Bundelkhand Rural Poverty Alleviation Initiative (BRPAI) - ABSSS

Study of SC/ST households doing regular/seasonal migration
Block-Tikamgarh,District-Tikamgarh (MP)
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Seasonal labour migration: a sign of distress or growth?

A sample study of SC/ST households doing regular seasonal migration from Tikamgarh block, Tikamgarh district, MP, conducted under "Bundelkhand Rural Poverty Alleviation Model" project implemented by Akhil Bhartiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan (ABSSS), Chitrakoot/Tikamgarh, with support from Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT), Mumbai

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ABSTRACT

Seasonal migration done by rural households (HHs) in India is seen by some as a sign of agrarian distress and slow growth in the rural economy. The contra-view is that it is part of the great Indian growth story: through seasonal migration, poor rural HHs gets an opportunity to increase their incomes and living standards. To find out which of these views is valid, a small but intensive study was conducted in 18 villages of Tikamgarh block of Tikamgarh district of MP. The study covered 46 randomly selected SC/ST HHs who have at least one member who had migrated in at least three of the five previous years (2007-8 to 2011-12). Findings establish that at least for SC/ST HHs in the 18 villages, and similar HHs in similar areas, migration is largely a coping mechanism, though it also meets the purpose of capital accumulation to some extent.

Introduction

It is well known that a large number of people from many Indian villages regularly do seasonal or "circular" migration: almost every year, they move out of their villages, to other agriculture regions, or to cities and industrial centres, for a period ranging from a few weeks to several months, for the purpose of earning money through wage labour.

Comprehensive information on this phenomenon is hard to get, as it does not allow easy recording of data on a large scale. The Census of India does record the number of migrants, but counting is done only on the basis of "place of last residence": no differentiation is made been seasonal labour migration and other kinds of migration. The 55th Round of NSS (1999-2000) attempted to capture seasonal/circular migration by asking non-migrants whether they had stayed away from the usual place of residence for more than 60 days during the last 365 days, for purpose of employment. Those who responded positively were considered as persons "temporarily staying away for employment", or seasonal migrants. However, data that emerged from this exercise is also of limited use, as the survey left out people who had migrated for work for less than 60 days. Further, the sample was small and the number of seasonal migrants reported is considered a gross under-estimation by scholars like Priya Deshingkar and John Farrington[1]: their view is that official surveys report only *one-tenth* of seasonal migrants.

One good source of macro-level data on seasonal migration is a large-scale survey done in 2005-06 jointly by National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER), New Delhi and University of Maryland, USA, for preparing a detailed analysis on human development in India[2]. The survey showed that in around 1400 villages of 258 districts located in the 19 major states of India, nearly 60% villages reported seasonal migration. Proportion of HHs reporting migration ranged from less than 10% HHs in surveyed villages of Punjab to 90% HHs in Bihar villages. In UP and MP villages, close to 75% HHs reported seasonal migration[3].

However, this data is also of limited use. As the survey shows, there is not only inter-regional but even inter-district variation in incidence of migration, and the survey does not help us understand why this happens: the data does not tell us the purpose or driving force of migration.

According to one school of thought, expressed often in the NGO sector, seasonal migration from rural areas is due to poverty and distress conditions like poor agriculture crop. On the other hand, official data suggests that incidence of migration from rural areas is greater among relatively well-to-do HHs than among poorest HHs. For instance,

[1] *Circular Migration and Multilocational Livelihood Strategies in Rural India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2009

[2] SB Desai, A Dubey, et al, *Human Development in India: Challenges for a Society in Transition*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2010

[3] Analysis done by Amita Shah in "Migration as an Exit Route: How Does It Work for the Chronic Poor" , draft paper (undated), Chronic Poverty Research Centre, London.

analysis of the 1999-2000 round of NSS data shows that the bottom 40% of the population (in economic terms) account for only 29% of the total seasonal migrants, and migration rates for SCs and STs are around 20.4% whereas the rate for the remaining segment of the population is about 25%. The explanation put forward is that migration to urban areas presupposes some level of skill/education that has market value in cities, awareness about urban labour opportunities and risk-taking capacity—all of which are more likely to be present among relatively well-to-do HHs than poorest HHs, and particularly SC/ST HHs.

Neither of these contrasting views captures the complexities of seasonal migration. There is considerable evidence to show that seasonal migration can serve one or more of many purposes[4]:

- It can help HHs cope not only with external distress conditions such as failure of rainfall, but also domestic distress factors such as expenses to be incurred on account of illness, death, marriage, etc.
- It can help HHs accumulate capital for making investments to increase agriculture production, build reserves to deal with future needs or shocks, or to start a new business.
- It can help HHs improve their living conditions in their permanent place of habitation.

In other words, seasonal migration can have positive impacts even for poor HHs.

However, as noted by development researchers DC Sah and A Shah[5], there can be an "element of distress" even among those who apparently migrate to increase their living standards. Moreover, the positive effects of migration can vary according to HHs' economic and social position: income from migration may help an HH in a relatively good socio-economic position to improve its living standards in the village and move up the status ladder, or the income may help meet the capital requirements for starting a new business, but for a poor SC/ST HH with low literacy, migration may only provide a regular source of income[6].

Keeping these complexities in mind, this study attempts to understand the "push" and "pull" factors for seasonal migration, and the benefits gained thereby, among SC/ST HHs who migrate regularly.

This study was conducted under a "Bundelkhand Rural Poverty Alleviation Model" (BRPAM) NGO-led project[7], implemented in 40 villages of Tikamgarh block of Tikamgarh district, MP. Of the 40 villages, 20 are selected for intensive intervention.

[4] Priya Deshingkar and Daniel Start (2003), "Seasonal Migration for Livelihoods in India: Coping, Accumulation and Exclusion", Working Paper 220, Overseas Development Institute, London.
[5] "Migration in Remote Tribal Areas: Evidence from South Western Madhya Pradesh", *Indian Journal of Agriculture Economics*, 2005, Vol. 60, No.2, pp. 184-204, quoted in Amita Shah, op cit.
[6] Amita Shah, op cit.
[7] The project is implemented by Akhil Bhartiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan (ABSSS), a reputed NGO working in Bundelkhand, with support from Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT), Mumbai.

The specific objectives of the study were:

- To understand driving forces of seasonal migration done regularly by SC/ST households (HHs)
- To ascertain monetary and other benefits to the HHs as a result of seasonal migration, and hardships and problems they face as a result of migration.
- On basis of above, identify issues and topics for awareness and capacity-building programmes so as to optimize benefits and minimize losses from migration.

Key Terms: Limits of Study

The study is limited to SC/ST HHs regularly doing seasonal ("circular") migration, which was understood as one or more members of HHs moving out of their village, to live in another place for a period ranging from a few weeks to several months, for the purpose of doing income-generating work. "Regular" seasonal migration was understood as one or more members of HHs doing seasonal migration for at least three of the five financial years preceding the study (2007-08 to 2011-12).

As such, the study does not cover:

- Daily migration, which involves persons going out of their home/village for work and returning to their home/village the same day.
- Long-term migration, which involves persons or HHs moving out of their village permanently or for period of several years, with their sole or primary income coming from work done in the place of migration.
- Migration for reasons/purposes other than work, such as higher studies, or due to marriage, personal reasons, etc.
- Seasonal migration done occasionally in the preceding five years—that is for less than three of the five preceding years.
- Large-scale seasonal migration done in drought years[8].

The above limits were chosen to specifically **gain understanding of seasonal migration done regularly by SC/ST HHs as a livelihood option**.

Methodology

The study was conducted through focused group discussions (FGDs), intensive interviews and surveys.

Initially, a baseline survey was conducted through FGDs, with the help of a detailed questionnaire, in all 20 villages in 2011-12. Among other things, the survey obtained gross information about incidence of seasonal migration in each village. Data was validated, corrected and then analysed in March 2012.

In May-June 2012, an in-depth sample survey of 100 HHs was conducted. Apart from demographics, landholding, livestock holding, sources of income, annual HH expenditure

[8] HHs reported that when drought persists for more than 1-2 years, almost entire villages are emptied out: the only people left behind are large landlords, people with salaried jobs, and the aged and the very young.

for different purposes, and work done by women, the survey covered seasonal migration as a source of income.

In October 2012, FGDs were conducted in some Project villages to get information about general patterns of migration among SC/ST HHs. Subsequently, in December 2012 and January 2013, an in-depth study of 46 SC/ST HHs regularly doing seasonal migration was done with the help of a detailed questionnaire, to get details of migration history, push and pull factors, migration destinations, income and other benefits gained, and perception of losses due to migration. The 46 HHs were randomly selected from SC/ST HHs (31 SC and 15 ST) in 10 villages/hamlets, which had at least one person of the HH who is doing regular seasonal migration. Respondents were intensively interviewed to get clear data on different questions. Final data analysis and report preparation was done in March 2013.

All the surveys were conducted by the Project's village-level workers after receiving orientation, and after pilot testing of questionnaires. All data collected from different sources was analysed and results of the analysis were discussed internally. As necessary, data was re-collected and re-analysed.

Thus, this report incorporates information obtained from (i) the baseline survey (ii) the in-depth survey of 100 HHs (iii) the in-depth survey of 46 regularly migrating SC/ST HHs (iv) group discussions and interviews with key informants conducted specifically for the purpose of this study, and (v) some desk research on seasonal migration from rural India.

Project area

The 20 villages selected for intensive intervention under the Project are located in Tikamgarh block of Tikamgarh district, MP, at a distance of 20 to 40 km from Tikamgarh town, which is the headquarters of the district.

Tikamgarh district lies in the Bundelkhand plateau between Jamuni, a tributary of Betwa, and Dhasan rivers, in the northern part of MP. The northern part of Tikamgarh district is at height of about 200m above the mean sea level (amsl), while the southern part is at a height of around 300amsl. Thus, the district's topography is marked by a gentle slope from south towards north. Soil tests conducted in the Project villages show that soil has normal pH and EC, low to medium organic-carbon content, low phosphorous content and low to medium potash content.

The climate of the area is characterized by a hot summer and general dryness except during the southwest monsoon season. The normal maximum temperature during the month of May is 41.8° C and minimum during the month of January is 7.0°C.
The normal annual rainfall received is 1057.1 mm. However, **in eight out of nine years before the start of the Project (2002 to 2010), rainfall was below normal**, and in one year (2007), it was 50% below normal.

Tikamgarh is a predominantly rural district with urban population restricted to 30% of total population. Data on land use in Tikamgarh block reported in the 2006-07 District Statistical Handbook shows that nearly 60% of the land is cultivated, and of this, over 50% is under double cropping. Only 5% of the land is under different categories of forestland.

A total of 2565 households (HHs) live in the 20 villages/hamlets covered intensively by the Project. Of these, **30% belong to SC groups, 14% belong to ST groups and 56% belong to OBC groups**. The main SC groups are: Ahirwar, Vanshkar, Chadar and Khangar. The main ST groups are Saur and Gond. The main OBC groups are: Lodhi, Yadav, Kushwaha, Vishwakarma, Rai, Sahu, Raikwar, Napit and Patel. The general population (less than 1% of total) consists of a few Thakur, Jain and Brahmin families.

Half the villages have a significant ST population, and in 3 villages (Sapon, Sauryana, Basiyan Khera) and Haidarpur adivasi basti, the ST population is predominant.

Barring 6% of the total HHs in the 20 villages, all HHs own some agricultural land. However, 44% of the total HHs own less than 2.5 acres (1 ha) and another 38% own between 2.5 to 5 acres (1 to 2 ha). Thus **80% of the population comprises marginal and small farmers**.

The in-depth survey of 100 HHs[9] showed **a clear relation between social category and land owned**, as **average land owned by OBC HHs is 3.9 acres, while it is 2.8 acres for SC and ST HHs** (however, SC HHs have on average encroached on 2.7 acres of forestland, which had not been "regularized", at the time of the survey).

Groundwater tapped through dug wells is the main source of irrigation in the entire Tikamgarh district, and the situation is the same in the 20 Project villages. Of the total 6823 acres of cultivable land, around 60% (4037 acres) is irrigated, and of this, around 67% is irrigated by privately-owned dug wells. Around 15% of the irrigated land is irrigated by tubewells, and 13% of the irrigated land is irrigated by lifting water from nallas or rivers.

The in-depth study of 100 HHs revealed that wheat, soyabean and urad are the main crops (in that order), with wheat providing the maximum gross income[10] (average around Rs. 18,000 per HH), followed by soyabean (Rs. 10,600 per HH). Though nearly half the

[9] The in-depth study was limited to "target" HHs, as identified by Project's field staff, in consultation with community members. Generally speaking, "wealthy" HHs with considerable property and other assets were excluded. Due to this criterion of selection, the distribution of HHs by social group in the sample was considerably different from the overall distribution of HHs according to these parameters in the Project area. The study sample comprised 42 SC HHs, 24 ST HHs, 29 OBC HHs and 5 general-category HHs.

[10] As HHs use part or full of their agriculture production for domestic use, it is strictly speaking not correct to consider this as "income" from agriculture. However, the produce has net cash value, which is indirectly related to HH income (if HHs did not get the produce, they would have had to pay cash to buy it, for domestic use). Hence "income" from agriculture was estimated as net value of produce, as estimated by HHs, excluding *paid-out* expenditure towards inputs, hire of equipment, labour, etc. Amounts not paid out, such as rental value of land and depreciation on agriculture equipment were not considered. Likewise, no cash value was attached to use of HH labour.

HHs grow gram, usually with mustard, it is not a major source of income. A few HHs who have access to water in summer earn an average of Rs. 7500 gross from cultivation of vegetables. Otherwise, income from vegetables is marginal.

The in-depth study of 100 HHs revealed that almost all HHs do agriculture but it clearly does not meet needs, as over 80% of HHs also do wage labour. Around half the HHs are engaged in collection and sale of forest produce or fruits (primarily ber, which is found in the wild in large volume in the project area). Comparatively, only a fourth of HHs are engaged in livestock rearing as a livelihood activity, though the majority of HHs own some livestock.

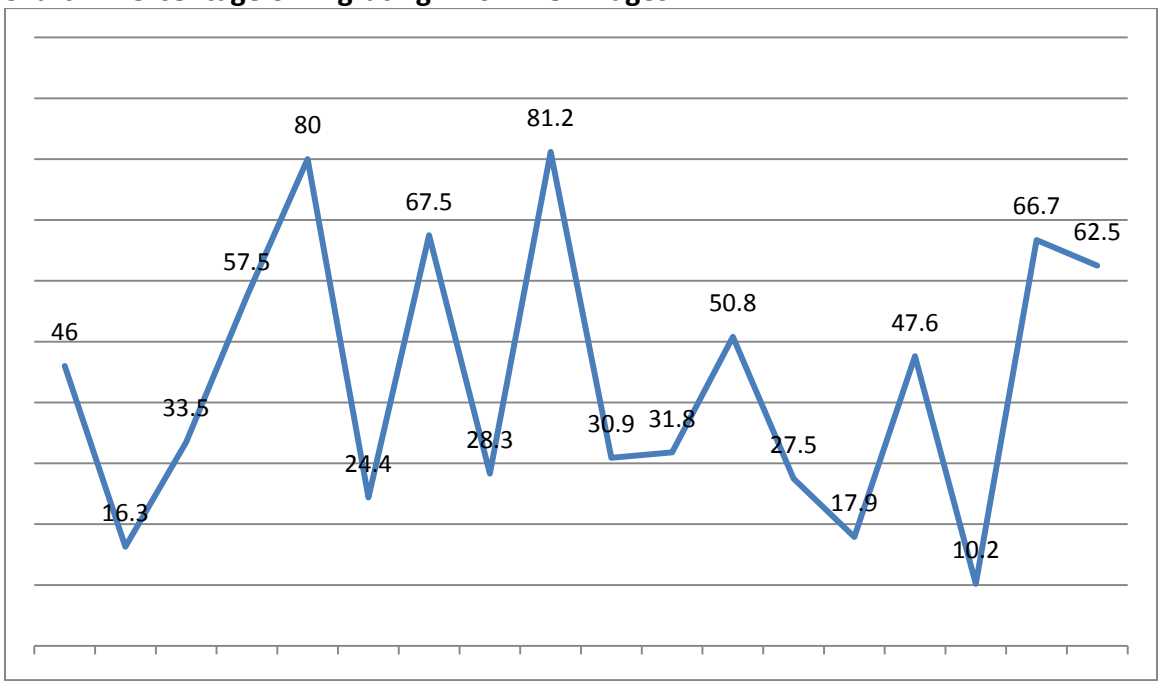
The Project villages are well-connected by road. Electricity is available in almost all villages, but supply is erratic. Weekly markets near villages are the main outlets for sale and purchase of produce.

Incidence of migration in Project villages

Through the baseline study, grossly reliable data on the number of migrating HHs could be obtained from 18 villages, with a total population of 2465 HHs. Of these, 1031 HHs, or 42% of the total, were reported to have at least one member who had done seasonal migration in recent years. There was however much variation in incidence of migration across the villages, as shown in Chart 1, which categorises villages according to percentage of migrating HHs.

It was seen that the proportion of migrating HHs across villages varied from a minimum of 10% HHs in a village, to a maximum of 81% HHs.

Chart 1: Percentage of migrating HHs in 18 villages



Through a detailed study[11] of three villages in neighbouring Chhatarpur district, Amita Shah identified possible determinants of such variation. Like the Project villages, the three Chhatarpur villages, viz., Singrawan Kalan, Madhaupur and Manpura, are in the same geographical cluster, yet there was considerable variation in percentage of migrating HHs: it ranged from 23.4% in Singrawan Kalan to 30.2% in Manpur and 69.8% in Madhopur. Shah attributed this to three factors:

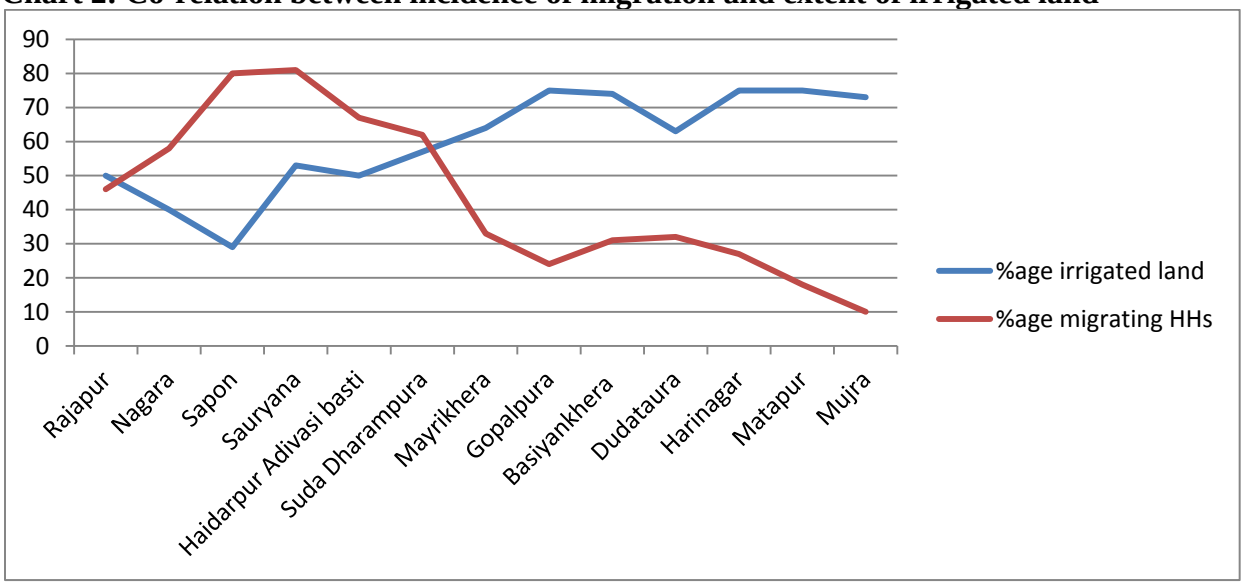
- *Irrigation coverage*: Whereas Singrawan Kalan had highest area under irrigation per HH, Madhaupur had lowest area under this parameter.
- *Land-holding pattern*: Madhaupur had highest percentage of landless HHs (35.3%), roughly double the proportion in the other two villages.
- *Incidence of poverty*: Madhaupur had also higher percentage of BPL HHs (31.8%) than the other two villages.

An attempt was made to see whether the above three determinants apply in the same way in the Project villages. However, incidence of poverty could not be considered because enumeration of BPL HHs in Project villages is said to be highly suspect—as it is in many other parts of the country. Further, landlessness could not be considered as a determinant because, as stated earlier, the proportion of landless HHs in Project villages is low. Even among villages with relatively high percentage of landless HHs, no co-relation was found between this factor and incidence of seasonal migration: in three of the six villages with relatively high percentage of landless HHs (12-17%), incidence of migration was above the average, but in the other three villages, it was lower than the average. Similarly, no co-relation could be found between proportion of HHs with marginal land-holdings and incidence of migration: in four of the seven villages with above-average percentage of HHs with marginal holdings, incidence of migration was above average, but in the other three villages it was lower. Likewise, in four of the seven villages with above-average percentage of HHs with small holdings, incidence of migration was above average, but in the other three villages it was lower.

However, **a fairly strong co-relation was found between percentage of irrigated land in a village and incidence of migration**. "Irrigated land" was understood as land that receives water for crops at least once in a cropping season, from sources such as wells, ponds, river/nallas and checkdams. Accordingly, in the 18 villages a total of 3857 acres of 6509 acres of cultivable land, or 59% of cultivable land, was found to be "irrigated". There was much variation in percentage of irrigated land across the villages, and it was found that in seven out of eight villages with lower-than-average percentage of irrigated land, incidence of migration was higher than average. Similarly, a generally negative co-relation was found between high percentage of irrigated land and low incidence of migration**.** In 13 of the 18 villages, the co-relation between irrigation and migration was clear, as depicted in Chart 2.

[11] ibid

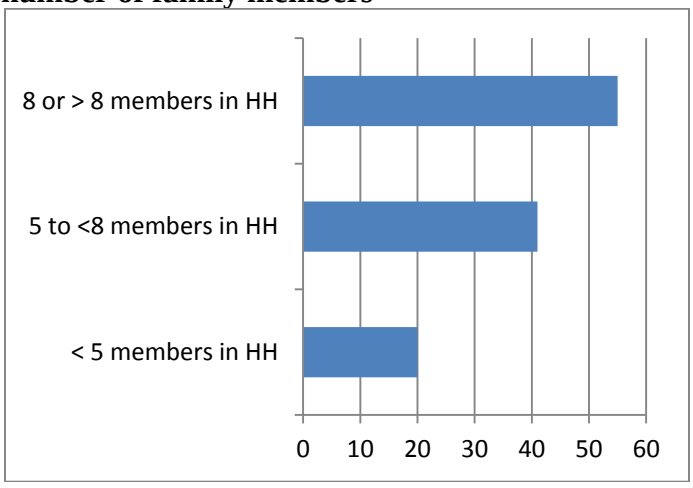
Chart 2: Co-relation between incidence of migration and extent of irrigated land



Another determinant was found partially: **the three villages with highest percentage of migrating HHs also had highest percentage of ST HHs** (80% or above). However, in five of six villages with significant ST percentage (>10%), incidence of migration was found to be lower than average.

No co-relation was found between high proportion of SC HHs and incidence of migration in villages.

Chart 3: Percentage of migrating HHs among all HHs categorised according to number of family members



The baseline study obtained migration-related data on gross basis, through FGDs, without door-to-door enumeration of HHs, and no differentiation was done between regular and occasional migration. More specific data was obtained from the in-depth study of sample 100 HHs, limited to target-group HHs, as identified by Project staff in consultation with community members. It was found that 36 HHs in the sample have at least one family

member who does seasonal migration as a regular livelihood option. Due to size of the sample, it was not feasible to analyse these 36 HHs on the basis of parameters like social group and land holding. However, the HHs could be reasonably categorized on the basis of number of HH members, and the findings, shown in Chart 3, are revealing.

It can be seen that incidence of migration among large HHs is clearly more than in small HHs. While one reason is obvious—large HHs have more mouths to feed—another explanation was also got through FGDs: large HHs have more members to "spare" for migration than small HHs. It was generally agreed that HHs with less than 2-3 members are least likely to have migrating members, irrespective of other factors like size of land holding, availability of irrigation or social group.

To conclude this part of the discussion, seasonal migration in the Project area is a complex phenomenon that cannot be co-related directly to land holding, or incidence of poverty (for which reliable data is not available). There is a fair co-relation between extent or irrigated land and incidence of migration. There is some co-relation between high ST population and high migration, but the link is limited to villages with ST population of 80% or above. There is a definite link between number of members in an HH and migration.

It must be stressed that even to the extent that co-relations were found, they do not constitute absolute determinants. There are several HHs with many members and/or without irrigation facilities and/or from SC category who do not have migrating members. It appears that while these factors play some part in "pushing" an HH to migration, other factors also come into play. In FGDs, these other factors were broadly identified as "confidence" for living in an urban area, trend set by HH members earlier, and plain willingness to leave one's village and home. In other words, there are also psychological factors at play. It also appears that trend-setters in the village play a major role: if a village has "notable" individuals who have been migrating for years, the proportion of HHs who will be induced to migrate will be more than in villages that do not have such trend-setters.

Within the framework of complexities discussed above, let us turn to a sample of SC/ST HHs in the Project area who are regularly doing seasonal migration for livelihood purposes.

Regularly migrating SC/ST HHs

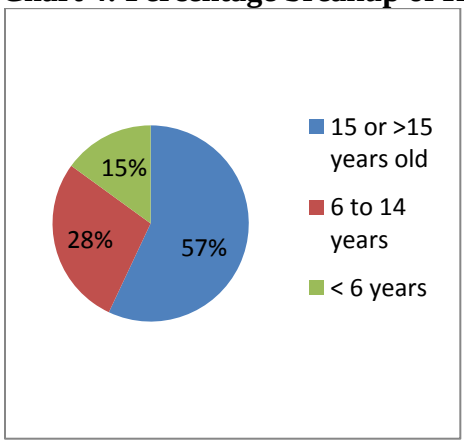
An in-depth study of 46 migrating SC/ST HHs was done with the help of a detailed questionnaire in Hindi, to understand the (i) age, gender and education profile of migrating members (ii) HHs' migration history (iii) "push" factors for migration (iv) destination preferences (v) type of work done at migration destination (vi) income and other benefits (vii) how money earned from migration is spent (viii) perception of losses due to migration, and (ix) "pull" factors that would stop them from migrating.

A total of 31 SC HHs and 15 STs were randomly selected from 10 villages, using only one criterion: at least one member of the HH should be regularly doing seasonal

migration. Of the 46 HHs so selected, three HHs had members regularly migrating for three of the previous five years, two HHs had members doing so for four years, and all the rest had members migrating in all five years.

The total 46 HHs had 316 members in all, giving an average of 6.9 members per HH. That is, the HHs had sufficient number of adults who could be "spared" for migration. The proportion of HH members by age group is shown in Chart 4.

Chart 4: Percentage breakup of HH members by age group

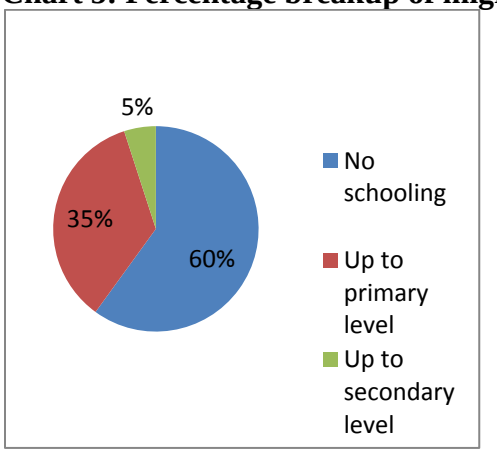


All except two HHs had land, with average size of holding being 1.9 acres. That is, the sample predominantly comprised small and marginal land-holders. Only two HHs belonged to category of semi-medium land-holders, with five or more than five acres of land.

Details obtained about migrating members showed that a total of 157 members, **or half the number of members in HHs, had migrated at least once**, with an obvious preponderance of members above the age of 15 years (86%) and a higher proportion of males (58%). While children below the age of six years constituted an insignificant proportion of migrating members, children in the age group of 6-15 years formed 13% of the migrating members. It can be thus surmised that very young children left under the care of the aged, about half the children above the age of six years, and some adult females are left behind in the village by regularly migrating SC/ST HHs.

The migrating members are severely disadvantaged in terms of education level, as seen in Chart 5, which shows that 95% of the migrants have not studied beyond primary-school level.

Chart 5: Percentage breakup of migrating members by education level

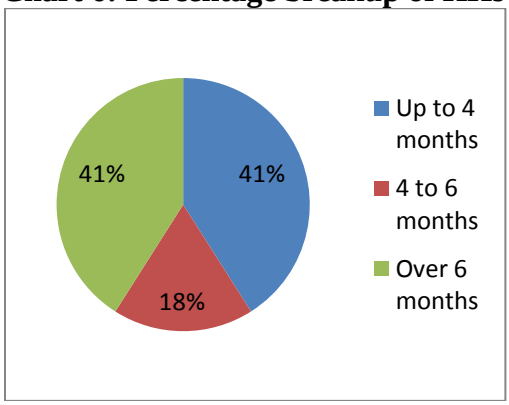


Around 65% of the HHs have a bank account and **only 15% have life insurance. None of the HHs had any health insurance coverage**.

Duration of migration

Chart 6 shows percentage breakup of migrating HHs by duration of migration. As can be seen, around 60% of HHs migrate for up to 6 months.

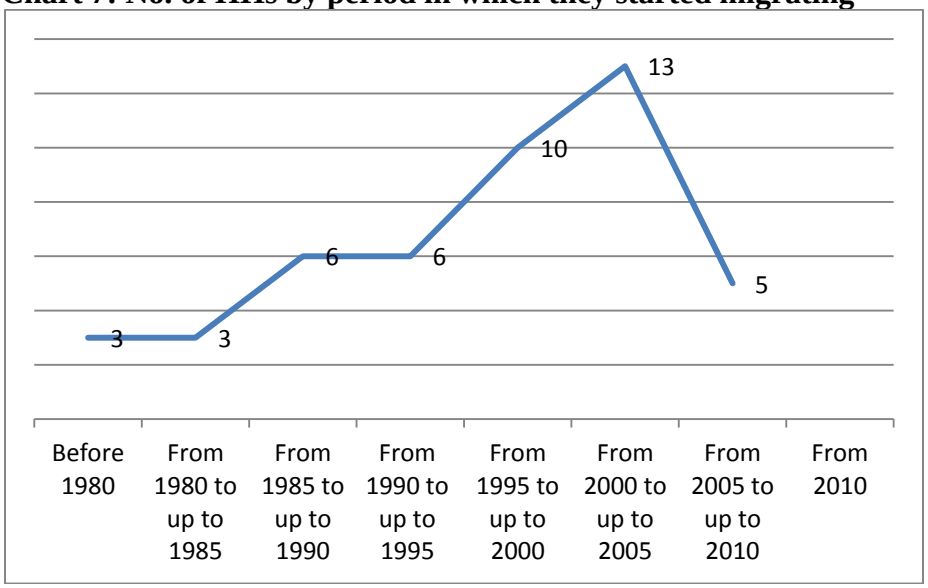
Chart 6: Percentage breakup of HHs by duration of migration



Period in which migration started

HHs' were asked to specify the year in which at least one member started migrating, to understand the trend across years. The findings, categorized under 5-year periods, are shown in Chart 7.

Chart 7: No. of HHs by period in which they started migrating



It can be clearly seen that:

- **Trend of migration was low in the 1980s** with less than a quarter of the HHs starting to migrate.
- **Rate of HHs starting to migrate increased subsequently**, peaking in 1995-2005, when half the HHs started migrating. Significantly, this was also the period of marked agrarian distress. This was also the period of a boom in the Indian economy, with many wage-labour opportunities opening up in urban areas, particularly in the construction sector.
- **Most of the HHs have a history of starting to migrate over 10 years back**, with only 5 of 46 HHs starting to migrate after 2005.

However, it was also seen that **migration is not necessarily done every year.** In only 17 of 46 HHs (37%) is there at least one member who has been migrating regularly for over 10 years. It is however notable that in a little over half the HHs, there is at least one member who has been migrating regularly for over eight years.

The findings suggest that the reasons, or "push" factors for migration, are complex. This was confirmed through detailed interviews with HH respondents.

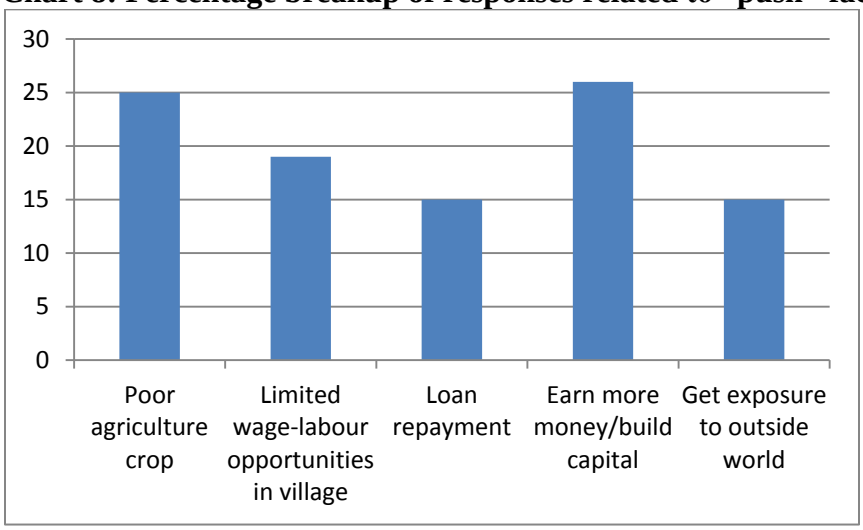
"Push" factors for migration

Interviews with respondents suggested that there were many "push" factors for migration, mainly: (i) poor agriculture crop (ii) limited wage-labour opportunities in village (iii) need to repay a loan (iv) desire to earn more money (v) desire to get exposure to world outside village/region. It was also seen that, over the years, these factors do not operate in a constant manner (in any case, crop failure is not a constant). For example, for some HHs, the reason to migrate was "always" poor agriculture crop, whereas for others the reason to migrate was "sometimes" a poor agriculture crop. Hence, "always" and "sometimes" reasons for migration were obtained from HHs and scores of 3 and 1 were

given for “always” and “sometimes” reasons respectively. The percentage-wise breakup of aggregate scores so obtained is shown in Chart 8.

It can be seen that there is no one dominating “push” factor for seasonal migration across HHs. The desire to earn more money in cities, closely followed by poor agriculture crop, are the two major reasons for migration. Limited wage opportunities in the village, followed by need to repay a loan and desire to get exposure to outside world are the other, relatively less salient reasons. It is notable however that distress factors (viz, poor agriculture crop, limited wage-labour opportunities and loan burden) taken together are somewhat more important “push” factors for migration than desire to build HH capital or get exposure to the outside world—the former account for nearly 60% of responses. However, **the importance of different distress factors vary according to HH**. For example, 35% of HHs reported that poor agriculture crop is “never” a reason for migration. Likewise, nearly 40% of HHs reported that desire to build capital was “never” a reason to migrate, and 60% HHs said desire to see the world outside was “never” a reason to migrate.

Chart 8: Percentage breakup of responses related to “push" factors for migration

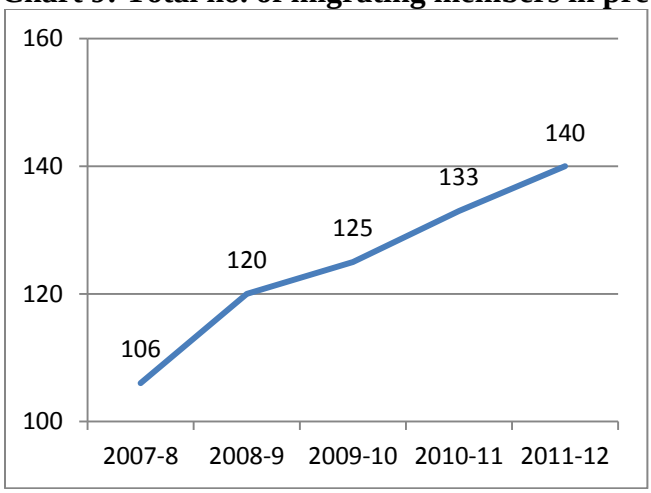


Considering these conclusions, in relation to conclusions drawn earlier on incidence of migration across HHs, in terms of availability of irrigation facilities and number of HH members, it can be conjectured that while distress conditions can push more HHs to migrate, it is not the only reason for migration. As the economy grows, HHs see opportunities for earning higher income in urban areas, and once they start to migrate, their comfort-level with the outside world increases, so that a regular pattern of migration sets in.

The above conjecture is supported by data on total number of migrating members of surveyed HHs in the previous five years, shown in Chart 9. It can be seen that while there are a total of 180 persons above the age of 15 years in the 46 HHs, the total number of migrating members has always been lower than 180. At the same time, **there is a clear increase in the number of migrating members over the years, which indicates**

growing desire as well as comfort-level in relation to migration among HHs. It is notable that highest number of migrating members was in 2011-12, which was *not* a bad year for agriculture in the Project area.

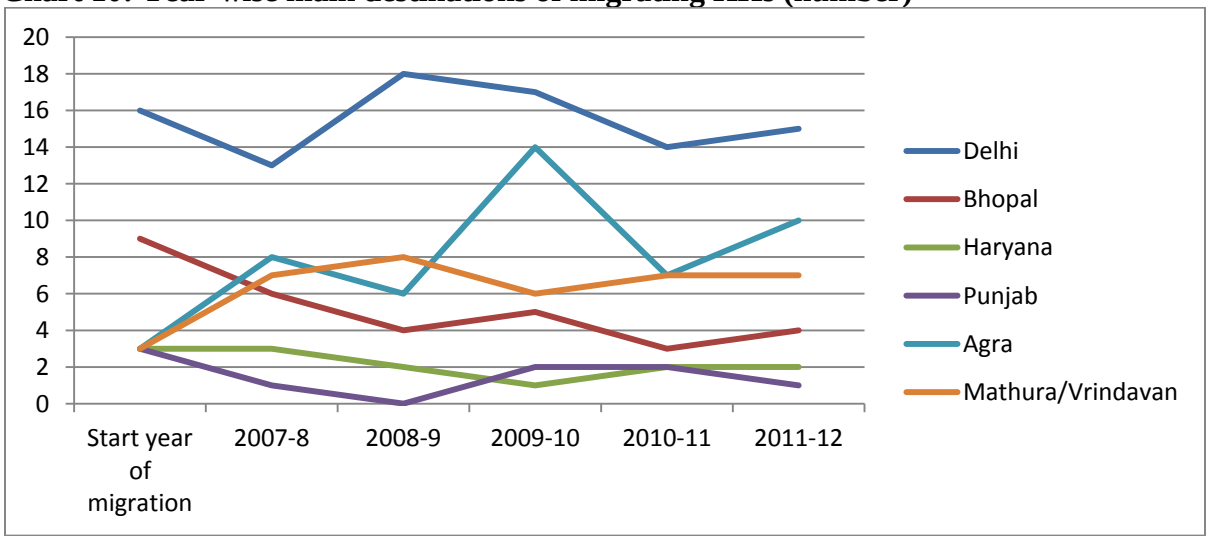
Chart 9: Total no. of migrating members in previous 5 years



Destination of migration

Chart 10 shows the main destination places of HHs for migration, under two time periods: (i) when HH started to migrate, and (ii) in previous five years. (Destinations have been named as told by HHs. For example, "Punjab" was named by respondents to identify different locations in the state. Destinations to which more than one HH did not go across the years have been excluded from the listing in the chart).

Chart 10: Year-wise main destinations of migrating HHs (number)



It can be seen that **from the time HHs started to migrate, Delhi has been the top destination**, with Agra being another population destination. The Delhi-Agra-Mathura/Vrindavan cluster is destination of 50-80% HHs across the years.

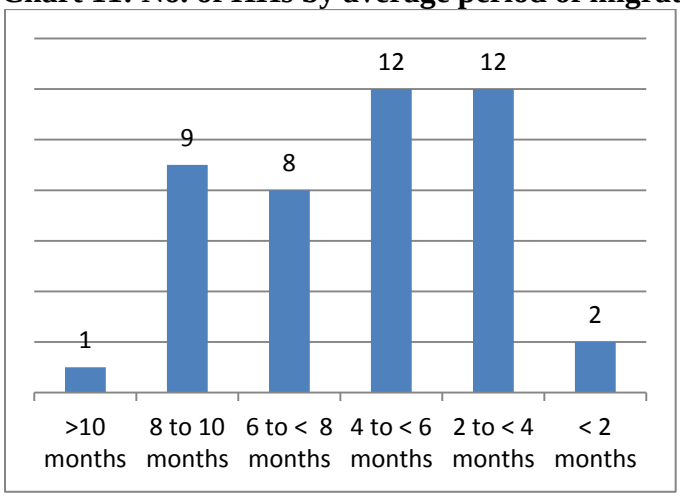
Apart the major destinations listed in Chart 10, destinations named by HHs included Gwalior, Jaipur, Moradabad, Datia, Gonda, Bhind, Sagar and Lalitpur. However, **choice of destination is largely not determined by HHs, as in nearly 75% of cases, the HH gets work through labour contractors,** who fix the place of work for them. The contractors contact regularly migrating HHs directly by cell phone, or through middlemen, including some migrants from the village itself.

From the above, one can surmise that **apart from "push" factors, "pull" factors also determine migration**. Particularly in the recent past, the large-scale industrial investments and construction witnessed in the Delhi-Agra-Mathura circuit have been major "pull" factors.

However, as the "pull" operates through informal channels, the benefit of long-term employment is not enjoyed by migrants. The labour contractors generally get specific work contracts, for which they source labour for relatively short periods. The fact that, as we shall see later, no housing benefits are given to the migrants, also prevents them from staying on in the destination of migration for a long time, as is evident from data in Chart 11, which shows distribution of HHs by average period of migration in the previous five years (2007-08 to 2011-12).

It can be seen that around half the HHs have stayed in the destination of migration for 2 to 6 months in a year and less than one-fourth have stayed for over 8 months.

Chart 11: No. of HHs by average period of migration per year, in previous 5 years



Type of work done at place of migration

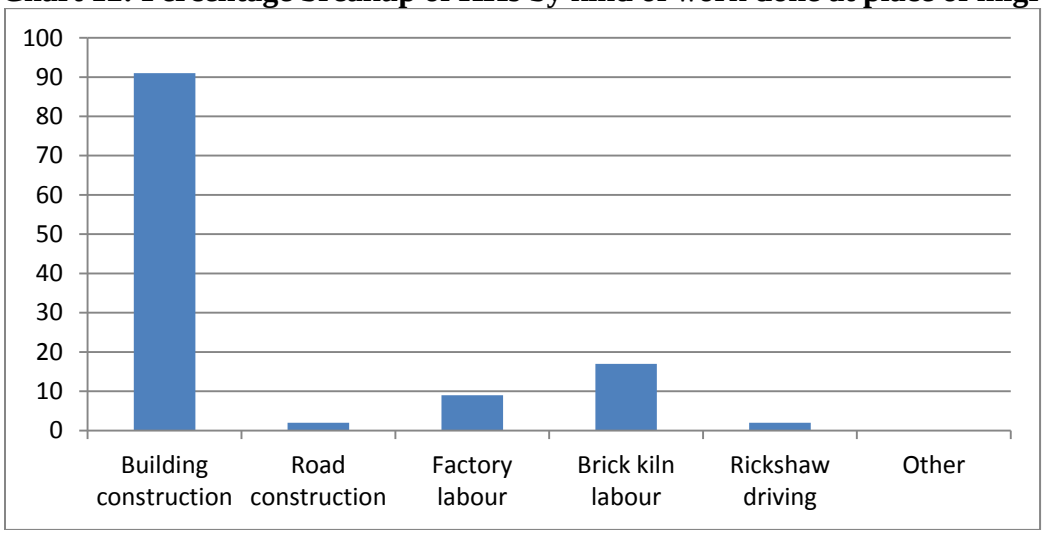
The "pull" factor for migration, discussed above, is confirmed by data on the kind of work done by migrating HHs at the destination of migration.

Chart 12 shows percentage breakup of HHs doing different kinds of work. (As more than one member of HHs migrates, and different members may do different kinds of work, the total of the percentages in the chart exceeds 100).

The data shows that the overwhelming number of HHs are engaged in the building construction industry directly, or indirectly, through brick kilns. Less than 10% HHs are employed as factory labour.

This establishes the "pull" exerted by the demand for manual labour in the construction industry; it is also a reflection of the low education level of HHs, which prevents them from taking up other kinds of work.

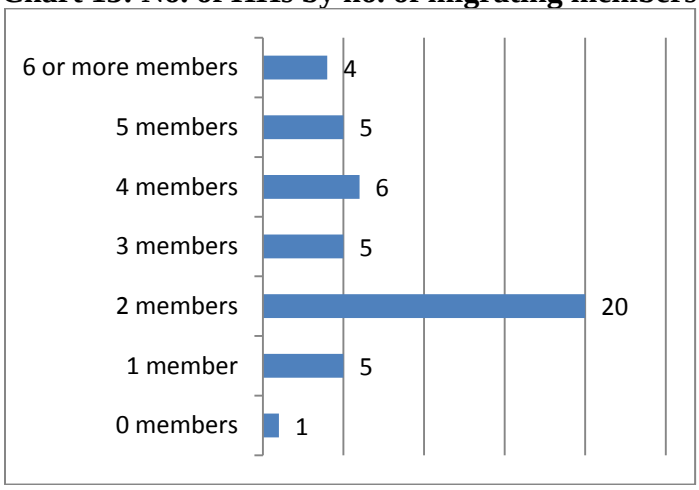
Chart 12: Percentage breakup of HHs by kind of work done at place of migration



No. of migrating members

As shown in Chart 9, total number of migrating members is on the increase and in the previous year, the total was 140, which constitutes 44% of total HH members and nearly 80% of HH members above the age of 15 years. As can be seen from Chart 13, in around 85% HHs, more than one member migrated in 2011-12, with the norm being two members per HH, usually the husband and wife.

Chart 13: No. of HHs by no. of migrating members in 2011-12



Employment terms

As already mentioned, in around 75% cases, wage employment is secured by migrating HHs through labour contractors, who often have "agents" in the Project area—members of some regularly migrating HHs in villages are themselves agents.

In around 25% of cases, the contractor gives an advance—ranging from Rs 500 to Rs 10,000—which is adjusted against wages. Employment is offered by the contractor against a commission, charged in one of three ways: (i) on cash basis @ Rs 20-50 per day of work given, per person (ii) on percentage basis @ 10-20% of wages paid, or (iii) on the basis of total work given to an HH in a particular period. The average cost to the employee in 2011-12 worked out to 15% of wages.

In nearly 60% of cases, wages are paid monthly. Weekly wages are paid in 36% cases and only a couple of HHs reported getting wages daily.

The HHs have to go to the migration place on their own expense, and in less than 10% of cases are they given a place to stay there. In the rest of the cases, the HH has to take a room/house on rent, or construct its own makeshift hutment on some open land.

Availability of work in a month depends on stage of construction and labour available then. On an average, HHs get work for 20 days a month. Usually, they have to work 8 hours a day, but some HHs reported working for 10 hours. There is no paid weekly holiday.

Nearly 40% HHs reported that the work they have to do is "risky". But they enjoy no formal medical benefits. Only 15% HHs reported that the employer/contractor pays for medical expenses if they suffer an injury in the course of work. No payment is made when labour-days are lost due to illness. HHs do not enjoy any employee-paid insurance, gratuity or provident fund benefits.

Costs of migration

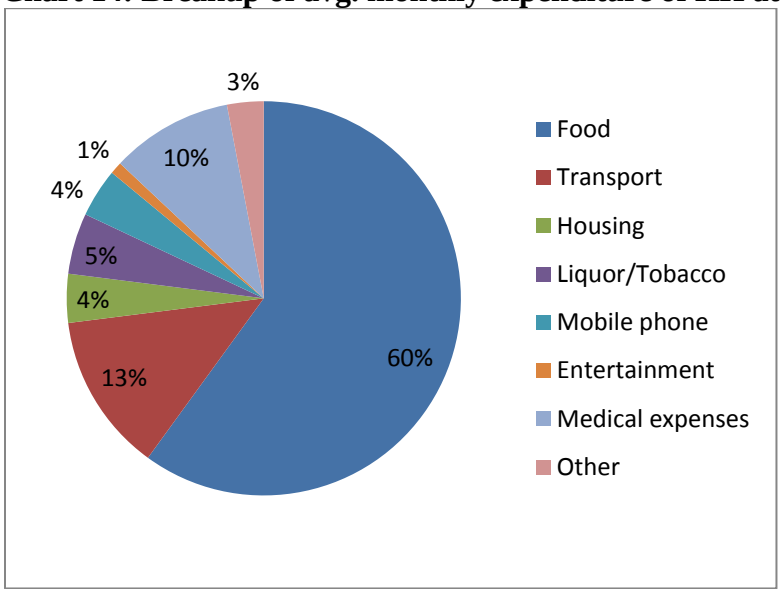
Seasonal migration involves substantial costs—monetary and non-monetary. The monetary costs start with expenditure on travel till the migration destination, and end with the journey back to their village. Only 30% HHs have the money required—around Rs 4000[12]—for reaching the migration destination, setting up a home there, and surviving the first week or month till wages are received. Nearly 55% HHs reported that they took a loan from moneylenders to meet these expenses; 15% borrowed from relatives.

All HHs reported that they carry with them materials and household goods to set up a home at the migration destination but nearly half the HHs reported that they have to incur some additional expenditure to put up their hutment there. The average reported expenditure under this head was Rs 500.

[12] All costs reported in this section are for the financial year 2011-12.

HHs have to bear food expenses, and average of monthly expenditure reported under this head was Rs 3000.

Chart 14: Breakup of avg. monthly expenditure of HH at place of migration



Around 90% HHs reported that their place of residence at the migration destination is usually at some distance from the place of work and hence transport costs have to be incurred, at an average of Rs 700 per month.

Nearly 85% HHs reported that they have to regularly incur medical expenses and average monthly expenditure under this head was Rs 500. Around 70% HHs reported they incur cell phone expenses regularly—to be in touch with people at home—and monthly expenditure under this head ranged from Rs 100 to Rs 600.

Despite the several entertainment options available in cities, only 10% HHs reported spending on entertainment. But 75% HHs reported that they spent on liquor or tobacco; the monthly HH expenditure reported under this head range from Rs 150 to Rs 1000.

Considering all these expenses, the average monthly expenditure at place of migration was Rs 5000 per HH in 2011-12, with broad breakup as shown in Chart 14.

Income from migration

Gross income from migration depends on a number of factors: (i) months for which HH migrates (ii) number of persons of HH who migrate (iii) number of days for which income-earning work is obtained (iv) type of work obtained (v) gender of migrating HH members, as male labourers generally get paid more than females, and (vi) wage labour rates prevailing in place of migration.

As these factors vary across years, and HHs would find it difficult to remember exact income earned in previous years, income from migration was ascertained by asking HHs to recall details of only wages earned in the previous year (2011-12).

It was found that daily wages earned by migrating members ranged from a minimum of Rs 100 to a maximum of Rs 300. Average wages earned by males was Rs 200/day. For females the average was Rs 165/day. As already stated, HHs generally get work for 20 days/month, and around 15% of wages are deducted as commission.

Accordingly, the average gross monthly income earned at place of migration was around Rs 8000 per HH. Taking into account all the expenses, and the fact that HHs' average duration of migration in the previous year was 5½ months, the **average net HH income from migration in the year was Rs 13,300**, with wide variation (Rs 2000 to Rs 30,000) according to number of months of migration and number of migrating members.

In comparison, as gathered from the sample survey of 100 HHs, the average income gained in the 12 months of 2011-12 from doing wage labour in and around Project villages was Rs 12,500. **Thus, HHs earned more through migration in half the time**. Further, whereas availability of work in Project villages is uncertain and variable, HHs are fairly assured of getting work at the place of migration.

Around 70% of HHs reported that they sometimes send a part of the net income from migration to the family in the village, for meeting its consumption expenses. The money is almost invariably sent through some friend or relative—only one HH reported using bank or postal transfer. However, generally, the net earnings are brought by the migrants themselves when they return home. In other words, the HH members left behind in the village largely live through the period of migration without cash support from the migrants.

It must be remembered that during and after the period of migration, members of most migrating HHs are engaged in either agriculture or wage labour in and around the village. Hence, the migration income is a kind of additional income for the HHs. From the sample study of 100 HHs, it was found that the size of the this additional income ranged from 5% to 45% of total HH annual net income[13] of migrating HHs, which ranged from Rs 33,000 to Rs 97,000, with **average net annual income of migrating HHs being Rs 54,600, and average share of migration income being 24%**.

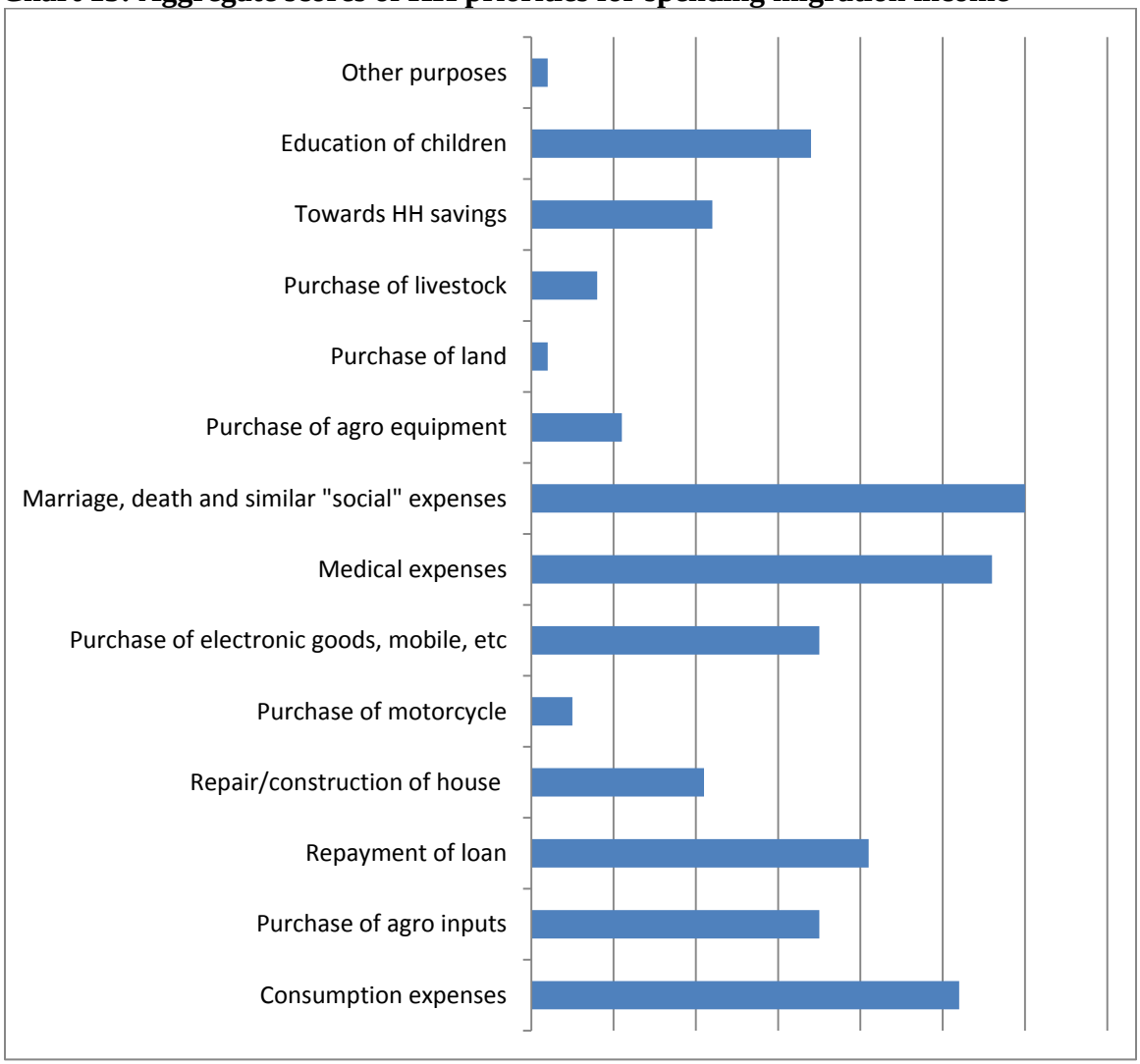
The above facts show that migration income is not the sole or even major source of income of HHs. Hence, the money may be used for improving living standards, building HHs' capital assets, or for investment in new business, or for enhancing income from existing land and livestock assets. We shall turn to see if this in fact happens.

[13] Excluding costs incurred for earning the income (such as cost of agro inputs and expenses incurred at place of migration) but not excluding other HH expenses incurred in the village.

How migration income is spent

HHs spend the net income from migration fully or partially for a variety of purposes. As it would be difficult for any HH to recall exactly how much money from a particular income source was spent for different purposes, the 46 SC/ST HHs were asked to state whether they "fully" or "partially" spent the net income from migration on different heads like daily consumption expenses, purchase of agriculture inputs, repayment of loan, purchase of consumer durables, purchase of land, on medical expenses, etc, in the previous year. A score of 3 was given for money reported to be spent "fully" under any of these heads, and a score of 1 was given to money spent "partially" under any of these heads. The aggregate scores so obtained were taken as indicators of HH priorities for spending migration income. The data is shown in Chart 15.

Chart 15: Aggregate scores of HH priorities for spending migration income



It can be seen that:

- Domestic consumption expenses (food, etc) did not get highest score. This is to be expected as the migration income has already paid for living expenses of around 40%

of HH members at place of migration for several months, and it is a kind of bonus income.
- The highest score was for expenses incurred on ceremonies related to marriage, death and similar "social" events.
- Medical expenses also got high scores.
- Repayment of loan and education expenses ranked below medical expenses.
- Purchase of agro inputs and purchase of electronic goods got equal scores.

It was further seen that:
- Only two HHs used the money fully to build family savings, while 16 HHs used it partially for this purpose.
- Only two HHs used the money fully to buy land, livestock or agro equipment, while eight and five HHs said they had used it partially to buy agro equipment and livestock respectively.

These findings indicate that migration money is used largely to meet expenses related to marriage, death, etc., and to "cushion" the burden of expenses related to food, agriculture, illness, loans and education. A small portion of the money is used to improve living standards, by repairing the house, or buying electronic goods (neither of these purposes would require large expenditure). The migration money helps build the savings of less than half the HHs and few HHs use it to make investment on land, livestock or agro equipment.

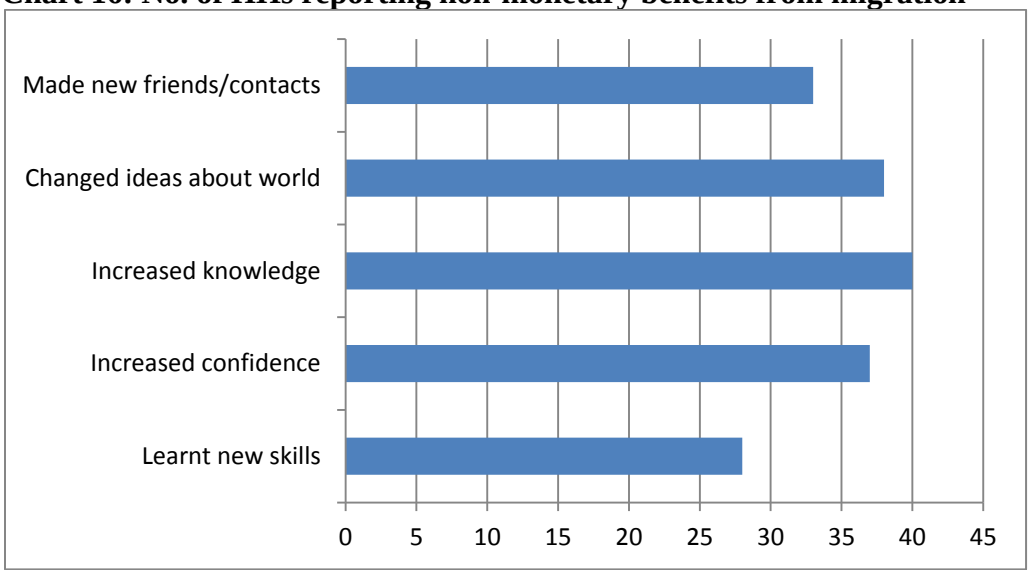
This pattern of expenditure is to be expected considering that the average annual net income from migration is only Rs 13,300. One can thus conclude that **for SC/ST HHs migration is largely a coping mechanism, though it also meets the purpose of capital accumulation to some extent**.

Other benefits from migration

HHs gain some significant non-monetary benefits from migration. Data in Chart 16 shows that most HHs get important psychological and social benefits, in terms of increased confidence and knowledge, change in world views, or new friends and contacts. However, these benefits are difficult to quantify.

Further, though a majority of HHs reported that they had gained some new skills, **only a fourth of HHs could report specific skills they had acquired, which had good income-earning potential**. These skills were in the domain of advanced construction-labour jobs, like masonry.

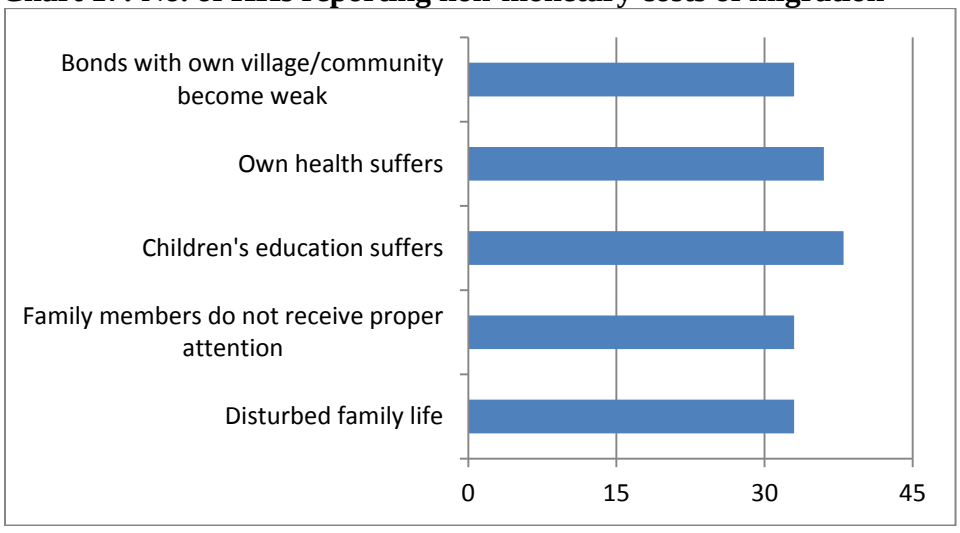
Chart 16: No. of HHs reporting non-monetary benefits from migration



Non-monetary costs of migration

Apart from the fairly high monetary costs discussed earlier, migrating HHs also face significant non-monetary costs, in terms of disturbed family life, disturbance in children's education and loss of bonds with the village. The nature and duration of work at the migration place, and the living conditions there also impact migrants' health and marital life. As Chart 17 shows, the number of HHs reporting such non-monetary costs is high.

Chart 17: No. of HHs reporting non-monetary costs of migration



Considering these costs, many HHs are keen to stop migrating, but they said they could do so only if net returns from agriculture somehow increase, more wage labour opportunities are available in the village, or they could somehow start a new business. **Notably, however, around a third of HHs did not see chances of any of this happening**.

Summing up

The study establishes that seasonal migration is a significant—though not primary—source of income for SC/ST HHs. The income helps them cushion a range of routine expenses, and, to some extent, it enables them to improve their living standards or accumulate capital.

However, the migrants do not possess marketable education or skills, and face harsh terms and conditions of employment. The overwhelming majority of migrating HHs also report significant non-monetary costs they have to incur.

The migrants are not in a position to exercise choice over place or kind of employment. The significant net income that they earn is linked to rapid construction activity, particularly in the Delhi-Agra-Mathura circuit. If there is a slump in this activity, the rate of migration is likely to drop, in terms of migrating HHs and/or number of migrating members per HH.

Hence, at least in case of SC/ST HHs in the Project area, and comparable areas, seasonal migration is no substitute for overall improvements in the rural economy, to ensure higher returns from agriculture, and more wage-labour and business opportunities in and around the village.

Another long-term requirement is ensuring that children get good-quality and complete school education, so that even if they are also forced to migrate (or they choose to do so), they are in a better bargaining position than their parents in the urban employment-market.

In the short-term, there is a need to improve the income-earning potential of migrants and reduce their vulnerability by:

- Building their skills, particularly in the area of building construction
- Linking them to low-cost life insurance schemes, and health insurance schemes like Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana and micro-health insurance schemes for the poor, framed by public sector and private insurance companies.

There is also a need to study the impact of migration on family-members left behind in the village, particularly children, with a view to build appropriate support systems.

ENDS

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