

# Long Distance Inter-state Migration of Unskilled Workers to Kerala, South India

N.Ajith Kumar

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# Aim

- To understand the drivers of long distance inter-state migration within a large country like India.

# Case Study Based on:

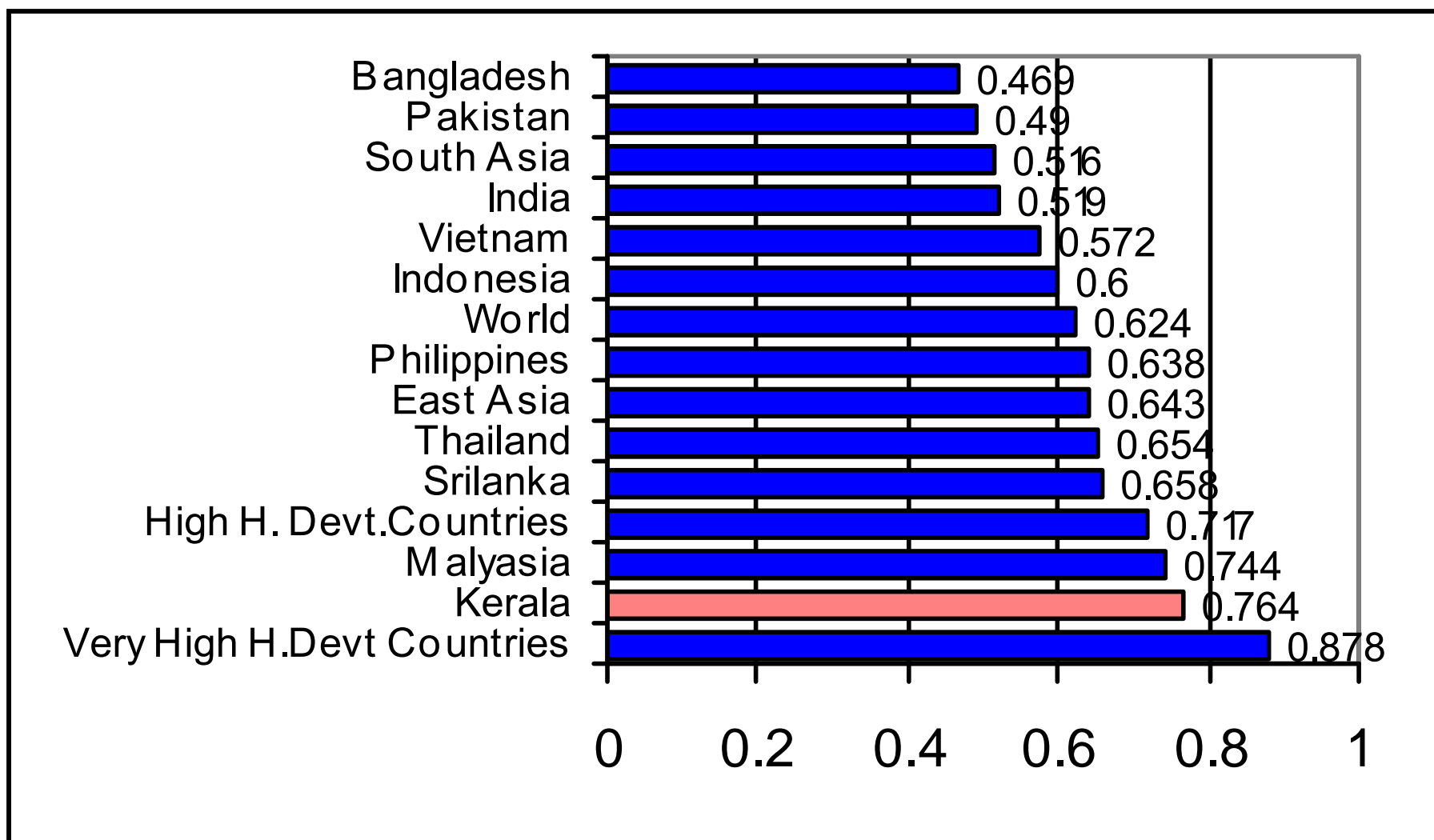
- Depth-interviews and FGDs with migrant workers and other key stakeholders
- Analysis of Secondary data and review of documents
- Inputs from earlier studies

# About Kerala



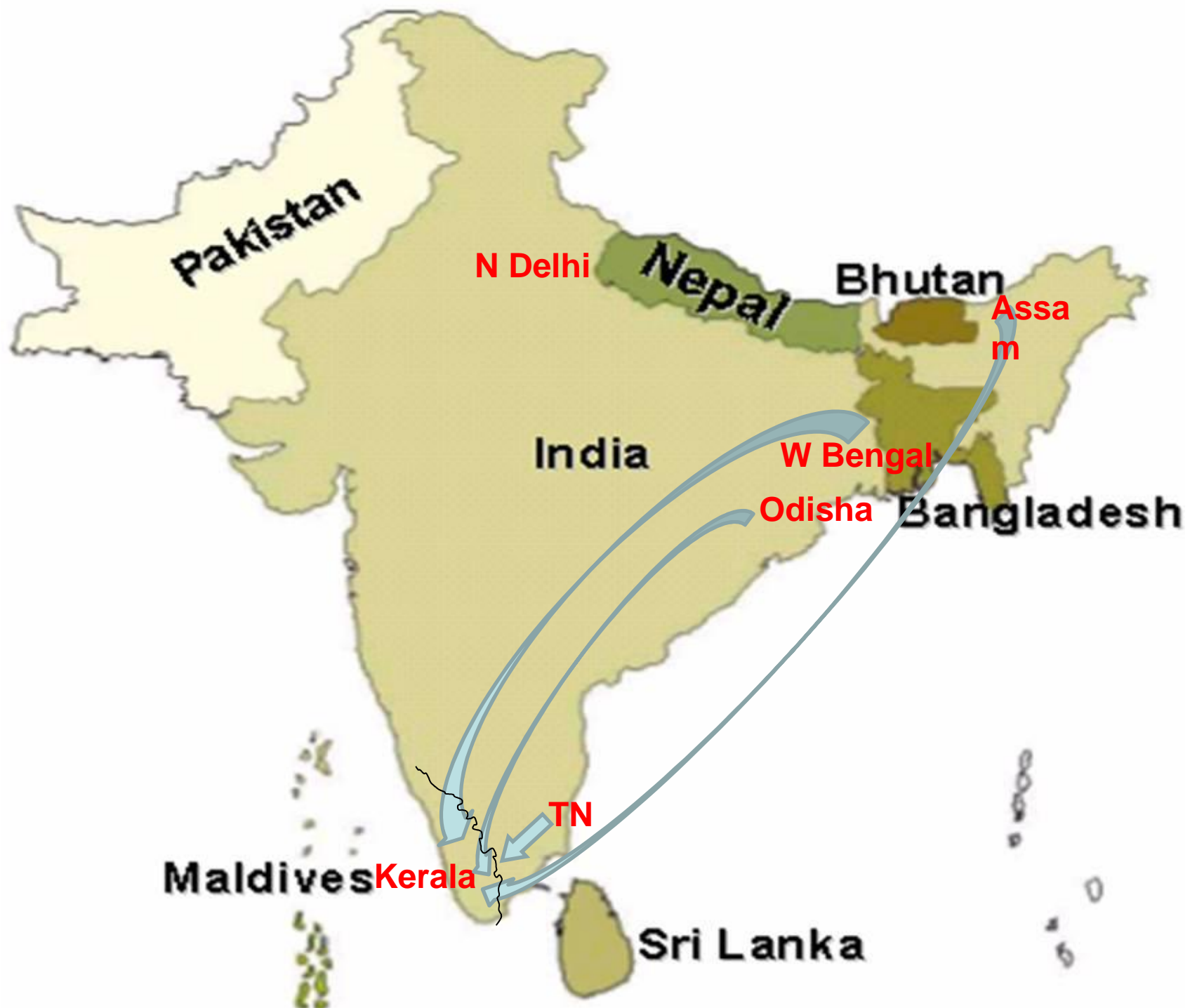
- Located in the South-western tip of India
- Accommodates 2.7% of Indian population
- But only 1.2% of the land area
- Ranked 1 on HDI and rural SDI.
- Low levels of poverty - rural 9%; Urban 5%
- Development experience often referred to as Kerala Model of Development

# HDI - Kerala and South Asia and South-east Asia



# Migration in Kerala

- 2.2 million Keralites migrated to other countries and one million to other states
- Estimates of interstate migrants in Kerala- 1 -2.5 million
- Inflow increased significantly in recent years
- Migration in 1980s and 1990s - SDIMs
- Now, LDIMs
- Most of the LDIMs are young



# The Distance Factor

- May travel more distance than to cross country borders
  - Kerala –West Bengal: 2400 km; Assam : 3500 km
  - Kerala- Dubai/Abu Dhabi- 2800km
  - West Bengal/ Odisha to West Asia is also not much higher
  - Dhaka – Kolkata much lower
- Linguistic Distance- Dravidian vs. Indo Aryan
- Cultural distance is also high.



# Selected Indicators of Kerala and States of origin of LDIMs

Indicator	Kerala	West Bengal	Odisha	Assam	Tamil Nadu
HDI Rank (2006)	1	15	26	19	9
Literacy Rate (%)	94	77	73	79	87
Sex Ratio (2011)	1084	947	978	954	995
Religious composition					
Hindus	56	73	94	65	88
Muslims	25	25	2	31	6
Christians	19	1	2	4	6
Infant Mortality Rate (2011)	12	32	57	55	22
Life expectancy (2011)	74.0	64.9	59.6	58.9	66.2
Households with toilets (%)	95	59	22	65	48

# Push and Pull

- What compensates for the “friction of distance”?
- Push, Pull and the intervening variables
- Push and pull are complimentary – migration happens only if the reason to migrate is achieved by pull from an attractive location.
- Intervening variables: Distance and opportunities in other states

# Push

- Lack of opportunities in place of origin
  - “I had nothing to do at home. Was not in a position to survive that way”.
  - “income was insufficient. We were taking loans, repaying it and again taking loan when I finally decided to move out”.
  - Limited land
  - Inadequate job opportunities in farming/agriculture labour
  - No year round employment
  - No opportunities for non-agriculture labour
  - All members in the family not required
  - Elder members take care of the work in the locality while the youngsters migrate. Or one young member stays back.

# Push

- Low Wages- An Equally important factor
- Gets less than 150-200 in the place of origin
- But why Kerala?
- Kerala do not have million plus cities

# Pull -Higher Wages

- “If I work here properly, I would earn around 15000 per month. Even in Kolkata I can earn only 6000. Regularity of work is also a problem there”
- “Here I earn 10000-15000 without much difference in working hours and cost of living”. “In villages also, we need at least 4000 for my family consisting of father, mother, myself, wife and one child”
- Higher wages in Kerala – Not a recent phenomenon

<b>Average Wage Rate for Male Casual Workers 2011-12</b>		
State	Rural	Urban
Assam	142.63	159.4
Delhi	--	284.85
<b>Kerala</b>	<b>345.14</b>	<b>335.76</b>
Maharashtra	133.69	173.18
Odisha	123.57	165.34
Punjab	202.35	198.45
Tamil Nadu	196.65	227.66
West Bengal	123.92	134.58
All-India	149.32	182.04

# Pull: Opportunities for employment created by:

- Economic growth from late 1980s
  - Kerala: Per capita SDP- 84000 (\$1400)
  - 34000 in Assam; 46000 in Odisha and 55000 in WB
  - Change in structure of the economy- Tertiary sector increased its share from 42% in 1987-88 to over 60%.
  - Construction sector also showed improvement
  - Agriculture at the receiving end
  - Created opportunities in the non-agriculture sector- An attraction for migrants who wanted to shift from agriculture

# Pull: Opportunities for employment created by:

- Change in the age structure of population
  - Share of young workforce (20-34) – 50% in 1991 to 38% in 2011
  - Decline numerically also – 7.9 million to 7.7 million
- Out migration and Emigration
  - Created shortage of labour – unskilled and semi-skilled
  - Remittances pushed up the wages further
  - Increase in consumption and construction
- But Kerala has unemployment- More of educated

# Pull: Fast Pace of Urbanisation

- No. 2 among major states in urbanisation– 26% in 1991 to 48% in 2011.
- 31% in India; 14% in Assam; 17% in Odisha and 32% in WB
- Migrants work in rural areas also:
  - Different settlement pattern
  - Rural urban continuum
  - Physical infrastructure and social amenities in villages
  - Employment opportunities and better living conditions in rural areas



# Network

- “When people having nothing to do in the villages, seeing a living example of a person in the village who has earned money by working in Kerala”
- “When we come, we know nothing. So we call up people already here and ask them to find job for us”
- “sometimes when I come back from my village, two or three villagers come with me”
- Bengal-Gujarat-Kerala-Gujarat

# Other Drivers

- “We were told that we can trust employers in Kerala on wages”- Overall work environment
- “I am planning to bring more youngsters from my village who will work initially as helper but can later become mason like me” –Possibilities of skill upgradation
- “I had to leave my Village in Odisha because of some religious tension there”
- Difference between early LDIMs and recent LDIMs-

# Other Drivers

- “Going to Dubai is very difficult as many certificates have to be produced. It will cost us 100000” ( \$1700 approx)
- To and fro journey to Kochi costs only 1400- Wages for 3 days of work in Kerala.
- Entry barriers of potential destination countries facilitating inter-state long distance migration

# Job Guarantee scheme and Welfare Fund

- MGNREGS- a policy response aimed at arresting migration flows –
  - Low MGNREGS wages (< 155) compared to Kerala wages
  - Much higher opportunities than the guaranteed 100 days
- Migrant Welfare Fund of Kerala
  - Did not create interest among migrants
  - Low awareness
- Both seems to be not affecting migrant flow.

# The Case of SDIMs from Tamil Nadu

- Physical, linguistic and cultural distance is short
- Have been in Kerala for long
- Developed a strong network
- Yet many had returned when new LDIMs came in
- Reasons include
  - “can extract more labour from the new migrants”
  - “Need to pay less than what is offered to Tamil labour
  - Increase in employment opportunities and wages in Tamil Nadu
  - Welfare schemes at the state of origin
  - But there was pull from the state of origin also

THANK YOU