

Growing Concern Over Legal And Illegal Migration

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I. Abstract

This paper examines the rising concerns surrounding legal and illegal migration. It explores the Indian context through case studies of migration issues in regions like Assam, Manipur, West Bengal, the Rohingya crisis, etc. Additionally, the global migration crisis in Ukraine, Gaza, Syria, Afghanistan, etc. is assessed. The paper, then, highlights the dual impact of migration such as addressing labour shortages and remittances alongside internal security risks and social tensions. Policy recommendations to address illegal migration in Indian states and strategies are proposed to mitigate legal migration challenges.

Keywords: *Illegal Migration, Manipur, Migrants, Refugee, Rohingya, Ukraine*

II. Introduction

Migration, an intrinsic part of human history encompassing legal and illegal dimensions, has emerged as a pivotal issue in the contemporary global landscape. **According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), over 281 million were international migrants in 2024**, constituting 3.6% of the worldwide population. **According to the World Migration Report 2024**, international migration remains a driver of human development and economic growth, highlighted by a more than **650% increase in international remittances from 2000 to 2022**, rising from \$128 billion to \$831 billion. Of that \$831 billion in remittances, \$647 billion were sent by migrants to low and middle-income countries.¹ These remittances constitute a significant portion of those countries' GDPs.

Many factors, including economic opportunities, wars and conflict, environmental changes, and political instability drive migration. However, the rise in migration has also led to growing concerns about the socio-economic, political, and security implications, particularly in regions where illegal migration is prevalent. **With an estimated 281 million international migrants worldwide, the number of displaced individuals due to conflict, violence, disaster, and other reasons has surged to the highest levels in modern-day records, reaching 117 million,**² underscoring the urgency of addressing displacement crises.

In India, migration trends have been equally significant, with the **2011 Census reporting over 45 crore of internal migrants and a substantial number of international migrants**. In India too, the issue of undocumented migration, particularly from neighbouring Bangladesh and Myanmar, has been a persistent one. The most affected regions include **the northeastern states like Assam, Manipur, and West Bengal**, where the influx of undocumented immigrants has led to **demographic shifts, cultural tensions, and political unrest**. All these upscale the concerns on **cross-border terrorism, smuggling, human trafficking, low-wage jobs for local labour, etc.**

¹ World Migration Report, International Organisation Migration (IOM), 2024

² World Migration Report, International Organisation Migration (IOM), 2024

Though the Indian government has taken various measures, from time to time, to address these issues such as the Assam Accord 1985³, the National Register of Citizens (NRC)⁴, and bilateral agreements with the neighbouring states, the effectiveness of these measures remains a topic of debate. On 17th July, 2024, Assam's Chief Minister **Himanta Biswa Sarma Ji stated that changing demography is a significant issue for him. He mentioned that in Assam, the Muslim population has reached 40% today, whereas, in 1951, it was 12%.** He expressed concern that many districts have been lost, emphasising that this is not a political issue but a matter of life and death for him.⁵ Similar **concerns were raised in Himachal Pradesh** on the influx of Bangladeshi Muslims into the state.⁶

III. Current Prevalent Issues of Migration

A. Indian Issues of Migration

1. Rohingya⁷ Crisis

Since 1962 various state-sponsored persecution programs have been set into force, such as “**Operation Dragon King**”⁸, and “**Operation Clean and Beautiful Nation**”.⁹ Following the **Rakhine state riots in 2012, the Rohingya crisis in 2015, and the military crackdown in 2016-17** the problem drew international attention.

As per the Government Estimates (Ministry of Home Affairs), there are more than 40,000¹⁰ Illegal Rohingya Immigrants presently staying in India, mostly in states like Jammu and Kashmir, Telangana, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, etc. As per the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**, around **16000 Rohingya** are certified as Refugees.

³ The Assam Accord was a Memorandum of Settlement signed by the Governments of India and Assam, and the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) in New Delhi on 15 August, 1985. It Specified that Migrants who entered Assam before 1 January, 1966 were granted citizenship, and those who entered between 1 January, 1966, and 24 March, 1971 were granted citizenship with the exception of voting rights for ten years. Migrants who entered Assam on or after March 25, 1971 were treated as foreigners and deported

⁴ The National Register of Citizens (NRC) is the register containing details of all Indian citizens. At present, only Assam has maintained such records.

⁵ [X.com/\(ANI/\) 17th July, 2024](https://x.com/ANI/17th_July_2024)

⁶ [X.com/\(Anirudh Singh/\) 4th September, 2024](https://x.com/Anirudh_Singh/4th_September_2024)

⁷ The Rohingya are a predominantly Muslim community residing in Myanmar's Rakhine State, where the majority of the population practises Buddhism. They are made up of over 3.6 Million people but are not recognized by the Government of Myanmar among the country's 135 Official Ethnic Groups.

⁸ In 1977, then known as Burma, Myanmar launched this operation in which the Rohingya ethnic minority was declared "illegal", and after getting stripped of their citizenship they were subjected to mass arrests and persecution driving some 200,000 Rohingya across the border to Bangladesh.

⁹ During this 1991 Operation the soldiers of Myanmar, executed, raped, and assaulted Rohingyas and destroyed their homes and property. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's data Between 1991 and 1992, more than 250,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh.

¹⁰ [The Business Standard, August 2017](https://www.bbc.com/news/india-41111111)

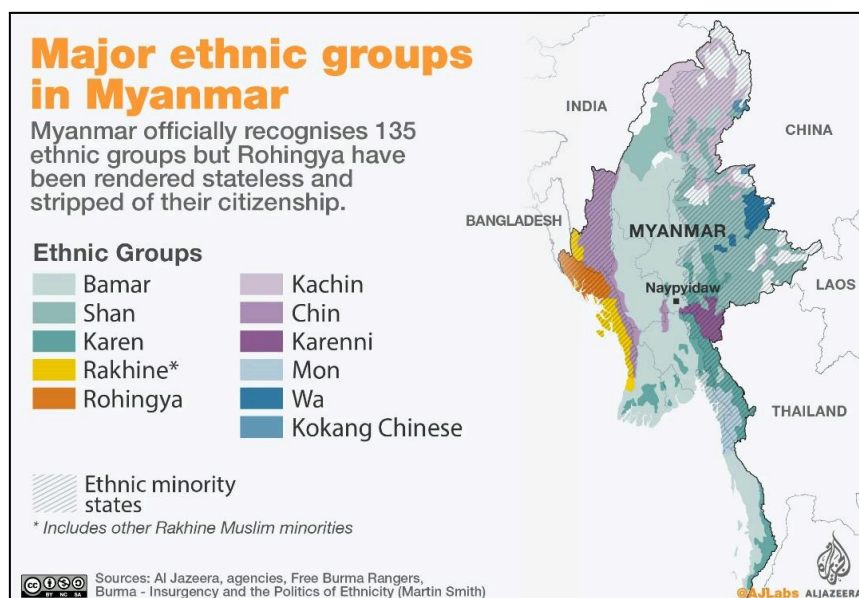


Image 1: Area-Wise Major Ethnic Groups In Myanmar¹¹

Since Rohingyas have entered India without having any legal and valid documents, they come under the category of ‘Illegal Migrants’, defined under section 2 (1) (b) of the Citizenship Act, 1955.¹²

In India, there have been multiple instances when Rohingya refugees have been involved in **violence and riots**. For example, in the **Nuh communal violence (Haryana) in 2023**, police arrested as many as **25 Rohingyas, who possessed UN refugee cards¹³**, for violent mob attacks on Hindu pilgrims.

2. Manipur Crisis

On 8th May, 2024, N. Biren Singh Ji, the Chief Minister of Manipur, disclosed that, as of 7th May, 2024, the government had identified a total of 5,457 illegal immigrants in Manipur’s Kamjong district, and the deportation process is currently in progress.¹⁴ **He also remarked that there are various threats posed by these Illegal Migrants, such as forest encroachment and poppy plantation.¹⁵**

Due to its poor border fencing and improper demarcation, The state has been infiltrated with a large number of undocumented migrants over time. **The Joint Committee on Inner Line Permit System, Kangleipak claimed that 71.5% of the total voters in Jiribam Sub Division are migrants from different parts of India and other countries¹⁶.**

3. Assam Crises

Assam shares a highly penetrable 262-kilometre border with Bangladesh, with portions left completely unchecked and unfenced due to the difficult nature of the terrain. **Illegal migration into Assam has**

¹¹ [Al Jazeera, March 2017](#)

¹² [Section 2\(1\) \(b\) of the Citizenship Act, 1955](#)

¹³ [SwarajyaMag, August 2023](#)

¹⁴ [X.com/\(N. Biren Singh\)/8th May, 2024](#)

¹⁵ [ET, November 2023](#)

¹⁶ <https://e-pao.net/GP.asp?src=23..210912.sep12>

been a highly substantial issue that poses political, economic, security, and other challenges to the Assamese society so much that it evoked Assam agitation resulting in the Assam Accord of 1985. The growth rates of the Muslim population, according to the 2001 census, are the highest precisely in the districts that share a border with, or lie close to the border with Bangladesh, for example, in Assam this is particularly in Dhubri, Barpeta, Karimganj, and Hailakandi.¹⁷

As of now, the majority of the infiltration is taking place through the Dhubri district in lower Assam bordering West Bengal, the districts of Cachar and Karimganj in Assam bordering Bangladesh, and the 443 km Bangladesh-Meghalaya border. Though there is no documented data on the number of illegal migrants, it is assumed that out of the 26 million people residing in Assam, around six million are illegal Bangladeshi migrants.¹⁸

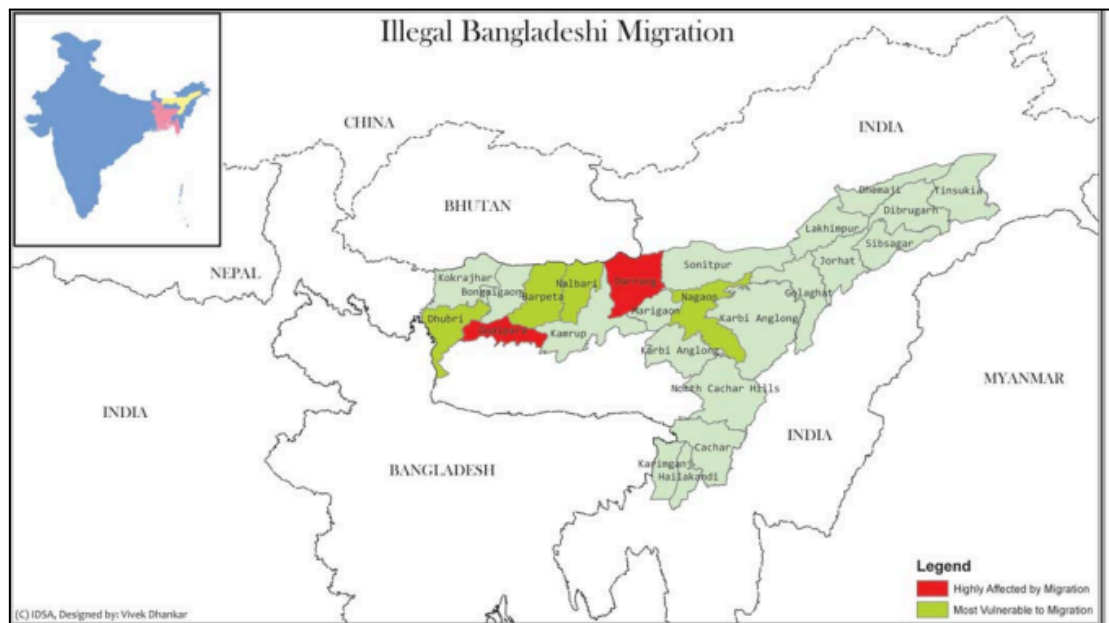


Image 2: Districts Affected From Illegal Bangladeshi Migration In Assam¹⁹

This issue has multifaceted concerns, such as growing concerns among the state population that **Assam, being a Hindu-majority state, will become Muslim-dominated due to the influx of illegal migrants.** Such concerns get amplified due to government reports, such as the **42-page report sent by former Assam Governor, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) S.K. Sinha to President K. R. Narayanan in 1998** also created a sense of insecurity in Assam as it categorically stated that the **influx of illegal migrants was turning the lower Assam districts into a Muslim-majority region. It will only be a matter of time before a demand for their merger with Bangladesh may be made.**

On the economic front, these Illegal Migrants manage to get Indian Aadhar Cards and thus benefit from schemes like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGA) and the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), etc. **making the legal Indian Citizens lose out on the benefit of such schemes.**

¹⁷ Outlook India, September 2004

¹⁸ Bangladeshi Illegal Migration into Assam: Issues and Concerns from the Field, IDSA, 2009

¹⁹ <https://images.app.goo.gl/pXWPuCQS8DtmBWER6>

In addition, this issue has also security implications for India, **most of the armed insurgent groups in Assam like the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), the Kamtapur Liberation Organization (KLO), and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) had established camps in Bangladesh and also procured their weapons from the Cox Bazaar area near the Bangladesh-Myanmar border.**

4. West Bengal Crises

Bangladesh borders West Bengal on the eastern side with nine Districts. It is estimated that **there are about 15 Million Bangladeshi nationals living, in India, illegally.** According to an estimate by the Border Police Department, **about 1,000 people cross the border each day and enter West Bengal.** The **cause of migration is primarily Political** i.e. Insecurity of the Life and Property of the Minority Hindu Community in Bangladesh.

However illegal Migration is not just of the Hindu Community, as per the Bangladesh Census Administration, 8 million people were missing from 1981 to 1991. Hindus, who number 1.73 million, are also included in this number. **Thus, in West Bengal, 6.28 million Muslims from Bangladesh have entered India.**

	2011		2001-2011	
	Share of Hindu	Share of Muslim	Share changes in Hindus	Share Changes in Muslims
Darjeeling	74.00	5.69	-2.91	0.38
Jalpaiguri	81.51	11.51	-1.79	0.66
Koch Bihar	74.06	25.54	-1.45	1.30
Uttar Dinajpur	49.31	49.92	-2.41	2.56
Dakshin Dinajpur	73.55	24.63	-0.47	0.61
Maldah	47.99	51.27	-1.29	1.55
Murshidabad	33.21	66.27	-2.71	2.60
Nadia	72.15	26.76	-1.60	1.34
North 24 Pgs	73.46	25.82	-1.78	1.60
South 24 Pgs	63.17	35.57	-2.69	2.33

Image 3: Changes In Population Share In Border Districts Of West Bengal between 2001-11²⁰

These Illegal Immigrants Engage in practices **like Cattle Smuggling, and trafficking of items like gold, sweets, and narcotics. (Banerjee, 2003).**²¹

²⁰ https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Population-Share-in-Border-Districts-of-west-Bengal_tbl4_343041545

²¹ Banerjee, B. (2003, January). Infiltration and border problem. Paper presented in the workshop at the Indian Statistical Institute on the Undocumented Migration From Bangladesh to West Bengal organised by Population Studies Unit. Kolkata, India

District / State	Percentage Decadal Variation of Muslim		Percentage Decadal Variation of Hindus	
	1991 - 2001	2001 - 2011	1991 - 2001	2001 - 2011
Derjelling	40.98	26.04	22.15	10.42
Jalpaiguri	31.36	20.75	19.29	11.42
Koch Behar	18.59	19.82	12.78	11.53
North Dinajpur	34.43	29.80	22.84	17.41
South Dinajpur	24.81	14.33	20.04	10.81
Malda	30.65	17.00	17.68	26.13
Mursidabad	28.35	26.03	15.82	11.94
Nadia	21.90	18.15	18.58	9.79
North Parganas	24	22.97	19.44	22.31
South Parganas	24	34.17	26.44	15.14

Source: Census of West Bengal – 1981, 1991, 2001

Image 4: Decadal Increase (1991-01 and 2001-11) of Muslim And Hindu Population In The Boarder Districts Of West Bengal²²

5. Jammu and Kashmir Issue

The anti-India Islamic terrorism led to the migration of **55,304** families, which mostly comprised minority Kashmiri pandits (Hindu). With the growth of militancy in the Kashmir valley and its adjoining areas since the early 1990s period, the region witnessed the **selective killing of prominent personalities supporting Indian rule in Kashmir valley, mass rallies chanting anti-Indian and Islamic slogans denouncing symbols of Indian nationalism, and attempts at its Islamisation.**

6. Tamil Nadu: Migration from Sri Lanka

India has a long history with Sri Lanka before and after independence. Since the 19th Century Britishers used to take a large number of Tamil workers to Sri Lanka as workers in Tea Plantations. Tamils constitute 15% of the Sri Lankan Population while Sinhalese constitute 70-75% of the population. **While the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka consist of the Tamil majority, the central and southern parts have a Sinhalese majority.** The making of Sinhala the National Language in 1956, perpetuated state efforts in reducing the role of Tamils in Government and decision-making started brewing dissent among the Tamils and gave rise to confrontation Politics. Soon this led to the formation of multiple armed groups, a prominent one among all was the LTTE. **Over time these pressures ejected in an equipped clash in 1983, with the Black July revolts that killed thousands.** A vast majority of the displaced and affected people found their way across the shores of India. **As of today, there are as many as 66,156 Sri Lankan Refugees living in approximately 113 refugee camps in Tamil Nadu alone that are situated in 28 out of 32 districts within the state.**²³

²²Impact of Migration and Infiltration from Bangladesh to West Bengal: A Historical and Demographic Perspective, *Research Journal Of Humanities And Social Sciences*, 2018

²³ Sankar, R. (2019). *SRI LANKAN TAMIL REFUGEES IN TAMIL NADU: AN OVERVIEW*. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR)*, April-June 2019. https://ijrar.com/upload_issue/ijrar_issue_20543969.pdf

Phases	Period	Inflow
Phase - I	24.07.83 to 31.12.1987	1,34,053
Phase - II	25.08.89 to 30.04.1991	1,22,078
Phase - III	31.07.96 to 31.08.2003	22,418
Phase - IV	12.01.06 to 04.01.2010	24,527
Total		3,03,076

Image 5: Depicting Phases Of Sri Lankan Refugees To India.²⁴

B. Global Issues of Migration

1. Ukraine

The Ukrainian refugee crisis is the largest in Europe since the end of the Second World War. Since the beginning of Russia's aggression in February 2022, nearly one-third of the population has been displaced either internally or across borders. According to the UNHCR, there are 6.3 million Ukrainian refugees recorded globally.

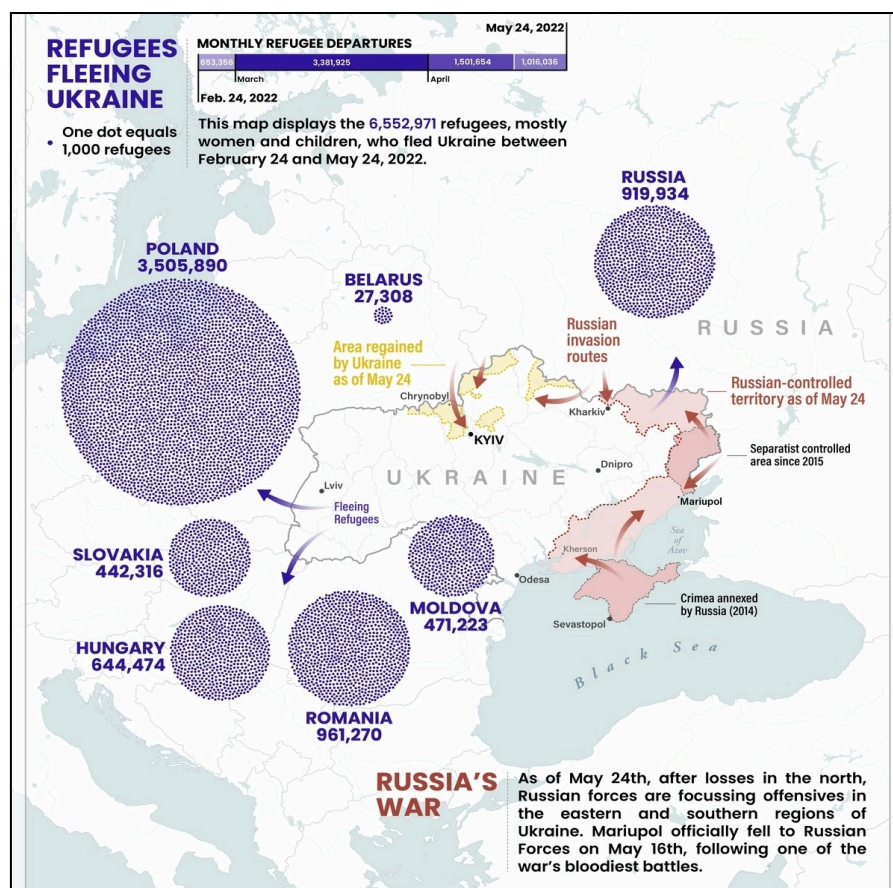


Image 6: Country Wise Depiction Of Refugees Fleeing Ukraine between 24th February, 2024 to 24th May, 2024²⁵

The Ukrainian Migrants have both positive and negative implications for the recipient countries. Amid Strong Public Support, **European countries have welcomed Ukrainian Migrants by granting**

²⁴ Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees in Tamil Nadu: An Overview, International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR), 2019

²⁵ <https://www.bentleycartographics.com/>

them temporary protection status with the right to work in the EU, access to health care and education services, and other social benefits.

The rise in the spending by the Ukrainian migrants in the recipient countries has amplified private consumption in those countries. According to the data collected by the National Bank of Ukraine, expenditures of Ukrainians abroad amounted to \$2 billion per month in 2022, more than three times higher than in the previous year. Also, based on the IMF research and surveys by the UN, the contribution of the Ukrainian migrants will boost the output in 2026 compared to the baseline scenario with no migration by 2.2%-2.3% in Estonia, Poland, and Czechia, and by 0.6%-0.65% in Germany.

The negative implications in the recipient countries are that the expenditures of Ukrainian migrants contributed to the high inflation rate. In addition, the expenditures by the recipient countries on migrants' accommodation, education, healthcare, etc. will increase the fiscal and public finance challenges in those countries.

2. Gaza

According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency's (UNRWA's) most recent situation report, up to 1.9 million people, or 85% of the population, have been displaced across the Gaza Strip since Israel started its retaliatory operations against Hamas in October 2023. At the end of 2023, over 90% of the population in the Gaza Strip (about 2.08 million people) were cut off from access to most basic goods and services, including basic medical aid.

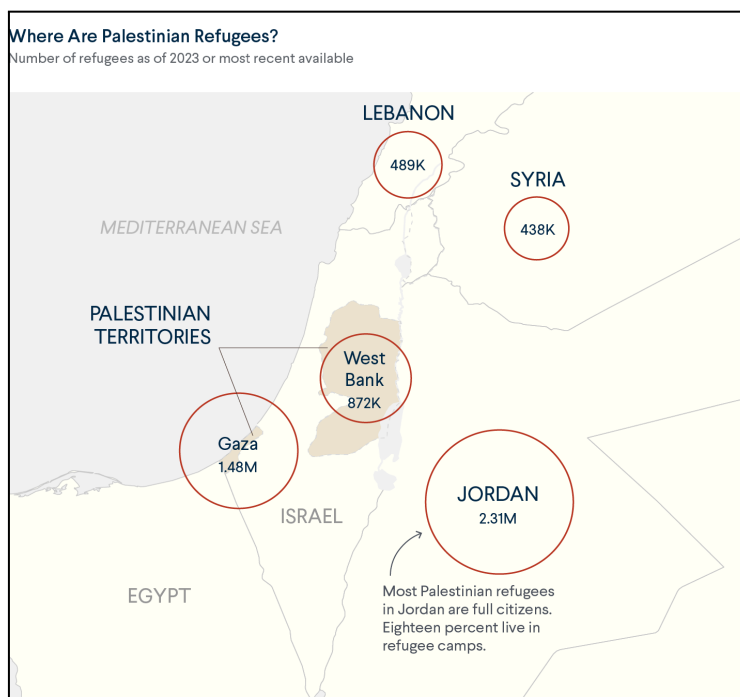


Image 7: Country Wise Distribution Of Palestinian Refugees as of 2023²⁶

²⁶ Israel-Hamas War Sparks Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza, Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), 2023

Today, **more than 1.5 million Palestinian refugees registered by UNRWA live in refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank**, posing problems related to internal security in these countries.

After the Palestinians, Jordan has the most to lose with the war in the region. **The Gaza war has hurt Jordan's already struggling economy, causing tourism revenues to plummet just after they had revived following the COVID-19 pandemic.**

3. Afghanistan

According to recent figures, there are **2.6 million Afghan refugees** registered globally, **2.2 million** of them in the neighbouring countries of **Iran and Pakistan**, and another **3.6 Million people** are considered internally displaced.

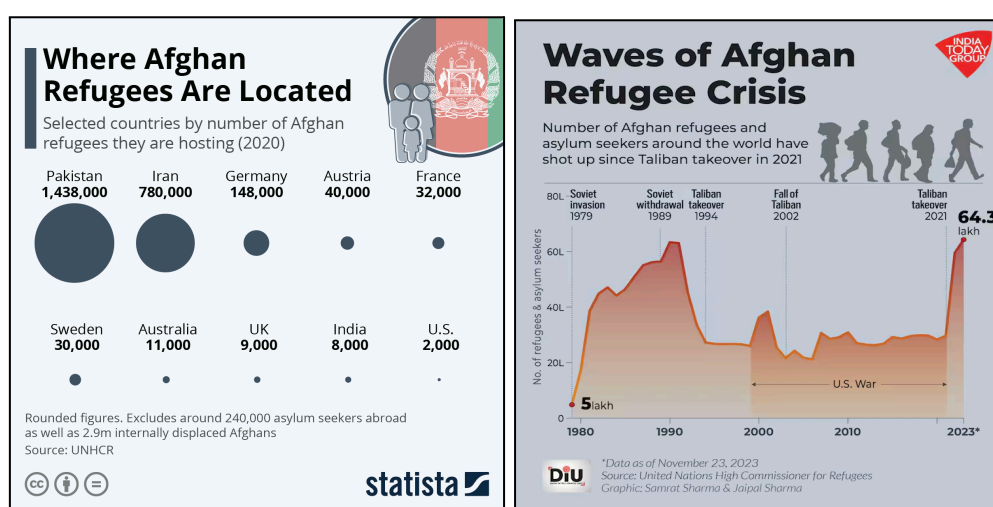


Image 8: Country Wise Distribution Of Afghan Refugees As Of 2020 (Left)²⁷, Different Waves Of Afghan Refugees Since 1980 (Right)²⁸

In the Balochistan Province of Pakistan, **the Local Baloch population considers refugees as a threat to the imbalance of their population.** It has also given rise to the problem of child labour. Because of their poor living conditions, **children work more than 16 hours a day.**

Moreover, **Terrorist organisations in the region also take advantage of these children** by using them as facilitators or brainwashing them for suicide bombing (Margesson, 2007 January). **In addition to this increasing crime rate, drug trade, and ethnic clashes are the major challenges posed by the Afghan refugees in Pakistan.**

4. Syria

The Syria Crisis, now in its 13th year, remains the world's largest refugee crisis. Since 2011, more than 14 million Syrians have been forced to flee their homes in search of safety. More than 7.2 Million Syrians remain internally displaced in their own country. **Approximately, 5.5 million Syrian**

²⁷ <https://www.statista.com/chart/25559/host-countries-of-afghan-refugees/>

²⁸ [India Today, November 2023](#)

refugees live in five countries neighbouring Syria - Turkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt. Germany is the largest non-neighboring host country with more than 850,000 Syrian Refugees. According to the research thesis of Chatzichristou, M. (2018), Syrian refugee inflows have a positive and significant impact on Germany's employment rates. In addition, the **wages of German people have shown a positive and significant increase** with the inflow of Syrian people into the labour market. The only exception is for females ages 15 to 24, who experience a negative impact.

5. African Countries

According to the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, **the total number of displaced persons in African countries stood at 40 million in 2023**, an increase of 13% since 2022 and 23% since 2021. More than 77% of them are displaced inside their home country.

All this is driven by a complex interplay of factors, **including armed conflict and violence both at the internal and interstate level, political instability, religiously motivated violence, military coups, economic hardships, lack of prospects for the younger populations, environmental factors, humanitarian crises, and natural disasters, limited civil liberties, and human rights violations.** For example - A series of military coups in Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea, Niger, Gabon, and Chad since 2021.

IV. Implications and Concerns Stemming from Migration

A. Positive Dimensions

1. Economic Growth and Skill Development

Migration fosters economic growth by providing a steady influx of labour, filling gaps in both high and low-skill jobs. For example, in the **United States, skilled migrants in the tech industry have driven innovation in Silicon Valley**, contributing significantly to its global leadership. In India, cities like **Bengaluru have benefitted from the domestic migration of skilled workers** from rural areas, propelling these cities into IT and startup hubs. Another emerging example is Greater Noida.

2. Remittances and Poverty Alleviation

Remittances sent by migrants back to their home countries support the development of local economies. For instance, **In India, remittances accounted for \$120 billion in 2023—the highest in the world**—particularly benefiting states like Kerala, where 36% of households rely on remittances for everyday expenditures. In addition, Remittances also foster Financial Inclusion, for example, **The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) saw a surge in accounts opened as remittances were funnelled through formal banking channels.**

3. Addressing Labour Shortages

Migration helps address labour shortages, particularly in ageing societies, and sectors requiring low-skilled workers. **Germany's healthcare sector, for instance, heavily relies on migrant labour to fill nursing and caregiving roles due to its ageing population.** Similarly, India's urban centres like Delhi and Mumbai depend on migrant workers from rural states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh for

construction, agriculture, and service sectors. This ensures economic stability and continuity in essential industries.

4. Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Migrant communities often contribute to entrepreneurship and innovation by establishing businesses and startups. In India, internal migration has led to new ventures in urban centres like Gurgaon, where migrant entrepreneurs have established small businesses that fuel economic growth. **In addition, over 70% of India's tech start-ups have at least one co-founder who has lived or worked abroad, especially in Tech Hubs like Silicon Valley.**

B. Negative Dimensions

1. Strain on Public Resources

Large migration influxes strain a country's infrastructure, healthcare, housing, and education systems, especially in urban centres. For example - On 7th May, 2024 Dame Andrea Jenkyns, A **British** Member of Parliament said **“Even the most basic calculations put the economic burden on the British taxpayer of an illegal migration population of 1.2 million at £14.4 billion”**. “Home Office figures cited by the Financial Times in August last year showed that the annual asylum cost reached £3.96 billion in the year up to 2023—double that of the previous year and six times higher than 2018.”

2. Loss of Skilled Labor (Brain Drain)

Countries with limited economic opportunities or political instability often face a “brain drain,” losing their most skilled and educated citizens to more developed nations. For example - Many African countries, such as Nigeria and Zimbabwe, have seen an exodus of healthcare professionals. **38% of Nigerian doctors currently work abroad, leading to the health care services shortage in their own country. In India too, Between 2015 and 2022, 1.3 million Indians left the country, many of whom were highly educated professionals.**²⁹ Various experts have estimated that India's IT Industry could have added \$15-\$20 billion more annually had the talent stayed.

3. Illegal Immigration and Security Concerns

Unregulated, Illegal Migration and Infiltration pose **concerns related to national security, internal security, law and order, human trafficking, organised crime, etc.** For example, with the ascent of Myanmar as the world's top opium producer in 2023, with illicit crop cultivation expanding from 99,000 to 116,000 acres, the threat of drug trafficking has intensified in the North Eastern Region (NER). Official reports revealed that in the fiscal year 2022-23, NER states alone recovered contraband worth over ₹ 2,000 crore.

4. Economic Challenges to Local Workforce

Migration often creates economic disparities in the host region, as **migrants may accept lower wages, displacing local workers and leading to labour market tensions.** For example, the UK's post-Brexit landscape revealed migrant labour displacing domestic workers, particularly in sectors such as

²⁹QUESTION NO-2466 RENOUNCING INDIAN CITIZENSHIP, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2023

agriculture and construction. Studies suggest that **low-skilled immigration reduced wages by 2%-3% for native low-income workers.**

5. Social Tensions and Climate Migration

Migration leads to social tensions and a rise in xenophobia, particularly when local communities feel economically or culturally threatened. For example, the social fear in the **State of Assam** is that the Assamese way of life will get subverted in the religious and linguistic aspects due to the influx of illegal migrants. **The October 2008 violence in Udalguri and Goalpara districts between the Bodos and the Bangladeshi migrants was a flare-up based on such social fears resulting in the death of nearly 36 people.**

V. Policy Recommendations

A. Border Fencing: India's border fencing project along the 4,096.7 km India-Bangladesh border faces delays, with 952 km yet to be fenced. Key obstacles stem from **land acquisition challenges, particularly in West Bengal**, where state-level cooperation is often limited. Local resistance from farmers fearing agricultural land loss exacerbates disputes, delaying progress.

To resolve this, establishing **Fast-Track Special Land Acquisition Courts** dedicated to **border security projects** would expedite compensation and dispute resolution. **Amending land acquisition laws** to create special provisions for border areas could also improve central government efficiency in land procurement.

A sustainable strategy is adopting **land pooling**, where a **Land Pooling Authority (LPA)** includes stakeholders from the government, security forces, and local communities. This mechanism would ensure fair compensation, rehabilitation, and resettlement, with part of the pooled land used for security infrastructure and the rest for local development. Additionally, raising **public awareness through NGOs and community leaders about land pooling benefits** can reduce opposition and foster trust.

These combined reforms would minimise litigation, reduce displacement, and create a balanced approach that promotes both national security and regional growth.

B. Developing a biometric registry of citizens for India's land-sharing border states (primarily northeastern states and West Bengal) demands a strategic, inclusive, and technology-centric framework **to address the gaps identified in the Assam NRC** and counter the widespread issue of fraudulent documentation. The **integration of advanced biometric tools such as fingerprinting, iris scans, and facial recognition** would establish a robust and tamper-proof database.

Given the ease with which documents like Aadhaar and voter IDs can be forged, the proposed registry must incorporate a **rigorous cross-verification process**. This would involve corroborating data across multiple sources, including digitised birth and death records, to ensure authenticity.

To address **accessibility challenges**, especially in remote areas, **localized biometric enrollment centres** coupled with mobile registration units should be deployed. Ensuring **robust cybersecurity infrastructure** is paramount to protect sensitive data from breaches, fostering public trust in the system.

Establishing a **transparent grievance redressal framework**, supported by **Fast-Track Special Land Acquisition Courts**, would ensure the fair and timely resolution of disputes. Additionally, **piloting the registry in select districts** within the northeastern states would allow policymakers to identify and address implementation challenges before scaling up the initiative.

- C. Cross-Border Cooperation and Repatriation Agreements:** India should engage in a formal "Repatriation Agreement" with Bangladesh, and Myanmar akin to the **Turkey-EU deal** which allows for the return of illegal migrants while providing financial aid and support to the sending country. This will be the most important as well as challenging in the case of India, when both Bangladesh and Myanmar, major sources of Illegal Migrants, are undergoing the Crises. In the case of Myanmar, diplomatic efforts and channels will be the most crucial direction to start from while for the case of Bangladesh as of September 2024, the situation is of Wait- Watch- Formulate - Prepare.
- D.** Ultimately at a greater pedestal, **the larger goal/ vision** must be developing **border areas** economically, politically, and socially and strengthening local governance. **China's Tibet strategy of developing infrastructure** and providing economic incentives in border regions can be a model. The need is to craft a **'Unique Border Village Development Strategy'**, for each state (primarily the ones that are facing Migration-related issues at a higher rate such as Manipur, and Assam). Eventually, the strategy's aim must be to create self-sustaining local economies and a vigilant population. **A major hindrance in implementing this model will be (i) protests on account of the preservation of the forest and green cover, and (ii) coordination with various local authorities/government agencies at multiple stages of implementation that shall delay the work.**
- E.** Since areas with high percentages of Illegal populations have usually a high crime rate, the local police often find themselves overburdened, with many instances of ignoring the issues. As a solution to this, **a multi-state task force specifically dedicated to illegal migration shall be created.** Its primary work would include tracking **illegal settlements, fast-tracking deportations (if there is), and enhancing inter-state communication** to control the movement of illegal migrants across state lines.
- F.** Interstate cooperation at the Bilateral Level is a valuable means of addressing migration issues that affect two states. **The US-Mexico Border Agreement is a prime example of bilateral cooperation on migration.** The bilateral deal has since reduced illegal crossings.
- G. Interstate cooperation at the regional level like the framework EU provides** a structured model for managing migration across multiple states is another way to address Migration issues. For example, **the Schengen Agreement** facilitates the free movement of people within 26 European countries. Following the 2015 refugee crisis, the EU-Turkey deal.
- H. Strengthening the Migration Evidence Base:** Countries should promote evidence-based policymaking and **invest in data collection, research, and capacity development concerning migration and its impacts on individuals, communities, and societies.** The international community should create a dedicated capacity-building initiative to assist countries in improving the collection and use of migration data. This will help in assessing the social and economic impacts of migration.

- I. There is a **need to improve the public perception of migrants and combat discrimination, xenophobia, and intolerance against migrants and their families by creating greater public awareness** about the situations migrants experience and the contributions they make to countries of origin and destination. Such efforts could be promoted through a partnership of the private sector, labour unions, the media, educational institutions, and migrants themselves. In addition, the support of institutions such as local government, state/ independent media, Government agencies, and intermediary organisations is crucial for strengthening intergroup relations. Also, **allowing the participation, interaction, and exchange of communities in their local festivals and then highlighting the positive image of such exchanges through media outlets** will help in accepting differences, and will eventually promote a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation among the communities.

VI. Conclusion

Migration, both legal and illegal, continues to be a significant issue shaping global and national landscapes. With over 281 million international migrants globally (IOM, 2024), the challenges surrounding migration are complex, influencing economic growth, security, and societal dynamics. In India, the rising concerns over illegal migration, particularly in border states like Assam and West Bengal, highlight the pressing need for robust migration policies.

Reports indicate that 15 million undocumented Bangladeshi migrants are present in India, leading to socio-political unrest and resource strain. Through an evidence-based approach, this paper advocates for stronger bilateral, regional, and global level cooperation as well as for strengthening the internal infrastructure and systems of India to tackle the growing concerns and challenges over illegal migration.

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