

Vinod Kumar Pandey¹
vinodpandey@u.nus.edu

Rozgar Dhaba: A Rural Information Tea Café Solution for Sustainable Cities

Abstract:

With an increasing urban migration population in Indian cities challenges are in terms of scarcity of survival resources in the form of land, food, water, sanitation and livelihood. Rozgar Dhaba an employment café in rural India brings a public policy solution to restrict unsafe migration and filter safe migration with informed choices of livelihood. Rozgar Dhaba is a tea shop with uncalled gathering and also works as an information exchange center and provides information on local jobs as well as secured and safe jobs in nearby cities. It's cost-effective and a revenue-based model where people have to pay just a 10 cents for a cup of tea and information related with jobs, farm produce prices, government scheme applications, etc. are free along with the free, but limited wifi. Rozgar Dhaba helps small and marginalized farmers to get an extra income along with their agriculture and brings a platform to sell agriculture produce at better prices. With the offering of various livelihood based information services Rozgar Dhaba helps in boosting the rural economy, and also helps cities in terms of reducing unsafe migration. This paper is based on a study of a social startup in India addressing the public issue with bringing a public policy revenue based model. This paper unfolds how small social start-up can addresses key issues like unsafe migration and unemployment in India.

Key words:

entrepreneurship, livelihood information, public policy, rural India, social start-up, unsafe migration, unemployment.

Context

Urbanization in India is a consequence of demographic explosion and poverty-induced rural-urban migration. Youth from rural areas migrate to bigger cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, and Kolkata in search of

¹ Vinod Kumar Pandey is a social entrepreneur in India and has completed his Master in Public Administration from Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore.

greener pastures. The basic purpose of the migration is to make the ***most of their working age and contribute to the progress of the family***. Migration is rampant in the rural pockets of the nation. Increase in population in urban areas is one of the key indicators of migration pressure in Urban. According to statistica.com, Degree of urbanization in India has grown from 29.91 in 2007 to 33.6 in 2017 and is expected to grow to 40.76 by 2030. Mumbai saw large scale rural-urban migration in the 20th century.

Life in the metros is full of opportunities unlike the life in the villages. However, the migrants struggle really hard to make basic ends meet in the cities. Apart from the hardships endured to make a living, they also save money to send back to their families in the villages. Migrant workers live in substandard houses called as Slums, with limited access to basic amenities.

UNFPA World Population report 2016, states that more than half of the world's population lives in urban areas, and the number is steadily growing every year. India, where the majority of the population is still dependent on agriculture, is no exception to this trend. As per the census, the level of urbanization in India has increased from 27.81% in 2001 to 31.16% in 2011. Economic Survey of India 2017 mentioned that a number of inter-state migration in India was roughly 9 million annually between 2011 and 2016. Seasonal migrant workers, 44.1% of whom were below secondary education level, take over low-income, hazardous and informal market jobs in key sectors in urban destinations, such as construction, hotel, textile, manufacturing etc.

The plight of migrant workers

Unsafe migration: People migrate from villages to cities, primarily without any information about job availability. They migrate on the trust that acquaintances or friends will help them search a job. Unaware of the consequences, they end up living in slums without basic facilities such as clean drinking water and toilets to use. In these slums, the size of the house (Chawls) is 15X10 sft and around 10 people stay in a small room. Life in these chawls² can be atrocious with people contracting fatal diseases due to the lack of ventilation.

No guarantee of jobs: People migrate to cities in search of jobs without any guarantee. They do not have authentic sources to get information on job availability. They have to depend on their relatives or friends to help them secure a job in the informal sectors, which often

² (In South Asia) a large building divided into many separate tenements, offering cheap, basic accommodation to laborers.

land up relatives to make arrangement for their stay and thus they avoid it. Job hunting could take any number of days, sometime lasting four to five months. This hunt could potentially exhaust all the financial resources of the migrants.

In some cases, people migrate with families, where the spouse also works as a daily wage laborer. Children also end up working as laborers to support the family. Children have to go through the ordeal of losing school time and affecting learning outcomes.

Poor wages and cost of living: In the cities, migrant earn about 250 to 350 INR per day (for unskilled work) and 400-500 INR per day (for skilled work) and work days range between 15-20 days. It's a daunting task to earn and save on these meager earnings. Some migrants save 100-150 INR per day (in case of unskilled work) compromising their needs/comfort, resulting in adverse health conditions. However, in villages, the average wage ranges from 150-200 INR but the benefits include living in an own house, low cost of living, limited commute, better living conditions, and a family to bank upon.

What happens to cities when migrant workers come to cities?

People migrate to cities in hope of a brighter future and undoubtedly this migration adds to an increase in the population of cities. According to the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC), 2011, nearly 833 million people migrate to urban centers in search of employment. Census 2011 states that 31% of India's population, or 377 million out of 1.2 billion people (when last counted in 2011), live in urban areas and 17% (65 million) of this population lives in a slum. As cities have fixed geography (physical boundaries) and limited space, though in recent time we have seen an expansion of cities, it is the result of an explosion of urban migration pressure. Thus with an increase in population resources shrink, thereby giving birth to cities that have to combat new challenges especially with water, space, sanitation, education health care, transport, and food security. Uncontrolled migration creates huge pressure on cities and questions the ability of the city to sustain the growth.

Cities offer solutions in terms of high rise buildings (affordable housing), metros (affordable transport), affordable schooling, established local clinics, water ATMs and many new initiatives. However, the problems include:

1) National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Ayog), Government of India think tank has released report 'Composite Water Man-

agement Index³ in June 2018 and stated that 21 cities (including Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore) in India would run out of groundwater by 2020. That's just two years from now.

2) The latest database of Number lists three Indian cities among the top 10 cities of the world for having the worst traffic conditions. These cities include Mumbai, Pune, and Kolkata.⁴

3) Population growth and rapid urbanization are combining to create huge challenges for Indian cities. According to McKinsey⁵, the country's cities are expected to grow from 340 million people in 2008 to a whopping 590 million in 2030 and this growth will be very rapid. Meeting demand for urban services in these cities will require US\$ 1.1 trillion in capital investment over the next 20 years. Without the right design and planning, this massive urban growth could exacerbate existing problems of congestion, pollution, and traffic safety.

4) Delhi is now considered the most polluted city in the world, according to the Brookings Institute, while at least two-and-a-half million premature deaths are blamed on poor air quality across the country as a whole.

5) The Economic Survey Report of India 2017-18 estimated that the percentage of agricultural workers of the total workforce would drop to 25.7 percent by 2050 from 58.2 percent in 2001. What is the cause of this decline? People migrating to cities and adding to the unemployment in cities. It is interesting to know that because of migration from rural pockets to urban (cities), unemployment in cities is increasing and in rural pockets, it's decreasing. As per Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) overall unemployment rate of India as on 18th Oct 2018 is 6.9 %, whereas for urban India its 7.5% and for rural India its 6.6%.

What makes rural people migrate in India?

In India, there are different reasons for people to migrate to cities from villages or rural pockets, but the following are the key reasons:

In search of a job: Unemployed youth are huge in numbers and this is one of the primary reason people migrate from villages to cities. They are eager for stable incomes unlike the agricultural income, where

3 Composite Water Management Index by NITI Aayog ; June 2018; http://niti.gov.in/writereaddata/files/document_publication/2018-05-18-Water-Index-Report_vS8-compressed.pdf

4 Ameya Naik; NDTV; Jan 29, 2015; Three Indian Cities in the Top 10 List Of Worst Traffic Conditions in the World; <https://auto.ndtv.com/news/three-indian-cities-in-the-top-10-list-of-worst-traffic-conditions-in-the-world-735439>

5 India's urban awakening: Building inclusive cities, sustaining economic growth; <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/urbanization/urban-awakening-in-india>

the yield is once a year and the returns are low. According to a Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) report, 31 million Indians were unemployed as of February 2018, while employment opportunity and job creation were limited to 600,000. Whereas a report by Azim Premji University State of Working India⁶ stated that around 100 million workers are either employed in very poor quality jobs or are out of the labor force because of the unavailability of work. These are 'surplus workers' available to be pulled into the economy if jobs can be created. Another estimate of the surplus workforce, that can be more productively employed elsewhere, is the percentage of those employed in unorganized petty services such as retail, domestic work, and so on. As of 2016, this is estimated to be 78 million. On the other hand, industrialization, having key government offices and growth in cities attract people to get jobs and thus migrate.

Poor implementation of rural employment generation programmes: India has different rural employment generation programmes. The most popular one is Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employee Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA⁷). Though it has generated more rural employment than any other government schemes or private initiatives in the history of independent India, it has also generated controversies over work done by machines (rather than manual work), and on issues of payment of wages, and fake entries in job cards and many more. Poor implementation of government programmes on employment generation has left people with two options: a) to work in the agriculture field, however rising input costs and in-appropriate market prices lead to no/low interest in agriculture; b) to migrate to cities and work in the informal sector. In cities, payments are prompt when compared to the payments in the Government schemes (as in the case of government programmes like NREGA). Even with several other schemes/programmes, the status of accessing secured livelihood across the country is poor.

Lack of information on job availability: Unlike the people in the cities with different jobs platforms like LinkedIn, Timesjobs.com, Indeed, monsterojobs.com etc., villagers do not have access to these platforms.

In villages, Gram Panchayats⁸ are the key source of providing information, but they focus only on government schemes and programmes

6 Azim Premji University; State of Working India 2018; https://cse.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/State_of_Working_India_2018.pdf

7 The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was enacted in 2005 and seeks to improve the rural infrastructure, augment land and water resources, and strengthen the livelihood resource base of the rural poor by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year: <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx>

8 A gram Panchayat is the only grassroots-level of Panchayati Raj formalized local self-governance system in India at the village or small-town level and has a sarpanch as its elected head. It is basic, a first formal democratic institution at the village level.

and benefits. The information is inconsistent and is not displayed at strategic places through the village. A few posters are put up a few places in Panchayat Bhawan/Office, or through gram sabha⁹ meetings (a called gathering, which often has less attendance¹⁰). This causes unawareness among people about the Initiatives of the Government and thus in different states, different NGOs work on dissemination of information on government programmes or schemes.

Agriculture is the primary source of livelihood, but it's no more profitable: Indian rural economy is primarily based on agriculture. Indian agriculture sector accounts for 18¹¹ percent of India's gross domestic product (GDP) and it is estimated that it provides employment to 50% of the countries workforce, but ground reality differs. Many farmers in different states of India are leaving farming, primarily because of high input cost and low income from agriculture. Also on the other hand with the use of fertilizers, chemicals, and hybrid seeds, land fertility is declining. This encourages many farmers to commit suicide. *In 2014, the National Crime Records Bureau of India reported 5,650 farmer suicides. As per the figures are given by the central government in 2015, there were 12602 farmer suicides.* This includes 8,007 farmers-cultivators and 4,595 agricultural laborers¹². The farmer's suicide rate in India has ranged between 1.4 and 1.8 per 100,000 total populations, over a 10-year period through 2005. Thus people (including farmers) are migrating to cities.

Health Care: Rural pockets have a scarcity of health service providers and local quacks play a key role in providing health care services. But their services are also limited to treating normal diseases and that too is risky. Thus people from rural pockets migrate to cities to get better health care facilities, especially to access services of hospitals like All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Delhi.

Other reasons: Some people migrate to cities to enjoy the luxury of the city life and to have better exposure towards life. Whereas some people migrate to cities for higher education, coaching classes for competi-

9 , The Gram Sabha is the fulcrum of the Panchayati Raj and village development. People use the forum of the Gram Sabha to discuss local governance and development and make need- based plans for the village. The term Gram Sabha is defined in the Constitution of India under Article 243(b). It is the primary body of the Panchayati Raj system and by far the largest.

10 Based on primary data sources in the villages where Rozgar Dhaba works in India

11 The Economic Survey 2017-18; https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/realtime/Economic_Survey_2017_18.pdf

12 Dhananjay Mahapatra; The Times of India; Over 12,000 farmer suicides per year, Centre tells Supreme Court; <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/over-12000-farmer-suicides-per-year-centre-tells-supreme-court/articleshow/58486441.cms>

tive education and better prospects. However, these people come from affluent families of rural India.

So what's the solution?

Migration pressure on cities cannot be solved by creating high rise building or expanding cities, as some resources are limited and the city would not be able to afford everybody. Unfortunately, we cannot stop people from migrating to cities. What's the potential solution to this problem? The simple solution is diversifying migration and explores opportunities for people to have job opportunities in rural pockets or in the local area from where people are migrating. The concern does we need to create jobs, if yes then how do we create these jobs in a rural pocket. These solutions cannot be materialized overnight.

If we look into rural India, we ignore the basic fact that there is no information available on different local jobs like a painter, wage labor work, tutor, salesman etc. People get information through their personal connections and there is no structured way to collect information of all such local jobs available and disseminate it. Based on the idea of 'bridging the gap of information on jobs availability' to communities, the idea of Rozgar Dhaba¹³ has emerged and it turned in to inaction by Mr. Vinod Pandey¹⁴ - a Masters in Public Administration (2018-19) student of LKY School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore.

Rozgar Dhaba is an attempt to solve the information gap which leads situation of unemployment in India (especially in rural and semi-urban pockets) through bridging the gap of information on different job opportunities and different job seekers available for the available jobs in the local geography. It is primarily a 'tea stall' in rural pockets of India (Currently functioning in Madhya Pradesh and Bihar), that sells hygienic and different varieties of tea and acts as a center for the exchange of information on available job opportunities. It collects information from local employers for local jobs and also collects information about job seekers, who are looking for jobs and displays the gathered information. It also serves for the following:

- 1) display of information on selling of agriculture produce and buyer looking for agriculture produce;
- 2) villagers willing to rent their farm or agriculture equipment's;
- 3) information on admissions to schools, colleges and on scholarships;

13 Rozgar is a Hindi Word meaning employment and Dhaba means Café or Restaurant

14 Vinod Pandey is a social entrepreneur from India.

4) information on government schemes;

5) linked with banks and provide information on loans from banks and institutions like NABARD¹⁵ and schemes like MUDRA¹⁶. It also supports rural poor on opening bank accounts.

Rozgar Dhaba works as a catalyst for providing information. Charges are only for tea and information is free of cost to villagers. Apart from serving information at Kiosk, Rozgar Dhaba also disseminate information on jobs/livelihood opportunities through broadcast on WhatsApp. This, in turn, increases more customers at Rozgar Dhaba and increases the sales of tea, which increases the revenue of Rozgar Dhaba. “When we called community meetings, we realized the jarring gap in how people had no single-point contact to find employment leads in villages. In the cities, different employment portals like LinkedIN Naukri, Monster.com help us access these. But what about people in small villages? So we came up with the idea of a center that would bring both employers and employees together in an informal setting. What better than the traditional tea stall or Dhaba?” – Vinod Pandey, Co-Founder of Rozgar Dhaba.

Beneficiaries of Rozgar Dhaba: Rozgar Dhaba works with all the community members aged 14 years and above in rural pockets. Its major focus is to cater to women, farmers, daily wage workers, students and anyone looking for a legitimate job (as a job seeker or as a job provider). It also works with women and farmers to channelize the agricultural produce.

Why Rozgar Dhaba works?

Rozgar Dhaba is an ideal model to work and replicate on providing information on livelihood options available in village’s primary because of:

- 1) it has uncalled gathering everyday (so you have both information provider and seeker at one place);
- 2) people pay for tea (it develops sustainability of model in the form of reducing dependency on grants and other support);
- 3) share information, but get unrecorded (it could get recoded in structured way);

¹⁵ National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development is an apex development financial institution in India, headquartered at Mumbai with regional offices all over India. <https://www.nabard.org/>

¹⁶ Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY) Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY) is a scheme launched by the Hon’ble Prime Minister on April 8, 2015 for providing loans upto 10 lakh to the non-corporate, non-farm small/micro enterprises. <https://www.mudra.org.in/>

4) common point of contact (everyone in village loves tea, even in hot summer);

5) place for people from every section of society (same tea for everyone, removes caste barriers also);

6) it's not just a tea stall, but a source of data in villages and can help government to design better programs.

Rozgar Dhaba aim to reach 10 million people in next five years through 100 Rozgar Dhaba centers.

Impact till date: It was started in 2018 at Nashrullaganj block of Shehore district of Madhya Pradesh, India. In a short span of time, Rozgar Dhaba on a monthly average caters to 1000+ beneficiaries, with 8 farm produce sale displays, 70-80 registration of candidates for job information per month and in total 272 people have get different jobs in local geography through the support of Rozgar Dhaba and 112 families have not migrated from villages around Rozgar Dhaba (as they get local jobs). The revenue earned through Rozgar Dhaba goes for education out of school girls in the same village to enroll, continue and complete schooling through girls2schools project.

“I get different types of information at Rozgar Dhaba such as information on agriculture (especially on cultivation on different crops), government schemes and different information on jobs” – Amitesh (from Village Nadan, Shehore).

What would be the possible impact of Rozgar Dhaba on cities?

1) Rozgar Dhaba would able to reduce migration pressure on cities and would also be able to diversify migration to different cities in the long run. Reduction in migration pressure on cities could help cities to be more sustainable in terms of access to resources.

2) Awareness on government/private jobs, scholarships and admission notices of different good colleges: Rozgar Dhaba also provides an opportunity for youths to apply for Government and other private sector jobs in different cities of India. This helps in diversifying migration to different cities rather than just migrating to one city. It also ensures safe migration and supplies the appropriate supply of workforce to cities. It is important to understand that the purpose of Rozgar Dhaba is not to restrict all migration. Its primary purpose is to restrict unsafe migration and inform people on opportunities available in the villages. Rozgar Dhaba's aim is to ensure that people stay content with the opportunities available in rural India and are knowledgeable of worthless migration.

Policy benefits of Rozgar Dhaba

Rozgar Dhaba is a policy solution for three critical problems in countries like India:

1) mitigating the issue of unemployment by making hidden employment information available to people in rural pockets: this would help people to have jobs available in their own villages, which in turn could help them in continuing their farming or other agriculture allied activities and earn a decent amount;

2) reducing unsafe migration as well as trafficking from rural pockets: this will ensure minimization of unsafe migration and an unwanted increase of urban population;

3) reducing migration pressure on cities, which in turn make cities more sustainable.

Conclusion

In rural India, because of the lack of access and exposure to education, most people do not have information regarding the welfare schemes and policies of the Government. Most of the information dissemination is through peer-to-peer learning and it is the major source of knowledge about the government and its policies. The government has enabled Panchayats¹⁷ (Top-Down approach) in all the villages to ensure that people living in villages know about the efforts of the government for the upliftment of the poor. However, villagers do not go to Panchayats to inquire about these policies for reasons ranging from corruption to inefficiency of the officers. Corruption and barricades to communication deter villagers from visiting the Panchayats.

At Rozgar Dhaba, information dissemination about the policies of the government happens in a very informal way. The villagers have to make a deliberate effort to inquire about the government and its policies at the Panchayat whereas, at Rozgar Dhaba, information dissemination is a by-product of the tea relishing process. People in India love tea and would go to any distance for a cup of refreshing tea. Rozgar Dhaba aims to capitalize on its loyal (tea) customers to proliferate rural India with information dissemination regarding jobs and policies.

¹⁷ A gram panchayat is the only grassroots-level of panchayati raj formalised local self-governance system in India at the village or small-town level, and has a sarpanch as its elected head.

Винод Кумар Пандеј

Розгар Даба: рурална чајданица за размену информација – решење за одрживе градове

С растом урбане популације миграната у индијским градовима, јавља се изазов недостатка ресурса за живот у виду земље, хране, воде, санације и средстава за живот. Розгар Даба је кафе за запошљавање у руралној Индији, који, у домену јавне политике, омогућава рестрикцију небезбедне и филтрирање безбедне миграције, која укључује информације о могућностима за издржавање. Розгар Даба је чајданица у коју се долази непозван, а представља и центар за размену информација о локалним пословима, као и сигурним и безбедним запослењима у оближњим градовима. То је исплатив и профитабилан модел, пошто, за само 10 центи, људи добијају шољу чаја, али и бесплатне информације у вези са запослењем, ценама пољопривредних производа, применом владиних програма итд, заједно с бесплатним, али ограниченим вајфајем. Розгар Даба помаже малим и маргинализованим фармерима да дођу до додатног прихода и обезбеђује платформу за продају пољопривредних производа по повољнијим ценама. Нудећи разне сервисе за информације о средствима за живот, Розгар Даба помаже унапређењу локалне економије и редуковању небезбедне миграције у градове. Овај чланак је заснован на студији социјалног стартапа у Индији и упућује на друштвени проблем, нудећи модел јавне политике заснован на приходу. Коначно, у овом раду се објашњава како мали социјални стартап може да решава кључне проблеме, као што су небезбедна миграција и незапосленост у Индији.

Кључне речи: предузетништво, информације о средствима за живот, јавна политика, рурална Индија, социјални стартап, небезбедна миграција, незапосленост.