

## **Impact Of Migration On Economic Development: A Study Of Assam And South Africa**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

Migration has been a major source of human adaptation, existence and development for centuries. Migration in South Africa and Assam (India) is neither a current occurrence nor a new occurrence. Migration has played an integral role in the economic development of South Africa. Immigration had a noticeable effect on Assam's economy. The economic growth of Assam was significantly influenced by migrant specialists in labour. The Northeast of India has undergone the largest, longest-lasting immigration of any region of India. Assam, in particular the Brahmaputra Valley, has borne the brunt of this influx. Assam stands out as the state that has experienced the most severe effects of immigration from East Pakistan and then Bangladesh, despite Tripura having experienced an equally rapid rate of immigration over the past four decades. Due to the idea that economic migrants pose a threat to South African nationals' jobs, such policies have disproportionately affected legal and economic migration in South Africa. The demographics of South Africa's major cities changed after apartheid due to an increase in intra-African migration. It was regarded as a sign of hope for social and economic prospects as well as the acceptance of other Africans during the post-apartheid era in South Africa. The truth, however, has proven to be more difficult. After 1994, South African inhabitants' perceptions towards African immigrants underwent a significant transformation. Due to persistent issues with youth unemployment and educational access, South Africa has struggled to sustain population growth rates. This essay examines economic migration in the context of South Africa's experiences with the regulation of economic migration in light of these shifting dynamics in both Assam and South Africa. There is not a direct connection between South Africa and Assam in every aspect, but this paper analyzes how migration can impact the economies of countries.

**Keywords:** migration, economy development, immigration, impact, unemployment

### **INTRODUCTION**

Migration is a general term that describes the movement of people from one region to another. Human migration is a worldwide phenomenon. Its nature, type and cause vary by time and place. It can be temporary or permanent. There are mainly two types of human migration. Inter-State Migration (Migration within political limits) and Inter-State Migration (Migration from one state to another). Migration or immigration is caused by many factors such as economic, social and political factors. They are classified as lack of employment, marriage, education, security etc.<sup>1</sup>

Worldwide migrations have equally direct and indirect effects on economic growth. There is little doubt that where migration expands the workforce, aggregate GDP can be expected to grow. However, the situation is less clear when it comes to per capita GDP growth.

South Africa is a country where international migration is a very touchy subject. Twelve years after the end of apartheid, the nation continues to draw a sizable number of migrants, which occasionally sparks contentious discussion. The African National Congress (ANC) government has acknowledged the need for highly skilled immigrants to work in South Africa's most important economic sectors and has begun to articulate the importance of international migration, including that from other African nations, in the country's future development. However, a significant portion of South Africans live in extreme poverty, and many South Africans believe that the government should give their own inhabitants a higher priority for employment than it already does. Many commentators have commented on what they experience to be some specific xenophobia, in particular on political refugees and immigrant migrants from elsewhere in Africa.<sup>ii</sup>

### **Causes of Migration in Assam and South Africa**

Various factors were responsible for migration in Assam:

The lack of sufficient labour supply was a significant barrier to Assam's establishment of tea industry. The population of Assam was decreased by disease, civil unrest, and Burmese invasions. Furthermore, because Assamese farmers in the area were relatively well-off and had access to fertile land, they had little desire to engage as low-wage labour in unhealthy forested regions. Assam, unlike East Bengal, once had at least sizable virgin lands, some of which were in low, easily flooded areas in the Brahmaputra Valley that are comparable to the deltaic regions of East Bengal. Additionally, Assam had substantial forest reserves that could be exploited, frequently illegally, drawing in migrants searching for land. The most widespread occurrence in all nations and one that has drawn significant attention from policymakers is out-migration of people. India, like many other developing nations worldwide, has seen an upsurge in out-migration in recent years, particularly in the Northeastern region of the nation.<sup>iii</sup>

Political reasons supported immigration to Assam as well. It was alleged that Muslim migrants from East Bengal were permitted and even encouraged by the Muslim League government, which controlled the state, to encroach on public lands, grazing areas, and forest reserves. This was said to have stopped in 1946 when the Congress government started to enforce revenue laws and evict unauthorised trespassers. Following the 1947 partition, the number of Muslim immigrants decreased while the number of Hindu refugees rose.<sup>iv</sup> Second, there are political factors that also cause individuals to migrate. Because of the unavoidable consequences that will occur in their country, many people may decide to emigrate. People leave to avoid such situations because of the pessimistic mood that wars, battles, and disputes produce. Additionally, vote-bank politics and regional and national political parties support immigration into Assam.<sup>v</sup>

Rural communities have migrated in quest of better livelihood possibilities as a result of recent study on climate change. Due to variables including the warming and drying of some regions, which will decrease agricultural production, and excessive rainfall due to flooding in low-lying areas, climate change will result in an increase in migration. Climate change will encourage the forced migration of rural inhabitants, particularly in developing nations where agriculture is the main source of income.<sup>vi</sup> Three sectors that are impacted by migration are the labour market, governmental finances, and economic expansion. But in this case, we're talking about how migration affects economic expansion. Economic reasons can be used to explain the

movement. Since Assam is a country with a wealth of natural resources, many people move there in search of a better life and a reliable source of income. Since there is such a strong need for labour due to population growth, many individuals migrate to work as workers.<sup>vii</sup> Natural disasters like starvation, floods, and drought drive people to leave their homes and relocate to areas that are safe from these calamities. There is proof that many people moved to Assam for these natural causes. Although there are many other causes for the migration, this is the last one.<sup>viii</sup>

Various factors were responsible for migration in South Africa:

migrants from Botswana, eSwatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique who were granted temporary admission into South Africa under bilateral agreements and who were largely black and male. Despite a male-dominated temporary migration, women later followed their spouses or made their own way to South Africa. Early research on migration in South Africa was framed by neo-classical economic theories of migration and concentrated on the migrant labour system. The impact of immigration and long-term migration became more prominent in the 2000s. The present focus seems to be on xenophobia, harmful immigrant stereotypes, and the policy ramifications from a human rights and local perspective.<sup>ix</sup>

political stability and economic prosperity are the primary causes of South Africa's migration. Particularly South Africa and the Global South have gained popularity as travel destinations. Defining the Global South is still debatable. The Pacific and Caribbean islands, Asia, Central and Latin America, and Africa are collectively referred to as the Global South. (Hollington et al., 2015:8). This perspective backs up the new economics of labour migration theory, which asserts that decisions to move are influenced by policies adopted by governments and investments made by multinational corporations that have the ability to diversify economies and create new job opportunities. Many migrants choose to leave their home countries not only in search of what they perceive to be greater personal freedom and opportunity, but also in the hope that these same freedoms and opportunities will benefit their families who are migrant workers as well as potential economic interests back home.<sup>x</sup>

Social networks, the economic and political environment in Zimbabwe, pushing and pushing factors, and post-South Africa situations are mentioned as the causes of migration in South Africa. Because trade, communication, and technological advancements have increased with globalisation, borders have become more permeable. Researchers, international organisations, and political decision-makers are becoming increasingly interested in international remittances as a result of their size. International remittances increased to \$ 440 billion in 2010 in spite of a decline brought on by the economic crisis in 2009. The primary beneficiaries are developing nations: 73.9% of these private financial flows were sent in their favor in 2010 (\$ 325 billion). International remittances thus constitute "an essential source of income for many poor countries".<sup>xi</sup> The idea that South Africa has a low unemployment rate makes it easy for migrants to find employment, and South Africa offers a variety of options because its GDP is 10 times greater than the total GDP of all SADC countries, according to the ILO. When compared to other SADC nations, South Africa's per capita income exceeds the \$500 mark, which serves as an incentive. It is believed that both the region's labour migrants and the South African population can be accommodated by the country's economy.<sup>xii</sup>

In South Africa, the repercussions of migration include increased housing stress, political and social unrest, rising expenses, overcrowding, the spread of disease, and the marginalisation of

migrants into low-status and low-paying employment. Remittances are a significant source of income for Lesotho migrants living in South Africa.

### **Migration and its Impact on Assam Economy**

Assam occasionally has a population inflow from different directions. Thus, migration is not a novel phenomenon in Assam; rather, its unprecedented scale since the turn of the 20th century is novel. Thus, migration is not a novel phenomenon in Assam; rather, its unprecedented scale since the turn of the 20th century is novel. There has been debate on the magnitude of migration and how it has affected Assam's population growth and economic situation, particularly in the recent two or three decades.

It was discovered that during the period of 1881–1931, in-migrations to the Valley were caused by time and economic considerations, such as the increase of tea plantations and the availability of cultivable wastelands. Even after Mymensingh and the rest of East Bengal were annexed by Pakistan in 1947 and Assam and East Bengal were separated by international borders, the movement continued.<sup>xiii</sup>

With only 22.5 million acres being fully cultivated, the economy is agrarian. Floods only completely avoid around one-third of the agricultural area. The remainder is substantially flooded to a depth of less than 3 feet in 40% of the cases, and is at least 6 feet deep in the other cases. These elements encourage migration through a "push-effect."

Migration has historically helped Assam's economy grow, but in recent years, its sheer volume seems to have had negative repercussions that outweigh its positive advantages. The strain on land has been increasing, to start. The amount of cultivable land per person has been quickly decreasing, in addition to the fall in the land-man ratio. Due to the tiny amount of landholdings, this means a loss of efficiency in agricultural production for a state that relies heavily on agriculture. In addition, immigrants' encroachment on forests, public wastelands, and tribal belts and blocks has exacerbated social and environmental issues. Second, a state which is already characterized by high unemployment and underemployment, the pressure in the labor market is likely to be significant.<sup>xiv</sup>

Generally speaking, out-migration happens in quest of work. However, leaving Assam is not just done in pursuit of jobs. In Assam, a variety of socioeconomic, cultural, and religious variables are having an impact on the out-migration issue. A thorough examination of the variables can aid in developing a better understanding of the variables that affect out-migration. Additionally, remittances from out-migration have a significant influence in economic development.<sup>xv</sup>

The intricate relationship between migration and poverty depends on the particular conditions under which migration occurs. Poverty can both cause migration and be the cause of it. Migration has the potential to both reduce and exacerbate poverty. In other cases, immigration has no positive impact on society or the economy. According to a study on the effects of labour migration in tribal Western India, poorer migrants have not seen any long-term increases in assets or decreases in poverty "after many years of migration." The study did point out that migrating gave low-income migrants a short-term way to pay off debt and stay away from more extreme types of dependence and servitude.<sup>xvi</sup>

Positive effects come in the form of remittances, which are likely to boost household economic health, while negative effects are likely to make slums, illiteracy, and unemployment rates rise in metropolitan areas. The migrant may lack some human development indices, such as assets, education, health, sanitation, and water access.<sup>xvii</sup>

An International Organization for Migration (IOM) report claims that forced migration puts more strain on urban infrastructure and services, stunts economic development, raises the possibility of conflict, and results in low levels of human development among migrants.<sup>xviii</sup>

For instance, the presence of Hindus from Bihar and central India in Assam has in the past led to ethnic unrest and violence. Similar to the threat that Bangladeshis will migrate to India's northeast due to their low population density, threats of ethnic conflict and violence have increased in the area. These threats were previously caused by climate change due to cyclones, floods, and sea level rise in the coastal region of Bangladesh. Migration, though, has both adverse and advantageous impacts. Remittances can have both positive and bad consequences. Positive benefits come in the form of remittances, which are likely to stimulate the local economy. Negative implications include a rise in slums, unemployment, and illiteracy in metropolitan areas. A number of human development metrics, including those related to education, health, sanitation, access to water, and property ownership, may vanish for migrants.<sup>xix</sup> Generally speaking, out-migration happens in quest of work. However, leaving Assam is not just done for employment reasons. Many socioeconomic, cultural, and religious variables are having an impact on Assam's outmigration problem. A thorough examination of the variables can aid in developing a better understanding of the variables that affect out-migration. Furthermore, remittances from out-migration have a significant influence in economic development.

The economic growth of Assam was significantly influenced by migrant specialists in labour. His contribution to the modernization and expansion of agriculture aided colonial Assam's overall economic growth. By introducing jute, vegetables, and ahu rice production on a commercial scale, the hardworking Muslim immigrants, who mostly settled in the floodplains and arable land of the Brahmaputra Valley, brought about a significant change in the agricultural economy of the state. As a result, they became in control of the dominant agricultural trend. As far as we know, a large number of professionals, including traders, sailors, mail clerks, masons, earth cutters, cart makers, cobblers, and fisherman, also migrated from other regions of the nation. These individuals began their careers in Assam over time. The Marwaris occupied almost the entire trade and commerce of the province. Thus, the immigrants occupied almost the entire economic territory of the state.<sup>xx</sup>

### **Migration and its Impact on South Africa's Economy**

Migration to and from Southern African nations is primarily influenced by the search for economic opportunity, political unrest, and rising environmental risks. The issue of migration is intertwined with South Africa's place in world events, both diplomatically and economically. South Africa is frequently referred to as a "middle power." On January 1, 2007, it took a place on the UN Security Council for the first time. As part of a larger UN reorganisation, it intends to secure a permanent seat on the Council. In order to pursue shared views in organisations like the World Trade Organization, South Africa has forged cooperation with a few other middle powers, most notably Brazil and India. It now serves as the G77 group's chair. In order to serve

as the continent of Africa's representative in international affairs, South Africa has developed an active diplomatic role.<sup>xxi</sup>

In South Africa, the topic of international migration is particularly touchy. Twelve years after the end of apartheid, the nation continues to draw a sizable number of migrants; the exact number is a source of sometimes-contentious disagreement. The African National Congress (ANC) government has acknowledged the need for highly skilled immigrants to work in South Africa's most important economic sectors and has begun to articulate the importance of international migration, including that from other African nations, in the country's future development. However, a significant portion of South Africans live in extreme poverty, and many South Africans believe that the government should give their own inhabitants a higher priority for employment than it already does.<sup>xxii</sup>

For more than ten years, the government of South Africa has struggled to formulate a cogent response to migration. Since the country's ambitious plans for political transformation, economic development, and poverty alleviation were set in motion in the mid-1990s, "illegal migration" from its neighbours has been seen as a major obstacle. The SADC's absence of meaningful regional initiatives has paralleled these polarising trends. The region's ability to coordinate a response to migrant and refugee movements is constrained, as shown by the SADC's muted response to the continuing Zimbabwean crisis.<sup>xxiii</sup>

One of the most important influences on migration patterns is trade, as an examination of South Africa's relations with Mozambique makes clear. Mozambique is South Africa's tenth largest trading partner and the largest in Africa. Trade relations are far from equal, however. South Africa exports 14 times more to Mozambique than it imports, a pattern that holds for trade relations in the region generally.<sup>xxiv</sup>

The ability of the South African labour unions to advocate for higher salaries for South Africans is allegedly being undermined by them. According to Crush (2008:33), the belief that immigrants take South Africans' employment is not supported by personal experience because, according to 85% of poll participants from 2006, neither they nor anyone they know has ever lost a job to a foreigner. According to organisations like the FMSP (2007:17), the perception that illegal immigration has a negative impact on the job market is accurate because it is impossible to enforce legal labour standards because of their illegal status and because they avoid being identified out of fear of being deported.<sup>xxv</sup>

International studies claim that immigrants do, nevertheless, support the economic growth of their host nations. In South Africa, businesses including hair salons, supermarkets, crafts, taxis, and upholstery are examples of both formal and informal industries where there has been an improvement or indirect effect on the economy. They are supposed to contribute by paying for commodities, food, and other living costs. According to the Human Development Report (UNDP 2009), Migration can aid in social and economic growth. South Africa won't reach its long-term development goals without the migration of trained and semi-skilled labour.<sup>xxvi</sup> South Africans believe that immigrants have a detrimental effect on the country's resources. According to the White Paper on International Migration from 1999, immigrants have a detrimental effect on South Africa's resources. They are alleged to be having an effect on crime, social security, housing, health, education, and the job market. According to stereotypes, South Africa believes that all foreigners legal or illegal—pose a threat to the country's economy and national security. Since there has been little research on how illegal

immigration has affected the South African economy, it is uncertain if most immigrants enter to trade, or to purchase items to resell back in their country of origin.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Global migration is a reality. It is noted as a significant driver of human development in the 2009 Human Development Report (UNDP 2009). For disadvantaged households in Southern Africa, migration is a crucial method for securing a living. Migration aids in the social and economic growth of linked households when migrants are able to offer a variety of resources, such as money for healthcare and school expenses. However, migration must be handled well in order for these development-related advantages of migration to be achieved; population mobility must be acknowledged as a crucial public health imperative.<sup>xxviii</sup> Even the government's business enterprise balance benefits from immigration. Immigration helps the government's business enterprise balance. The reason for this is that they typically have a propensity to pay higher taxes. In 2011, immigrants made an economic contribution per person ranging from terrorist organisation to twenty-eight. on the other hand, Native Americans made -8%.<sup>xxix</sup> South Africa, the most industrialised country in the region and a particularly alluring location for individuals looking for education and improved chances, was home to an expected 2.9 million migrants by the middle of 2020.<sup>xxx</sup>

The economic contribution of immigrants to South Africa could be increased by:

- Tailoring immigration policies to the needs of the labour market, which calls for effective data systems that aren't just fed by routine knowledge and information about native and nonnative workers but also institutional arrangements.

- overcoming discrimination with special consideration for the precarious position of low-skilled workers, specific actions to combat prejudice in the labour market and at work should be encouraged.

- Investment in immigrant integration requires a comprehensive, cross-government strategy that takes into account all aspects of integration.<sup>xxxi</sup>

- In South Africa, the repercussions of migration include increasing housing stress, heightened political and social unrest, rising costs, overcrowding, the spread of disease, and the marginalisation of migrants into low-status and low-paying employment. Remittances are a significant source of income for Lesotho migrants living in South Africa.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Immigration is essential to achieve international competitiveness in the corporate, small business, and tourism sectors given South Africa's aspirations for its economy, regional integration, and ongoing initiatives to promote severe skills shortages. A nation's economic development may be negatively impacted by ongoing statutory and informal restrictions on immigration, including laws, administrative procedures, violations of human rights, and pervasive xenophobia.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The ANC believed that the overall impact of undocumented migration on the South African economy was negative despite the paucity of evidence on the topic. The suggested interdepartmental cooperation represented the largely security-focused methodology that had been carried over.

In 2019, remittances to Southern African nations were anticipated to total USD 7 billion (World Bank, 2020a). Most nations in Southern Africa rely heavily on remittances provided by migrant workers as a source of money, yet the expenses of receiving remittances are still among the highest in the world (GMDAC analysis based on World Bank, 2020b). In terms of absolute amounts, the Democratic Republic of the Congo received the most remittances in the subregion

in 2019. Lesotho received the most remittances in the sub-region in 2019 as a share of GDP (World Bank, 2020a).<sup>xxxiv</sup>

The population of working age will rise due to migration. Migrants bring skills with them and help the recipient nations grow their human capital. Additionally, immigrants advance technology. If our societies are to effectively examine the role of migration, it is crucial to understand these implications.

## Conclusion

Both individual and household variables have had a significant impact on Assam's out-migration. Age, marital status, gender, educational level, and other personal traits of an individual all have a significant impact on migration decisions. Similar to this, household traits including size, type, race, social group, land occupation, and religion have a big impact on whether or not people decide to leave their current location.

South Africa's African Renaissance foreign policy, which aims to lead the continent in a more comprehensive uplift, complicates matters further. South Africa must balance furthering its own national interests with boosting the growth of the continent. In some instances, South Africa's foreign policy, which is crucial for stabilising countries in Southern and Central Africa and supporting their economic development, conflicts with its objective of enlisting skilled foreign labour. There is a severe lack of regional statistics on migration in southern Africa, and the data that is available focuses mostly on migrant remittances and tourism. The Statistical Yearbook of the SADC is one of the few publications that only covers a small number of pertinent indicators. The majority of the research indicates that migration away from the SADC region is not a recent phenomenon; it dates back to the 1860s and the hiring of inexpensive contract labour for the mining industry. The fall of apartheid spurred migration into South Africa as the country stopped hiring employees from SADC nations.

According to the Economist, it is clear that most economic arguments strongly favor migration. If there is any sense of comparative advantage and division of labor, they should hold the world over; they are certainly not valid only within the scope of arbitrarily drawn national boundaries.

We also have to take into account these negative economic effects of migration. We do not think that the three effects I have listed here are sufficiently strong to negate the positive economic effects. But they cannot be completely disregarded or ignored. Logistic regression results indicate how different factors influence an individual's decision to out-migration. Therefore out-migration is not determined by a single, a host of different factors that determine whether an individual will out-migrate.

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