



Migrants and Displaced Amid COVID-19

Issues, Challenges and Policy Options

Edited by

Lirar Pulikkalath

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CHAPTER 20

Reverse Migration in Goa: A Study of its Socio-Economic Implications

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Abstract

The coronavirus pandemic has sparked huge reverse migration throughout the country as well as in Goa. Loss of jobs and starting all over poses a huge challenge to the return migrants. This problem is exacerbated for low-skilled workers than for skilled labour. This has jeopardised every aspect of their life as their families were totally dependent on the remittances sent home. The implementation of the lockdown brought turmoil into the lives and livelihood of these migrants working abroad and who were primarily surviving through contributing labour to the informal sector and low-paying jobs. This reverse migration has put a strain on the native state as it quashes the remuneration flow from other countries, and there are bleak chances of employability for those who return home. Furthermore, there is a loss of status in the home and village and apprehensions about the future. This chapter seeks to examine the impact of reverse migration on home communities amidst the global pandemic.

Keywords: Reverse migration, unemployment, loss of status

Introduction

Migration has been an integral part of the history of mankind. It is a demographic phenomenon that results in population redistribution. People have been migrating since ancient times for a variety of reasons, sometimes in search of food, at other times to escape from natural calamities or threats of enemies. In normal conditions, human migration has taken place owing to the lack of social and economic opportunities at the place where one resides. The main driving force behind migration is a better standard of living away from home. Hence people start migrating to those places where they can fulfill their aspirations,

uplift from poverty, and access livelihoods. In south Asian countries, 'male-only' migration is a common pattern of migration. The prime reason for seeking overseas employment is the lure of attractive remittances. When men migrate, the wives, children, and elderly folks stay back at home.

Overseas Migration from Goa

Overseas migration is a common phenomenon in Goa, especially for men who leave home to fetch the much-needed resources for their families. Women, children, and the elderly are left behind due to practical constraints as well as normative roles demarcated by gendered division of labour. A sizeable number of Goans have settled elsewhere and constitute the Goan diaspora. Also, many Goans are working overseas onshore, as well as at sea, and send remittances to their families left behind here. For many families, remittances are the only source of livelihood.

Relevance of the Present Study

A visible fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic is reverse migration which experts say could end up being hard to resolve, given the importance of remittances sent by overseas migrants to the Goan economy. This paper seeks to examine the reverse migration of Goans with a special focus on low and semi-skilled workers and study its socio-economic implications on the family as well as the state. There is no systematic empirical study on reverse migration in Goa. This knowledge will help to formulate appropriate and effective social policies to mitigate problems emerging out of reverse migration.

To analyse the present situation of reverse migration, it is relevant to know the historical background which facilitated migration from Goa. In this context, the geographic location, demographic and socio-economic characteristics, as well as cultural influences are pertinent to understanding the scenario of migration from Goa.

The State of Goa

Goa is located in the region known as the Konkan, bound by the state of Maharashtra to the north and by Karnataka to the east and south, while the Arabian Sea forms its western coast. Goa occupies an area of 3,702 square kilometers (Gomes, 1996: 11). Goa is the 25th state of the Indian Union and was formed in the year 1987. Panaji is the capital city of the state. Prior to the formation of the state, Goa was a major district of the former Union Territory

of Goa, Daman, and Diu. It attained full-fledged statehood on 30th May 1987, under the Goa, Daman, and Diu Reorganization Act, 1987 (Act No. 18 of 1987), thus separating it from the 25 years old Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu.

The present state of Goa was under Portuguese colonial rule for 451 years, and it was liberated on 19th December 1961. It was integrated with India vide the Constitution (Twelfth Amendment) Act, 1962, dated 27th March 1962 (Goa: A Portrait of Population, Census of India, 1991). The state is divided into two districts: North and South Goa, and twelve talukas for administrative purposes. The talukas of Pernem, Satari, Bardez, Tiswadi, Bicholim, and Ponda form the North Goa District. The South Goa District comprises of the talukas of Mormugao, Salcete, Quepem, Sanguem, Canacona and Dharbandora (created in 2015).

Old and New Conquests

There is a need to consider the social, cultural, and political context in which the migration process occurs. In any discussion on Goa, it is necessary to distinguish between the so-called *Velhas Conquistas* (Old Conquests) and the *Novas Conquistas* (New Conquests). The 'Old Conquests' refer to the more developed talukas of *Ilhas* (Goa taluka as it was known), Bardez, Salcete, and Mormugao, conquered first by the Portuguese in the 16th century, and these underwent the full impact of colonization in all aspects of life. The 'New Conquests' refer to the remaining talukas, namely, Pernem, Bicholim, Satari, Ponda, Sanguem, Quepem, and Canacona, which were integrated into Goa between 1763 and 1778 (D'Souza, 1975: 18).

The 'Old Conquests' have a much higher density of population. Agriculture and allied activities like fishing are more advanced in these talukas. With the emergence of mining activity, the 'New Conquests' started gaining importance since the mines were situated almost exclusively in these areas.

The New Conquests cover three-fourths of the area of the present state of Goa and have remained predominantly Hindu. The Portuguese influence on the Old Conquests has been intense and significant, as is evident from the large Christian population living here. Most emigrants have originated from these talukas. Obviously, the Old Conquests (Bardez, Salcete, Tiswadi, and Mormugao) have been the scope of most studies on emigration (GMS, 2008: 23-24). Mascarenhas (1990: 243) and Larsen (1998: 284) have also made

mentioned that a bulk of emigrants originated from the Old Conquest talukas. The massive migration of the labour and middle classes to various parts of the erstwhile British and Portuguese empires affected the talukas constituting the 'Old Conquests' (Noronha, 1990: 263-264).

Migration from Goa: Transformative Shifts

Since Goa was a Portuguese enclave for over four centuries, with clearly demarcated political boundaries, migration to destinations outside Goa involved crossing national boundaries. Obviously, any out-migration to India before Goa's integration into the Indian Union as well as outside India was perceived as international (GMS, 2008: 20; Mascarenhas, 1990: 243).

The first recorded wave of Goan migration is traced to the 16th century, when the Portuguese rule began in Goa. Gracias (2007: 107) notes, "during the early centuries of the Portuguese rule, a large number of Hindus left Goa to escape conversion." Later, the new converts fled Goa to escape the terror unleashed due to the Inquisition in the late 16th century. Goans also migrated to the neighboring regions because of various incursions, recurrent epidemics, and high taxes imposed by the Portuguese rulers. However, these movements were not induced by employment considerations. In the later phase, agrarian economy, unemployment, and lack of educational prospects led to migration. An increase in modern means of transport and communication further facilitated migration (Thakker, 2015).

Migration trends according to the destination or changing patterns could be broadly illustrated in chronological order as follows: British India and Asia, Africa, America, Canada and United Kingdom, and the Gulf. With the establishment of the British colonial government in India in the 19th century and the development of Bombay and other towns and cities in the vicinity of Goa, many new employment opportunities were created. Goans migrated to the metropolitan cities, such as Madras, Calcutta, and Delhi, and to smaller urban centers near Goa, like Belgaum, Dharwad, and Poona. Others went to the British colonies along with their masters or on their own. Goans took up the jobs of sailors, stewards, and cooks in the passenger and cargo liners on the ships anchored by British India.

Goan females followed the males and worked as *ayahs*, governesses, and other low-paying jobs (Azevedo, 1997: 31). Women who migrated independently were mostly poor; low caste unmarried women or widows from the lower classes.

They worked as domestic staff in British families, while some took the jobs of nurses and secretaries in Bombay and other urban areas (Gracias, 2007: 107; Mascarenhas, 1990: 245).

With the departure of the British from India in 1947, Goans who were employed in considerable numbers in British firms lost their jobs, which resulted in their return home from 1948 to 1959 (Mascarenhas, 1990 cited in GMS, 2008: 26). Subsequently, in the late 19th century, many Goans who had gone to British Africa in search of jobs had to return to Goa as the colonies reverted to indigenous rule in the 1960s. Only a few Goans chose to stay behind, while others sought new places for settlement with new avenues of employment and shifted to greener pastures in Australia, America, Brazil, Canada, the U.K, New Zealand, and so on (Fernandes, 2007: 46); while those who go to the Gulf, do not settle there, but eventually return to Goa to lead a retired life (Azevedo, 1997: 32). This period coincided with the era of decolonization and the attainment of freedom from the British and Portuguese rule.

Post-Liberation Migration

After the liberation of Goa in 1961, the trend of emigration continued. Rodrigues (2004: 180) writes, “the generality of descendants and *mesticos* (children of Portuguese-Goan marriages) living in Goa opted for Portugal.” She opines that the *mesticos* felt that they “might be ill-treated and there would be no scope for them and their families in Goa.” Their departure acted as a catalyst for many Goans, who also emigrated to Portugal, also a small percentage of migrants to the United States of America and the United Kingdom. This was mostly to pursue higher studies. Some opted to stay on and acquire British nationality or to get Portuguese citizenship. In recent decades too, overseas migration continues to date.

We note that earlier migration was mostly involuntary, with the subjective factors more dominant than the objective factors; some sort of ‘push factors’ influenced the decision to migrate, and gradually the ‘pull factors,’ which were voluntary, affected the rationale for migration (Thakker, 2015).

The visible changes of migration are manifested through conspicuous consumption patterns and an ostentatious lifestyle of overseas migrants’ families (Gomes, 1987; Larsen, 1998). A high standard of living and lifestyle has been a characteristic feature of many overseas migrants’ homes. Migrants generally indulge in a grandiose display of wealth and construct bigger houses. Consumerism has been a hallmark of migrants’ families.

COVID-19 and Reverse Migration

The coronavirus pandemic has sparked huge reverse migration throughout the country and in Goa. Loss of jobs and starting all over poses a huge challenge to the return migrants. This problem is exacerbated for low-skilled workers than for skilled labour. Those living and surviving from one paycheck to the next find their life upended, and the families directly feel the repercussions. Further, they are deprived of social security and safety nets. For the skilled labor force, the impact has not been as severe since they anticipate returning when the situation normalizes or gets absorbed elsewhere. Reverse migration has posed fresh challenges not only to the families concerned but also to the society at large, which needs further research.

Objectives

This paper seeks to examine the impact of reverse migration on the home communities amidst the global pandemic and to understand the present scenario; it is pertinent to:

- ❖ Present an overview of the migration scenario in Goa.
- ❖ To identify the problems faced by the return migrants.
- ❖ To analyse the effect on the households due to the return of the menfolk.
- ❖ To study the impact on interpersonal relationships, home communities, and the state.

Methodology

This paper is based on an analysis of primary data gathered from eight villages in Salcete taluka, South Goa. The respondents were selected using the purposive sample method. The families were identified as units of observation. The household case study method and in-depth personal interviews gave a holistic picture of the issue. Informal group discussions were held with the migrants' families. In addition, formal discussions with religious heads, sarpanch, and village elders gave deeper insights into the problems faced by return migrants. Further, secondary data sources were from books, documentaries, government publications, news reports, and Goa Migration Study Report 2008.

Selection of the Locale of Study

It was challenging to decide on the research area during the initial stage of mapping the field. Goa Migration Study report 2008 published by the NRI Cell,

Government of Goa provides data on emigrants who have mainly originated from the Old Conquests, i.e., Bardez, Salcete, Tiswadi, and Mormugao. Hence, these have been the focus of most studies on emigration. This fact has been corroborated by Mascarenhas (1990). She mentions that one of the major impacts of sustained international migration was the development of the remittance economy in many parts of Goa, particularly in the coastal talukas of Bardez, Salcete, and Tiswadi, from where the bulk of migrants originated. Also, Larsen Karin *Faces of Goa* (1998) reveals that rural villages, mostly those located in the coastal talukas of Salcete, Bardez, and Tiswadi, have benefitted economically, educationally, and culturally owing to the existence of a large migrant community. In 1919, Mormugao, which was earlier a part of Salcete, became a separate sub-district (now called a taluka) for administrative reasons; the dividing line was drawn between Arossim and Utorda (D'Silva, 2011: 10).

Although Goa has a long history of international migration and almost all towns and villages have male members abroad for employment purposes, emigration from Goa is highly concentrated with respect to the origin, both geographically and culturally. The tables below throw light on the statistics of emigration in Goa.

Table 1: District Wise Emigrant Household

District	Percentage
North Goa	33.8
South Goa	66.2
<i>Source: Goa Migration Study 2008</i>	

According to GMS Report (2008), among the two districts of Goa, South Goa district accounts for 66.2 percent of emigrant households, whereas North Goa district accounts for about 33.8 percent of surveyed households (Table 1).

Table 2: Taluka Wise Emigrant Household

Taluka	Percentage
North Goa	33.8
Pernem	1.3
Bardez	15.2
Tiswadi	15.0
Bicholim	0.6

Satari	0.0
Ponda	1.8
South Goa	66.2
Mormugao	3.5
Salcete	50.6
Quepem	5.4
Sanguem	3.1
Canacona	3.6
Goa	100.0
<i>Source: Goa Migration Study 2008</i>	

Similarly, 18 percent of surveyed households in South Goa had at least one emigrant compared to just 7 percent in North Goa. The emigration rate is estimated as 22.8 percent per 100 households in South Goa, but only 10.7 percent in the North. Thus, the emigration rate in South Goa is almost twice that in North Goa. In addition, Salcete taluka in South Goa accounts for 50.6 percent of emigrant households (Table 2).

Table 3: Women Left Behind District Wise

District	Percentage
North Goa	25.2
South Goa	74.8
<i>Source: Goa Migration Study 2008</i>	

Table 3 highlights the percentage of women left behind, district-wise in Goa. South Goa district has almost 75 percent of women left behind by their migrant husbands.

Table 4: Women Left Behind Taluka Wise

Taluka	Percentage
North Goa	25.2
Pernem	0.3
Bardez	12.7
Tiswadi	7.8
Bicholim	0.0
Satari	0.0
Ponda	4.2

South Goa	74.8
Mormugao	2.6
Salcete	67.6
Quepem	0.7
Sanguem	2.0
Canacona	2.0
Goa	100.0
<i>Source: Goa Migration Study 2008</i>	

Table 4 shows that the highest proportion of women left behind was in Salcete taluka, i.e., 67.6 percent, followed by 12.7 percent in Bardez and 7.8 percent in Tiswadi taluka. Therefore, Salcete taluka in South Goa was chosen as an appropriate locale to undertake this research study as reverse migration impacted the most in this region.

Brief Description of the Area of Study

Salcete, an ancient hamlet of the Portuguese, is in the South District in the state of Goa. The former composite Salcete taluka, Sashti, also included the now separate taluka of Mormugao. Some of the legends link the habitation of Goud Saraswat Brahmins in Salcete with the origin of this taluka. It is believed that 96 Brahmin families arrived in the Konkan region, of which 66 settled in Salcete. Hence, the name Salcete is derived from the Sanskrit word Sassat meaning the number 66, who settled at the mouth of Zuari River, giving the place its new name Sassat or Sashti, later renamed Salcete. The remaining are believed to have settled on the island on the northern side and gave the area its name Tassis or land of 30 villages, later renamed as Tiswadi.

Selection of the Villages

Within Salcete taluka, eight villages were chosen by the cluster sampling method, i.e., they represent a 'group' of elements rather than individual elements. This method is usually convenient for collecting data as a cluster is ideally a mini population and has all features of the population. The cluster sample method was most appropriate in the absence of a suitable sampling frame. Places for actual field study were finalized after conducting a preliminary field survey. The following eight villages from Salcete taluka, located in South Goa, were chosen for primary data collection: Benaulim, Betalbatim, Colva, Cuncolim, Majorda, Nuvem, Orlim, and Verna.

Selection of the Respondents

The purposive sampling method was used in selecting the units from the sample villages that could provide the requisite information and are willing to share information with the researcher. In this method, the deliberate selection of a specific population was made as these respondents were likely to provide data that suited the objectives of the study and met the criteria of research.

Further, Snowball Method was resorted to, that is, asking respondents to suggest references of other persons exhibiting characteristics connected to the study. The main target group was return migrants who were compelled to come to their homes abruptly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sample Size

Samples of around sixty respondents were initially targeted, but repeated attempts to contact them proved futile. So, forty-three respondents were taken as samples and subjected to in-depth personal interviews to elicit information, and wherever necessary, follow-up interviews were done.

While conducting interviews and interacting with respondents, ten households having a long migratory experience were deliberately chosen to build up case studies through the judgment sampling method, that is, those who exhibited distinct characteristics of the research and were openly sharing information.

Data Analysis

Below is an analysis of data gathered through the primary method.

Impact on the Return Migrants

- ❖ Return migrants were treated with disdain and stigmatised when they came to Goa. They were viewed as potential carriers of coronavirus. The physical isolation (Quarantine) ended after a stipulated period, but the social isolation continues. The psychological impact has led to low self-esteem and perennial worry.
- ❖ In addition, there is a loss of status in the homes and villages. At an earlier time, migration was a popular craze among young lads of the villages. Those who had migrated were perceived as 'stars.' Their success stories dominated every social gathering. Youngsters were told to follow the path chalked out by the overseas migrants at home.

- ❖ Return migrants do not have savings to fall back on, and retirement plans have turned shambolic. Goan migrants have constructed houses, and the remittances were mainly used for consumption and clearing of housing loans. Mounting debts and deferred payment of Equated Monthly Instalments have caused immense worry.
- ❖ Lack of alternate gainful employment in hometowns and villages has led to physical and mental health issues. People have started selling vegetables, fruits, milk, fish, and miscellaneous stuff on the roadside, leading to occupational degradation.
- ❖ Readmission into the country from where they departed poses a big challenge and uncertainty. Migrants expect to re-migrate often to their previous jobs but may find that others have taken over their jobs or have been laid off. Their work permits have expired and are no longer valid. Overseas jobs too have considerably decreased.

Impact on the Household

- ❖ Downward social mobility has occurred in many households due to the abrupt stoppage of remittances. Household expenses have become unmanageable, and inflation has added to the problem. The purchasing power has been badly affected. Lifestyle and consumption patterns have spiraled downwards.
- ❖ Many have resorted to selling household gadgets and appliances and pawning jewellery in exchange for disposable cash.
- ❖ Health care worries of family members are a persistent problem. The burden of online education has been an unanticipated expense, so the education of children is grossly affected, and the brunt of discontinuation of studies is experienced mostly by the girl child.
- ❖ The return migrant's families often depend on the dole by religious organizations and relatives.

Impact on Social Relationships

- ❖ The family budget has gone haywire as remittances are abruptly discontinued. This has impacted social relationships. Earlier the man was the sole bread earner. There is a role reversal for women as they must take up odd jobs to make ends meet. This has led to conflicts between the

couples as the role of an 'authority figure' and 'provider' is lost. This is causing tensions and breakdown of interpersonal relationships.

Impact on the Home Communities

- ❖ For many Goans, migration has been a part of the transition into adulthood, a sort of a 'rite of passage.' Now, due to the global economic crises job market has shrunk. There is complete uncertainty about the future.
- ❖ Once upon a time, the youth looked up to the migrants as 'heroes' and indulged in overt anticipatory socialization to replicate their success stories, especially in the UAE. The return migrants are no longer role models worth emulating as their failure stories predominate their pessimist narrative of the hardships endured during the lockdown and the difficult journey made homewards.
- ❖ For youngsters aspiring to go overseas, their dream 'to go abroad only' is toppled, and they are searching alternate career paths.

Impact on the State

Goa, which has been lurching under the dual shocks of loss of revenue from mining and fewer tourist footfalls, is likely to be the worst hit as the COVID-19 pandemic drags down the economy. This reverse migration has put a strain on the native state as it quells the remuneration flow from other countries. In Goa, the vacuum created by overseas migrants had been filled by local migrants. The return migrants don't fit in the present system. The state will be overwhelmed with the twin burden of unemployment and limited resources and infrastructure.

Conclusion

Reverse migration could have far-reaching implications for Goan overseas who may have to relocate to Goa permanently. Getting gainful employment may pose to be a big challenge. Also, coping with a fall in living standards due to less salary would be another pitfall. It would mean a return to a life from which many have severed their umbilical ties. Those who opt to travel to seek employment in other European countries will have to start afresh and probably face the problem of getting a foothold in alien lands. The complete repercussions of this 'reverse migration,' which are yet to be fully experienced, shall be borne not only by the migrants themselves but also by their families. Thus, reverse migration and its

socio-economic implications pose a huge challenge for the return migrants in particular; and the Goan society in general.

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