

Migration In Bundelkhand

Dithering, division & the damage done...



Migration: A Survey of Rajnagar Block, District Chhatarpur, Madhya Pradesh



Kamli Bai (60) says her only son, Kishori (30), his wife & their 8-year old son have migrated to Jammu in search of work, after the drought forced them off their field. They have left behind their 1-year old daughter. She does labour to support her family, including her disabled husband.

Abstract

A snap survey was conducted by the PACS state-based communications agency (SBCA) in Madhya Pradesh & Chhatisgarh in Rajnagar block of Chhatarpur district of Madhya Pradesh to ascertain the degree of migration in select 10 villages.

To what extent has the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) has succeeded in stemming migration was also touched upon, albeit in a very exploratory manner.

In the given scenario of migrating families and the rights of people as spelled out in the NREGS, it has to be considered whether it would be physi-

cally possible by the already physically weakened workers to meet the strict standards and measurements for labor work, so fixed by the Government to determine the amount of wages payable to them. On the other hand, Government Officials, in their sheer gusto to show targeted progress of work, apply these standards with all possible strictness, with the result that workers are deprived of their full day wages. Consequently, the status of their socio-economic problems, poverty and migration remains unchanged without any improvement whatsoever.

As such, there is an absolute need to start the process of determining minimum wages based on prevailing geographical conditions, communities involved and principles of social welfare. Not only this, minimum wages have also to be linked and defined as a fundamental right of the people, so that prevailing rates may be revised in a manner at least to meet the basic needs of workers.

Obviously, the purpose of NREGS is not only to provide minimum wages as a right, but State Governments also have to ensure development of permanent sources of livelihood and creation of community assets to enhance the social-economic emancipation of people. In the absence of these objectives, the basic right of dignified quality of life for all cannot be achieved, what to talk of stopping migration.

Methodology of Survey

For collecting information, a simple Random Sampling method involving the use of interview schedules and discussions, was used.

Case studies to supplement data and findings were also used.



Reeling under a loan she had taken to dig a well on her land under the NREGA scheme, Rajji Bai says migration is better than facing starvation in the village. Her two sons have migrated to Delhi in search of work, and to sustain their parents back home. If it were not for the money they send, she says, we would almost certainly have starved.

S.No.	District	Block	Name of village	Households	Distance from main road (in km.)	Type of Road		No. of family members affected by migration					
								SC		ST		Other	
						Pucca	Kaccha	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
1	Chatarpur	Rajnagar	Lakheri	565	0	Pucca		40	60	5	5	40	5
2	Chatarpur	Rajnagar	Udaypura	425	3	Pucca		100	100	10	10	20	20
3	Chatarpur	Rajnagar	Lalgawan	200	3	Pucca	Kaccha	23	40	0	0	0	7
4	Chatarpur	Rajnagar	Chowar	101	0	Pucca		20	21	0	0	2	1
5	Chatarpur	Rajnagar	Behra purwa	390	1		Kaccha	160	200	12	15	6	40
6	Chatarpur	Rajnagar	Majhguvan	210	5		Kaccha	150	200	0	0	0	10
7	Chatarpur	Rajnagar	Pay	562	0	Pucca		76	77	0	0	17	17
8	Chatarpur	Rajnagar	Saliya	311	17	Pucca		40	40	100	100	0	10
9	Chatarpur	Rajnagar	Dogwa	295	2		Kaccha	0	0	40	50	0	0
10	Chatarpur	Rajnagar	Navda	206	3		Kaccha	0	0	20	20	0	0
Total				3265	34			609	738	187	200	85	110

Geographical Area :

The survey was carried out in 10 villages of Chatarpur district of Rajnagar block in Madhya Pradesh, an area more popularly known as Bundhelkhand. The villages were at a distance of 0 to 20 Km. from the block office, and connected by pucca or kaccha roads. The issue of drought, migration and the failure of the PDS system, resulting in food insecurity and failing livelihood options were some of the major issues in this area.

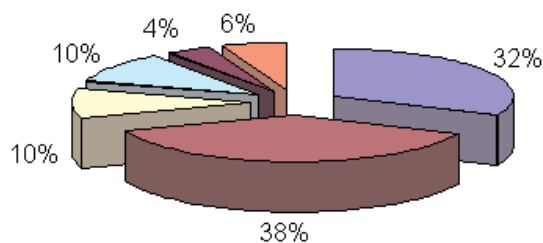
Number of Villages - 10

Total number of households covered - 3265

Families Affected by Migration

Out of sampled 3265 family members covered 59% of the people migrating to different places. Most of them migrate to Delhi and Jammu looking for livelihood sources.

The graph below shows the migration pattern of different caste groups in the community: In



■ SC Female ■ SC Male □ ST Female □ ST Male ■ Other Female ■ Other Male

this pie chart, we see that 44% of migrants are female, of which 32% belong to SC community, 10% belong to ST community and 4% belong to other communities. Out of 56% migrants who are men, 38% belong to SC community, 10% to ST community, and 6% to other communities.

Out of the total number of migrants, 70% belong to SC community, 20% to ST community and only 10% belong to other communities.

Despite many welfare programmes for the SC/ST community, migration in terms of sheer numbers is highest amongst the SC/STs, and hence it is a pointer to civil society groups and the local administration to pay immediate attention to their plight and their concerns.

Livelihood Sources for People Left behind in Villages

After the migration of young family members, those left behind and trying to make a living in their village face a



Ratiya Bai (65) was pushed away when she went to pick up rations at the local PDS shop. She said the PDS shopowner told her rudely that there were no rations at the shop, and she should come some other time, even though he kept her ration card with himself.

crisis in terms of a livelihood. Indeed, some like Haiku Ahirwar, Lalla bai, Meerchaiya Ahirwar (20), Gotapal (60) and many like them have to resort to menial labour or sheer begging to make ends meet.

Data shows that migration rate is more than 60% out of the universe, and out of 1929 affected families, 205 people above 50-years of age and 105 below 15-years of age face livelihood insecurity in the surveyed villages.

Livelihood Options of People Who Have Stayed Behind in their village

After younger members of their families have migrated, those left behind are generally either the very young or the very old and infirm. They face a harsh reality in their village, since the money or food grains left behind for their sustenance usually ran out much before succour arrived, either in the form of money from family members, or foodgrains.

Many, like Halku Ahirwar, Lallabai, Meerchaiya Ahirwar (20 year old) and Gotapal (60-year old), like so many others, were reduced to begging and hard manual labour to eke out a living.

Conclusions

It has to be admitted that migration is not a voluntarily chosen alternative for people to secure employment, but they are forced to migrate out of sheer hunger, food insecurity and lack of an other viable livelihood option.

On the other hand, the various policies framed by Government lack long term political commitment, with the result that none of the schemes are able to provide any benefit to the people for whom they are meant for. As a recent example, just consider the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. Going by the various provisions contained in the scheme, there appear to be wide-ranging opportunities, but experience with



Saguniya (80) came by crawling on her feet, since walking is an effort. She is also blind, and uses a stick to find her way around...Her three sons have long since migrated and left her to her fate. She survives on the charity of villagers. Her sons don't send any money, either.



"For me, the nightmare began as soon as work on digging the well began. We began digging the well with the help of 12 adivasi workers (including 2 women) in January, 2007, and the work was completed after 3 months. In fact, we received work only after a 2-month delay, when the sarpanch finally told us that we had permission to begin work.

The total value of the work was Rs 45,000, and the labour payment amounted to Rs 16,500, which we had to pay as wages to the adivasi labourers. But the sarpanch has since stopped any payment to us. Despite the fact that I paid him Rs 4000 for accepting my application to have a well dug on my land. Now he is demanding another Rs 3000 for having a board put up on my land, saying the well has been dug as part of the NREGA scheme! Rs 3000! How can I keep paying these ridiculous amounts?

The labourers were from BPL families and they demanded their wages, since otherwise they would starve! Without help from any quarter, I had no alternative but to borrow Rs 10,000 from the money lender to pay them off! The labourers said they had no interest in how I paid them.

Now, reeling under this loan, my two sons have migrated to Delhi, so that we here can at least eat a meal a day. My 2-year old grandson has also gone with them. They have been gone since June last year, and I do not know when they will return...

Who wants to stay back when there is no food and crops? We have to eat, isn't it...?"

Rajji Bai (40)

Village Pira, Rajnagar block

Smiles, but only for the camera! These boys in Pira village of Chhatarpur may be all smiles, but face a harsh reality because their parents migrate for 10-months at a stretch.



grassroot-level implementation has thrown up a virtual pandora's box of contradictions, lacunae and inertia. It may thus not be too wide off the mark to say that even now, public welfare schemes are prepared with the Government's point of view and not that of the community.

Another aspect is that the process of development is shackled in the clutches of bureaucracy, who are neither responsible to any community nor are interested in their empowerment.

Some people we spoke to said that they consider migration a comparatively better alternative because the NREGS promises only 100 days of work in a year, but what of the remaining period? They have to migrate to secure their livelihood.



Ramshackle and incomplete Indira Awas Yojana houses in the village of Shahpur, Tikamgarh. Where have the roofs gone? In bribes, because the Rs 25,000 given to beneficiaries is enough to construct only this much!



Saguniya uses a stick to crawl her way around the village, since she is both blind and old. She lives on the charity of fellow villagers, who say "how can we ignore her when our own children are eating". There are many like her who live on the inherent goodness of people. Period.

Strictly from the legal point of view, this argument is a valid one, but does it mean that the Employment Guarantee Act shall not be able to promote, at local level, any additional permanent sources of employment?

In other words, the very objectives of this Act, meant to benefit the poorest of the poor, are being attempted to be scuttled just because of glaring anomalies / contradictions at the implementation stage.