

Livelihood and Social Inclusion Pattern of the Migratory Labourers living in Cumilla District

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Abstract

Bangladesh has a predominant agrarian setting where, according to BBS data (2017), 65% of its total population live in the rural area and 40.6% of them are employed in agricultural sector. Internal migration of labourers are quite a common phenomenon and a policy concern of the government. Internal migration of labourers has both positive and negative impacts. It could be termed as a driver of economic expansion and modernization, while also the cause of severe urban deprivation and a destroyer of traditional rural life. This tension is not an unusual one for a country undergoing a rapid socioeconomic transition - from a low income agrarian past to a middle income, industrial future. Therefore, policy planners have always tried to correlate internal migration of labourers and development.

In this study, dimensions of internal migration and its concurrent issues have been discussed. It was seen that migration from northern districts of the country like Lalmonirhat, Thakurgaon, Kurigram, Nilfamari are quite rampant. The general objective of the study is to analyze the changes in demographic and livelihood pattern of the rural people because of migration. The specific objectives of the study are a) to examine the causes of migration of the rural people from Northern part of the country to Cumilla and other districts in Bangladesh; b) to analyze the livelihood pattern and social inclusion dynamics of the migrated rural labour force in the rural areas and c) to examine the involvement of migrated rural people in income generation. To complete the study both qualitative and quantitative method were followed. In total 250 migratory labourers were interviewed following a structured questionnaire. Most of the respondents were between 21-30 years of age (31%) whereas 27% of the respondents were between 31-40 years of age. Due to poverty and not having access to education, majority of the respondents (43%) were illiterate whereas 18% of the respondents were seen having primary education (class 1-5). Half of the respondents interviewed (50%) were day labourer whereas 20% of the respondents were rickshaw puller. Before migration, 29% of the respondents were involved for about 151 to 200 days in a year. Another one fourth (24%) respondent's involvement was ranging from 201 to 250 days in a year. A very few number of workers had involvement of more than 251 days in a year. On the other, it was seen that after migration about one third of the respondents (30%) has been working more than 300 days a year. Another major portion of respondents (37%) are working within the range of 251-300 days a year. This indicates that after migration their volume of work has been increased.

Major cause of migration was lack of work in the locality and less wage. Most of the respondents were motivated by neighbors to migrate to Cumilla with the hope of generating their income and improving standard of livelihood. Most of the respondents were seen working for 5-6 days in a week. Moreover, 44% of the respondents were seen earning 201 to 400 tk daily. As communication was easy and wage is high, the respondents had chosen Cumilla district as their destination. The respondents faced some problem of accommodation and sanitation during their stay as migrant worker. On an average a migrant worker spent Tk 4339 per month for his living as migrant workers that included food, accommodation, medical treatment and entertainment. Regarding social inclusion pattern, 28% of the respondents said that they had changed their way of living after arriving at Cumilla while 72% of the respondents mentioned that they adopted the changing environment without any socio-cultural change. It is significant to mention that the migrant workers developed a sense of savings through cooperatives during their stay as migrant worker at Cumilla. Ninety Six percent of the respondents worked on daily basis. Therefore, they had a tendency to save from their daily income. Three case studies in the study highlighted that the migrant workers could change their fate if they were given proper working environment and opportunities. Against the backdrop of the study findings and discussion, the study team has made some recommendation for consideration.

Sustainable poverty reduction require working opportunities and more working opportunities should be created in the northern districts of the country. Following the recent model of Amar Gram Amar Shahar of the government, more infrastructure should be developed in the rural areas of northern districts of the country. Special incentive package could be offered to the migrant workers so that they could utilize the earned money to their respective districts for their own local development. They could be provided with a registration card so that they could be identified as migrant worker. Union Parishad can come forward to make a database of the migrant workers in this regard. Most significantly, both government and non-government initiatives should be taken to build agro based industries in the northern districts of the country so that the excess labour could be utilized to boost up agricultural production.