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Research Paper

GLOBAL HISTORY OF SEASONAL LABOUR MIGRATION: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Seasonal labour migration is one of the important types of labour migration that has evidently increased rapidly in recent times but received little attention in empirical research. This is basically a temporary movement of labour or families in response to seasonal hardships caused by economic, climatic and social shocks. Seasonal hardships may include lack of food or income during certain months of year when local markets do not offer income earning opportunities. Although seasonal labour migration, is now an essential part of the livelihood strategies pursued by a large number of poor people in developing countries, but it has been ignored not only in public policy but our statistical system are currently not adequate to capture such flow of labour. In this paper, a brief overview of literature in the context of seasonal labour migration is brought out under these three different strands of literature: - (i) Seasonal Labour Migration: Magnitude and Composition (ii) The Drivers of Seasonal Labour Migration: Push v/s Pull (iii) Impacts of Seasonal Labour Migration.

KEYWORDS: Seasonal Labour Migration, Magnitude, Composition, Drivers, Impacts.

INTRODUCTION

Population mobility, seasonally or permanently, internal or international, rural-urban or rural-rural is universally recognized as an alternative livelihoods strategy adopted by the poorest section. From the conceptual point of view migration lends itself the various interpretations which are due to the differences in the nature, scale and purpose of the study. Sociologists have emphasized social and cultural consequences of migration, whereas geographers have laid stress on the time and distance implication on migration. Economists give importance to the economic aspect of migration. The issue of migration has also been the subject of various development theories (Lucas, 2015). Conceptual framework of migration can be reviewed in a wide range of migration theories starting from Ravenstein's Laws of migration, to the famous

Todaro Model and the New Economics of Labour Migration (Haan, 2002). Theory of migration history starts from the Smith's observation on migration and E.G. Ravenstein's response to the Smith's remark which is called "Laws of Migration" (Lee 1966). Lewis (1954) initiated the idea of rural urban migration using his two sector model. This conceptual framework follows closely that of Ranis and Fie (Ranis and Fie, 1961). Within these neoclassical theories an important addition is presented by Todaro (1969) and Harris Todaro (1970) migration theory which termed migration as a function of expected rather than actual earning differentials.

SEASONAL LABOUR MIGRATION: AN EMERGING PHENOMENON

Seasonal labour migration (also known as short duration/temporary/circular migration) is one of the important types of labour migration that has evidently



increased rapidly in recent times but received little attention in empirical research (Mosse *et.al.*1997, Srivastava 1998, Rogaly 2002 Deshinagkar 2005). Such type of labour migration is temporary in nature and takes place during a particular season of the year. Brauw and Harigava (2004) define “Seasonal migrants as any migrants who left the household for part of the year to work, but returned to the household.” Khandker *et.al.* (2012) in their research work defined it as “Seasonal Migration (either internal or external) is a temporary movement of labour or families in response to seasonal hardships caused by economic, climatic and social shocks. Seasonal hardships may include lack of food or income during certain months of year when local markets do not offer income earning opportunities.” The NSSO 64th round survey, defined seasonal migrants as “those who had stayed away from the villages/towns for a period of one month or more but less than six months during the last 365 days for employment or in search of employment.”

GLOBAL HISTORY OF SEASONAL LABOUR MIGRATION

The term short duration or temporary migration first appeared in the late 1960's and 1970's, mainly in the anthropological and demographic literature on urbanization, rural development and internal migration in developing countries. Often, it is considered as seasonal or periodic migration for work (in agriculture, fishing, hunting or market commerce), for survival (during drought) or as a life-cycle process (as is often in the case of students) (Hugo 1982). In this section, a brief overview of literature in the context of seasonal labour migration is brought out. There are three different strands of literature which are relevant in this context:-

1. Seasonal Labour Migration: Magnitude and Composition.
2. The Drivers of Seasonal Labour Migration: Push v/s Pull.
3. Impacts of Seasonal Labour Migration.

1.1 Seasonal Labour Migration: Magnitude and Composition

Although seasonal labour migration, is now an essential part of the livelihood strategies pursued by a large number of poor people in developing countries, but it has been ignored not only in public policy but our statistical system are currently not adequate to capture such flow of labour. Since the Census data are not useful in this regard because it provide results only on migrants who have changed location either permanently or semi-permanently (Liu and Chan 2001, Hugo 2003, Gazdar

2003, Srivastava and Sasikumar 2003). But this is borne out by a number of detailed empirical studies which shows both a high incidence of such migration as well as its growth (Hugo 1982, Posel and Casale 1993, Bhagat 2005, Luxembourg University Report 2011, Offin and Awuse 2013).

Thus there is no exact national and international level data exists making it possible to quantify the magnitude of seasonal labour migration. But a number of micro level studies found out a very high level of seasonal labour migration, particularly in the case of underdeveloped region. A search through such literature shows that, it is widespread among the rural males of socio-economically deprived groups such as SC's, ST's, and OBC's. In other words, in the absence of permanent employment options in the destination areas, the low skilled labourers seem to indulge in seasonal movements. Most of them young and either illiterate or had not even completed primary education (Guilmoto 1998, Hare 1999, Ateeq and John 2003, Rwelamira and Kirsten 2003, ILO 2011, Keshri and Bhagat 2012, Coffey *et.al*2013).

Seasonal flow of migrants vary with area and industry, but several fine grained studies of seasonal migration reveals extensive flow of seasonal migrants to the urban and rural informal sectors which include cultivation and plantations, construction sites, brick-kilns, mines and quarries, agro-processing industries, service or transport sectors and other unorganized industries which have seasonal nature (Haberfeld *et. al.* 1999, Gill 2003, Bird and Deshingkar 2009, Panzaru 2012, Offin and Awuse 2014) . Their movement is generally organized by contractors in a group rather than as individual for short duration. Seasonal migration in industries takes place once in a year for six to eight months (Guest 1998, Rogaly *et. al.* 2001, Yunsong 2009, Singh and Ebenezer 2012, Rao and Mitra 2013).

1.2 The Drivers of Seasonal Labour Migration: Push v/s Pull

The very basic questions which arises in the mind is that why do people migrate? Why these migrants leave their home? Why do migrants go to a particular region and not to other? What are the macroeconomic conditions that attract them in choosing destination region? Despite the importance of non-economic factors most of the studies point out that migration is primarily forced by economic factors. All theories so far brings out that the migration phenomena can be broadly divided into two models i.e. (a) Agency Model (b) Structure Model. Agency Model, which include the

theories of Lewis (1954), Lee (1966) and Harris and Todaro(1970), explains the causes of migration in which they mainly included the difference in wage rates between regions, individual's cost-benefit calculations as well as push and pull factors (specifically economic factors). On the other hand, Structure Model emphasizes those historical, social and political forces acts as to determine the migration of labour. Thus above two models, which include the theories of migration points out that, by and large, the two basic arguments are closely linked, that is people are forced to migrate due to development-driven factors (Pull Factors) or distress-driven factors (Push Factors).

The Push Factors are those which force a person, due to different reasons, to leave their native place and go to some other place. For example industrial and agricultural backwardness, poor economic conditions, lack of opportunities for progress, poor working and living conditions, debt bondage and natural calamities may compel people to leave their native place in search of better economic opportunities. These factors are pointed out in lots of studies done to find out push factors responsible for seasonal mobility (Hugo 1982, Haberfeld 1999, Haan 2002, Rogaly *et al.* 2002, Barrios *et al.* 2006, Chen *et al.* 2007, Gorlich and Trebesch 2008, Deogharia 2012, Khandker *et al.* 2012, Viji 2013). The Pull Factors are those factors which attract the migrants to an area, such as better labour market opportunities for employment, comparatively better agricultural and industrial development, higher wages, better working and living conditions etc. A lot of studies revealed that pull factors are the main reason for seasonal mobility (Bhattacharya 1998, Murphy 2002, Wahyuni 2005, Castless 2006, De Hass 2006, Mahinchai 2010, Kaur *et al.* 2011, Sundaravaradarajan *et al.* 2011, Lilleor and Broeck 2011, Awuse and Offin 2014).

1.3 Impacts of Seasonal Labour Migration

Seasonal Migration brings both positive (provide employment, meet the credit need, food sufficiency and fulfillment of other requirement) and negative (increased dropout rates, health problems etc.) impacts at the household as well as community level. Here we will discuss the impact of seasonal migration under these three aspects:-

- Economic Impact of Seasonal Migration.
- Impact on the lives of Migrant's and their families.
- Exclusion from Government Legalisation, Schemes and Services.

Economic Impact of Seasonal Migration

The economic contribution of seasonal migrants remains unrecognized because of the lack of data and serious under reporting in illegal and informal sector units. But field evidence and micro studies confirm that seasonal migration is a primary channel through which poor migrants are able to not only improve their conditions of living, but also the pattern of growth and development in the source and destination areas (Haberfeld *et al.* 1999, Murphy 2002, Taylor Mora 2006, Beggle *et al.* 2008, Merwood 2012, Awuse and Offin 2014). Not only migrants but both the origin and destination areas are getting economic advantage due to seasonal migration (Hugo 1982, Murphy 2002, Brauw and Harigaya 2004 and Bhagat 2011).

Impact on the lives of Migrant's and their families

Although Seasonal Migration becomes a major annual incident in rural areas, not enough is known about its impact on the personal lives of migrants and their families (Smita 2007). It has both negative and positive consequences for migrants and their families. Jetely's (1987) research work focused on the effect of male's migration on females. In response to male migration only 21 percent showed their happiness, 33 percent were unhappy and remaining regretted the long absence of the male migration of the family. Another study in Mali showed that female migrants did not find themselves as economically forced, but they migrated due to husband's migration (Findley 1994). But contradictory situation found in Senegal river valley where female didn't involve in seasonal migration, rather they played a subsidiary role and participated in domestic activities (Guilmoto 1998). In case of children's situation who migrated seasonally with their parents denied their right to education, none of them even completed their primary education, generally worked for six days in a week and contributed 10-20 percent in family income (Ghosh 2004, Wahyuni 2005, Mansuri 2006, Panigrahi 2006).

Exclusion from Government Legalisation, Schemes and Services

There is extensive legalisation to protect the rights of labour. But when it comes to broadly cover migrant workers, there are serious inadequacies in this legislation. The enforcement machinery is insufficient and a worker is expected to find readdress independently through other agencies namely the unions. Penalties are inadequate and participation of the workers in the

enforcement of the law is totally absent (Breman 1985, NCRL 1991, Rogaly *et.al* 2001, Ghosh 2004, Centre for Education and Communication 2006, Borhade 2011). Apart from legislation, migrants are excluded from government schemes to varying degrees (Rogaly *et.al* 2001, Bird and Deshingkar 2009, Kumar 2011). Several studies found that due to seasonal migration thousands of children were denied from government free education policy (Wahyuni 2005, Panigrahi 2006, Liang and Chen 2007, Macours and Vakis 2007). In case of political participation, Smita (2007) pointed that seasonal migrants could not participate in elections and were not included in the census. They couldn't access government services related to health and other things due to their migration status, timings and distance to services (Borhade 2011).

The above mentioned global history of seasonal migration proved that it is an integral part of livelihood for the poorest section and it can be regarded as both a cause and consequence of economic development both in developed and developing countries. But seasonal labour migration data is usually based on micro studies or surveys which separately cover such migration. Thus there is a large gap between the insights from macro data and those from field studies. And because of lack of data seasonal migration is largely invisible and overlooked by policy makers.

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