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### MIGRATION: STILL A SURVIVAL STRATEGY FOR RURAL INDIA

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*If well managed, migration can ensure a better living for the rural poor. In terms of the impacts of migration - it can be concluded that migration generally seems to have a positive impact on the livelihoods involved and migration has the potential to contribute to poverty reduction, with widespread and generally beneficial impacts.*

Migration is the barometer of changing socio-economic and political conditions at the national and international levels. It is also a sign of wide disparities in economic and social conditions between the origin and destination. Migration and development is a growing area of interest. There has been much debate on the negative impact of migration on development and vice versa. On the one hand, it is argued that underdevelopment is a cause of migration, and on the other hand, prosperity also leads to migration. The history of migration is the history of people's

struggle to survive and to prosper, to escape insecurity and poverty, and to move in response to opportunity. In developing countries like India, migration mostly takes place not due to the so called pull forces of the destination place as usually happens in case of developed countries, but because of poverty, unemployment, natural calamities and underdevelopment at the origin place. Migration in developing countries like India is still viewed as a survival strategy. In India internal mobility is critical to the livelihoods of many people, especially for people from rural areas.



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Rural to Urban migration is a response to diverse economic opportunities across space. Common household livelihood strategies in rural areas include agricultural intensification i.e. increasing farm yields and extensification i.e. increasing farm size; income diversification through engaging in a range of off-farm economic activities; and migration - either temporary or permanent, partial or with whole household. In rural areas, sluggish agricultural growth and limited development of the rural non-farm sector raises the incidence of rural poverty, unemployment and underemployment. Given the fact that most of the high productivity activities are located in the

urban areas, the rural-urban income differentials, particularly for the poor and unemployed, are enormous. Thus, many of them migrate to the urban areas in search of jobs.

According to NSS 64th round, during 2007-08, rural-to-rural migration was the most dominant migration stream, accounting for nearly 62 per cent of the total internal migrants, followed by rural-to-urban migration stream, which shared nearly 20 per cent of the total internal migrants. The share of urban-to-urban migration stream stood at 13 per cent, while urban-to-rural migration stream shared merely 6 per cent of total internal migrants.

#### Rural-Urban Migration : Some Emerging Trends

- The migration rate in the urban areas (35%) was far higher than the migration rate in the rural areas (26%).
- Magnitude of male migration rate was far lower than female migration rate. In both rural and urban areas, in rural areas nearly 48% of the females were migrants while the male migration rate was only 5%, and in the urban areas, the male migration rate was nearly 26% compared to female migration rate of 46%.
- Migration rate in rural areas was lowest among the scheduled tribe (ST), nearly 24%, and it was highest among those classified in the social group 'others', nearly 28%.
- In urban areas, migration rate was lowest among other backward class (OBC) nearly 33%, and it was highest among those classified in the social group 'others', nearly 38%.
- For rural male, migration rate was lowest (nearly 4%) among the 'not literates', and it was nearly 14% among those with educational level 'graduate and above'. For urban males also, it was lowest for among the 'not literates' (17%), and 38% for those with educational level 'graduate and above' level.
- Among the migrants in the rural areas, nearly 91% had migrated from the rural areas and 8% had migrated from the urban areas, whereas among the migrants in the urban areas, nearly 59% migrated from the rural areas and 40% from urban areas.
- Nearly 60% of urban male migrants and 59% of urban female migrants had migrated from rural areas.
- The most prominent reason for female migration in both the rural and urban areas was marriage: for 91% of rural female migrants and 61% of the urban female migrants the reason was marriage.
- The reason for migration for male migrant, was dominated by employment related reasons, in both rural and urban areas. Nearly 29% of rural male migrants and 56% of urban male migrants had migrated due to employment related reasons.
- A higher percentage of the persons were found to be engaged in economic activities after migration: for males the percentage of workers increased from 51% before migration to 63% after migration in rural areas and from 46% - 70% in urban areas, while for females it increased from 20% - 33% in rural areas and from 8% - 14% in urban areas.
- For rural males, self-employment had emerged as main recourse to employment after migration. The share of self-employment in total migrants increased from 16% before migration to 27% after migration, while the shares of regular employees and casual labours remained almost stable, in both before and after migration.

Source: Government of India. 2010. National Sample Survey 64th Round, Ministry of Statistics & Program Implementation, NSSO, New Delhi.

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Migration is a natural outcome of inequality in the distribution of resources. Studies and evidence reflect that it is positively related to modernization, industrialization and development. Migration is essential for development. It is a desirable phenomenon. But what is not desirable is the distressed migration, found in most of the developing countries resulting in overcrowding of cities and mushrooming of slums. In India the inter-state migration pattern reflects that there is an inequality in the regional development. Some states which have higher investment and resources for development experience high migration. At the same time, the backward states like U.P., Bihar, M.P. etc are experiencing heavy out-migration. Hence, there is a need for balanced regional development. More focus for development and investment should be given to those states which are lagging behind in development parameters. Increase growth both in agriculture is required, since most rural workers earn their living from the land; focus should be given more on rural non-farm economy. Beside that invest in rural education, vocational training, health and early nutrition will not only improves people's job prospects, but also reduces unacceptable disparities between rural and urban people. Much can be done to remedy these disparities if public resources are allocated accordingly and on a priority basis.

If well managed, migration can ensure a better living for the rural poor. In terms of the impacts of migration - it can be concluded that migration generally seems to have a positive impact on the households involved and; migration has the potential to contribute to poverty reduction, with widespread and generally beneficial impacts. Migration between urban and rural areas has fundamentally changed interactions between rural and urban settlements and the way in which we perceive the countryside. Many rural-urban migrants retain strong links with their home villages to the benefit of household members in both locations (for example, through remittances, food supplies, childcare, work at harvest time etc.). Long distance migration, usually to cities,

sometimes international, contributes an increasing share of household income. It helps individuals and their families to increase their income, learn new skills, improve their social status, build up assets and improve their quality of life. The UNFPA points out that migration can contribute to the empowerment of women by providing women migrants and women whose husbands have migrated with income and greater status, autonomy and self-esteem. It is important therefore, that development policy and planning to reduce poverty takes account of the complexity of migration, and the different ways in which poor men, women and children may benefit from, or lose out as a result of, migration. Migration can influence social and political development, with internal labor mobility being seen as essential to economic growth. But at the same time, it acknowledges that international migration must be managed, internal mobility must be planned for, and the rights of all migrants need to be addressed.

Initiatives can be taken to develop managed migration policies that aim to reduce the risks and enhance the benefits of internal migration for the poor. This could include improving national-level data on migration, increasing research capacity, developing dialogue on migration policy between governments and civil society organisations (NGOs, trade unions, research institutes) including the migrants themselves, improving access to information, or developing innovative initiatives to support internal migrants in places of origin and destination. There is a need for further research which looks at both international and internal migration and which takes a much broader perspective on policy, looking at issues such as land reform and resource rights, language and ethnicity, economic development and labor markets, and so on. It is also one of the felt-need to consider the ways in which developmental and industrial policies are implemented and the impact of these policies on household livelihood strategies.

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