughly around Rs 1,000 per day for a husband and wife team, much higher than MNREGA wages of about Rs 460 for two," RDPR officials explained.

Though the forecast of an above-normal monsoon has raised some hopes, it could take a few years for the region to return to normal, says Ravi S Kumar, who has done a study on seasonal migration of workforce in Karnataka with the support of the University of Agricultural Sciences.