Migrants’ access to social protection: a case study of the Public Distribution System in Delhi

Ian MacAuslan
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Migrants suffer double disadvantage

• Migration is a form of social protection…but:

• Double/triple disadvantage of migration
  – Migration creates needs for social protection
  – Migration reduces access to social protection
  – Migration reduces ability to demand social protection

• Technical and political disadvantage
Internal migration is significant

International Indian migrants
10 million

Indian internal migrants
300 million

Total international migrants
185 million
Informal economy dominates

• Social protection vs social security
  – Social security is for formal economy workers and comes through employers
  – Informal economy workers may be in the formal sector but need social protection not from employers
• 90% of workers in India are in informal economy
  • Unorganised Sector Workers Social Security Bill
• Social protection through non-market distribution
  – Transfers of goods or cash
  – Universal or targeted
  – PDS distributes food
Indians need PDS social protection

- 1 billion people
- 35% $1/day poverty (2004)
- 18% severely underweight under 5s
- PDS distributes 35kg rice and wheat to every Indian household
  - Cheaper for households with lower incomes
- 5% of Central Government expenditure (2003/4)
Poor households in Delhi live in slums and are migrants

Migrants

Delhi

Migrant poor in slums, etc.

Poor

Slum/resettlement, construction site, homeless
# Theorising migrant disadvantage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determinant of disadvantage</th>
<th>Migrant-specific</th>
<th>Intensified (for e.g. low-income actors)</th>
<th>Bureaucratically imposed</th>
<th>Over-representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spatial/environmental</strong></td>
<td>Unfamiliarity with surroundings.</td>
<td>Lack of knowledge</td>
<td>Public information in local language</td>
<td>Health risks associated with informal settlements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socio-political</strong></td>
<td>Lack of representation (illegal).</td>
<td>Uncertainty interacting with government</td>
<td>Discrimination in access to services</td>
<td>Lack of political access for slum dwellers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socio-cultural</strong></td>
<td>Xenophobia</td>
<td>Social discrimination based on ethnicity, language, illegal status.</td>
<td>Additional stigmatising requirements to access services</td>
<td>Social perceptions of ‘criminal poor’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theorising migrant access – the ideal type queue

• Gate: applicants claim eligibility for service
  – Indian national
• Line: applicants wait for service
  – First come first served
• Counter: applicants prove eligibility for service
  – Residence document
• Applicants know requirements and costs
• Administrators apply rules made by Weberian rule-makers
Theorising migrant access - complex queues

• Supplementary gates of language, class, etc.
• Multiple queues together
• Administrators do not follow rules
  – Simplify or interpret process
  – Poor morale
  – Different interests – compete for resource
  – Accept non-formal criteria – friendship, exchanges.
• Applicants do not follow rules
  – Do not know or understand rules
  – Cannot comply with rules
  – Stigma
Migrant responses (exit, voice, and loyalty)

Loyalty
  – Accept investments of time etc.

• Exit
  – Market providers
  – Theft

• Voice
  – Administrative appeals
  – Manipulate rule-makers or implementers
    • Competitive individualised voice
  – Mobilisation
  – Violence
  – Mass exit
Intermediary action

• Three types of broker
  – Representatives have better knowledge of the rules
  – Fixers can change the rules
  – Agents find alternative sources of provisioning

• Politics affects availability and choice

• Rule-makers can change rules, but greater complexity gives greater scope for informal gain
# The PDS in Delhi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly per capita consumption expenditure (Rs)</th>
<th>Number of households</th>
<th>Household rice + wheat consumption (kg/month)</th>
<th>% Household rice + wheat covered by 35kg PDS</th>
<th>Total actual household PDS purchase (kg/month)</th>
<th>% Household rice + wheat covered by actual PDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-335</td>
<td>16,043</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>85.4%</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>335-395</td>
<td>18,717</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td><strong>110.6%</strong></td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td><strong>5.7%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>395-485</td>
<td>64,174</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td><strong>76.9%</strong></td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td><strong>11.1%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>485-580</td>
<td>147,065</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td><strong>71.5%</strong></td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td><strong>15.3%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>580-675</td>
<td>179,151</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td><strong>76.1%</strong></td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td><strong>8.9%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>675-790</td>
<td>192,521</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>790-930</td>
<td>299,477</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>930-1100</td>
<td>310,172</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>88.4%</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1100-1380</td>
<td>371,672</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>83.0%</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1380-1880</td>
<td>454,563</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>107.4%</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880-2540</td>
<td>237,977</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>133.6%</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2540-</td>
<td>385,042</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>118.7%</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages and values are rounded to the nearest whole number.
Migrants’ access to the PDS - technical

• Complex access structures
  – 2 queues: 3 categories of card to obtain and present
    • Above poverty line
    • Below poverty line
    • Poorest of the poor
• Slum households (30%) excluded periodically
• Permanent residence criterion excludes temporary migrants (?1m construction workers)
• Migrants miss quotas (poor full in 2002)
• Migrants pay to re-access
Atul

Atul works for an organisation helping to organise construction workers, and is literate. He has a ‘poor’ card, and is applying for a ‘very poor’ card because he is the only earning member of his family, which contains 3 children. He is originally from Bihar, and moved to Delhi in 1988, living in a slum. It took 3 years or so to understand the system of acquiring ration cards, and then he got one when the government allowed their issue around 1990. In 2002, he acquired a ‘poor’ card under the targeted PDS. In 2003, the slum was cleared, and the household moved to Bawana, allocated a 12m² plot because of their post-1990 ration card. Transferring the card was relatively easy and no extra-legal costs were involved, although of course 2 months of ration were foregone during the process, and there were a significant number of journeys to offices, costing money and preventing work.
Queuing for a card

• Added costs of office closures etc.
• Knowledge problem
• Aggregate exit is not voice
• Administrative appeal risks persecution
• Politicians can help individuals, but unreliably
  – Hard for recent migrants
  – No voting rights
• Supreme Court/NGOs help groups, but rarely
Identity and rights

• Ration cards are identity documents
• Delhi Government wishes to avoid social tourism
• Entitlement ‘black hole’
• Citizenship rights?
• Does the government have incentives?
• Bilateral agreements are few (Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh)
Where do we go from here?

- Internal migrants’ social protection is endangered and important
- Informal economy social protection is vital
- Legal frameworks are not enough
- Access structures are important
- What does ‘universal coverage’ mean?
- Do incentives exist for the government to socially protect disenfranchised migrants?