



M. P. Institute of Social Science Research

(Autonomous Institute of ICSSR, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India)

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National Seminar on Status of Rural Poverty and Migration: Impact on Agriculture (March 13-14, 2019)

Background of the Seminar

Landless agricultural labourers living on subsistence level forms the major portion of rural population. The percentage of peasants without land is substantially higher in the total rural labour force. Due to the forces of poverty and financial obligations this labour force mostly opts for out migration. A phenomenal portion of this labour force has been moving out from their native areas to nearby cities. They are not only migrating but also changing their occupation from agriculture to other non-agricultural activities.

The most significant reasons for such out-migration are mainly – decreasing profits in terms of income from agriculture and agricultural productivity, substantial reduction in average monsoon resulting in depleting water sources, shortage of markets where they can get appropriate return of their produce and also depleting land holding from generation to generation. The attraction to out migrate also generates in the anticipation of higher wages, living in cities with modern facilities and amenities and a ray of hope for a reasonably secure future of their families and children. The whole idea of out migration due to poverty and other reasons results in diminishing agriculture from the fabric of our society.

More than two-thirds (69 per cent) of India's population live in rural areas as per the figures of 2011 Census of India. The other side of the coin is rapid urbanisation in the nearby places of villages practicing agriculture. A significant source of this growth is rural-to-urban migration, as an increasing number of people do not find sufficient economic opportunities in rural areas and move instead to towns and cities. 2011 census data show that for the first time, India's urban population has grown faster than its rural population since the last census. Thirty-one per cent of India's population is now classified as urban, up from almost 28 per cent in 2001. In 2007-08, the National Sample Survey measured the migration rate (the proportion of migrants in the population) in urban areas at 35 per cent. In addition to migration, natural population increase and the inclusion in census data of newly-defined urban areas also account for some of this urban growth.

Despite India's impressive rates of economic growth over the past three decades, vast numbers of Indians are unable to secure a meaningful livelihood. In 2010, 29.8 per cent of all Indians lived below the national poverty line, while 33.8 per cent of rural Indians lived below the national rural poverty line, according to World Bank data. While wage and education gaps between rural and urban Indians are declining, rural India is still characterised by agrarian distress, a chronic lack of employment, and farmer suicides. Thus, the rural-urban divide has been one of the primary reasons for India's labour mobility.

The high man-land ratio in rural areas is another factor of migration. It aggravates rural poverty and promotes surplus labour. In the situation of unequal distribution of resources more children, higher dependency ratio, larger family size and surplus manpower are the problems faced by poor who are under greater social pressure of these problems. The increased work force among them is unable to get absorbed on land that has limited quantity and productivity. The nature of the owner-labour relationship is exploitative. The traditional system of farming yields low income from agricultural work

and leads to poor conditions of living. In such a situation surplus labour and high man-land ratio become additional push factors of migration.

The Government of India in recent times have initiated plethora of schemes for rural development to ameliorate situations of poverty and increasing income of peasants. It may be constructing their homes through PMAY, or reinforcing MGNREGA where the rural poor can get financial support during non-agricultural seasons or by enhancing the support system to elder population through various social assistance programmes like NSAP where pension is universally being provided to the octogenarians. These various programmes do provide essential and crucial help to the rural poor and peasants but the moot question remains unanswered that despite all these efforts of governments why the pace of migration is kept increasing and putting pressure of agrarian society.

One of the fallouts of all these schemes is also worth noticing. The implementation of MGNREGA, PMAY, NSAP and other schemes provides a part of financial backing to the peasants. As a result these peasants specifically involved in agriculture labour are not very much interested to work in the agricultural fields. They are of the view that bare minimum help is being provided by the government and the remaining can be earned by moving outside as per day labour wages are higher in the nearby places. The financial backing with these schemes has made these peasants complacent in their behaviour. A casual labour is not very much interested in getting Rs. 300 as the wage in the village but is concerned to earn more than Rs. 500 in the adjoining cities. The concern of the labour in the village reflects that he/she is getting sufficient help from the government schemes and is not enthusiastic enough to spend their time in labour work at village sites. These practices also contribute to widening dearth of casual agricultural at the village and hampering the agricultural growth in totality.

The development of rural non-farm sector also plays an important role in the strengthening of agricultural scenario in its entirety. It has been witnessed repeatedly that non-farm sector has been successful in making inroads in the domain of agriculture. Despite this fact seasonal and permanent exodus from the villages is a continuous process and it needs to be tackled for a sustainable growth.

The complete web of poverty and migration resulting in leaving agriculture by masses is definitely going to impact the predominant peasant economy. Against this backdrop, the proposed seminar will make an effort to threadbare discuss various issues, challenges and possibilities faced by rural poor and peasants. An effort will also be made to get some concrete suggestions for not only stabilising the poverty and out-migration scenarios but also ways to improve the condition of rural poor and agriculture in the country as a whole.

Against this backdrop, M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain is organizing a National Seminar on “**Status of Rural Poverty and Migration: Impact on Agriculture**” to look into the various facets of rural poverty and migration in the context of agriculture.

Themes of the Seminar

1. Rural Poverty, Sustainable Livelihood and Employment Opportunities.
2. Migration, Employment and its Social Impact.
3. Changing Livelihood, Dependence on Agriculture and Agricultural Labour in Villages.
4. Welfare Schemes to address Rural Poverty and Migration.
5. Changing Rural-Urban Migration Continuum and Future of Agriculture Sector.
6. Suggestive Framework/Mechanism to address Rural Poverty, Migration and Agriculture.

MPISSR invites you to participate in the National Seminar. We propose to bring out an edited volume of the selected papers presented in the Seminar. MPISSR will reimburse travel cost and will arrange local hospitality for the invited delegates.

Submission of Full Paper along with ABSTRACT: **February 20, 2019**

All communications may please be sent to:

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