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Seasonal Migration for Livelihoods in India: Coping, Accumulation and Exclusion

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Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations **v**

Glossary of Terms **v**

Glossary of Castes **v**

Summary **vi**

1 Introduction **1**

2 Part I: Definitions and Theories of Migration **2**
2.1 Some definitions 2
2.2 Theories of migration 3

3 Part II: Broad Patterns of Migration in MP and AP **6**
3.1 The magnitude of migration 6
3.2 The returns from migration 7
3.2.1 Income from farm and non-farm work inside and outside the village 7
3.2.2 The returns from agricultural labouring work inside and outside the village 9
3.3 Who migrates and why 11
3.3.1 Do those with land, livestock and agricultural assets stay at home? 12
3.3.2 The poorest rarely migrate 13
3.3.3 Labour-scarce households do not migrate 13
3.3.4 Higher migration among the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes 13
3.3.5 Gender 15

4 Part III: Accumulative and Coping Migration Streams **17**
4.1 Accumulative migration 23
4.1.1 Sugarcane cutters from Medak district, Andhra Pradesh 23
4.1.2 Havelli workers from Mandla, Madhya Pradesh 24
4.1.3 Earthworkers from Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh 25
4.2 Migration as a coping strategy 26
4.2.1 Construction workers from Mandla, Madhya Pradesh 26
4.2.2 Construction workers from Medak district, Andhra Pradesh 26
4.2.3 Agricultural labourers from coastal villages in Andhra Pradesh 27
4.3 Main findings 28

5 Part IV: Recognising and Supporting Migration as a Livelihood Strategy **29**

References **30**

List of Tables

Table 1	Incidence of migration in AP and MP sample villages	6
Table 2	Average returns per household per annum in AP (Rs)	8
Table 3	Average returns per household per annum in MP (Rs)	8
Table 4	Agricultural labour income inside and outside the village in AP (Rs)	9
Table 5	Agricultural labour income inside and outside the village in MP (Rs)	10
Table 6	Agricultural labour income inside and outside the village by land category in AP (Rs)	10
Table 7	Agricultural labour income inside and outside the village by land category in MP (Rs)	11
Table 8	Factors correlated with migration: regression analysis results for AP	12
Table 9	Factors correlated with migration: regression analysis results for MP	12
Table 10	Migration rates by caste in AP and MP villages	14
Table 11	Gender profile of migrating households in AP	16
Table 12	Age and gender of migrants working in farm and non-farm work in AP	16
Table 13	Who in the family migrates in MP	16
Table 14	Coping and accumulative migration streams in MP and AP villages	19
Table 15	Percentages of households as a proportion of landed households in KA and KO villages, AP	28

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AP	Andhra Pradesh
BC	Backward Caste
FC	Forward Caste
MP	Madhya Pradesh
NCRL	National Commission on Rural Labour
NELM	New Economics of Labour Migration
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
O(B)C	Other (Backward) Caste
PDS	Public Distribution System
SC	Scheduled Caste
ST	Scheduled Tribe
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Glossary of Terms

Adda	A point where casual labourers gather to meet prospective employers
Gunta	A local measure of volume – 12’ x 12’ x 1’6’
Kharif	Monsoon crop growing season
Mestri	Contractor
Rabi	Winter crop growing season

Glossary of Castes

Ahirwar	Scheduled Caste
Baiga	Scheduled Tribe
Balai	Scheduled Caste
Brahmin	Forward Caste
Chamar	Scheduled Caste
Dhimar	Other Backward Caste
Ghond	Scheduled Tribe
Gowda	Backward Caste
Kamma	Forward Caste
Kapu	Other Backward Caste
Kshatriya	Forward Caste
Lambada	Scheduled Tribe
Lodhi	Other Backward Caste
Madiga	Scheduled Caste
Mala	Scheduled Caste
Mudiraj	Backward Caste
Panka	Scheduled Caste
Patidar	Forward Caste
Pradhan	Scheduled Caste
Reddy	Forward Caste
Sahu	Other Backward Caste
Thakur	Other Backward Caste
Vaddi/Vaddera	Backward Caste
Yadava	Backward Caste

Summary

Seasonal and circular migration of labour for employment has become one of the most durable components of the livelihood strategies of people living in rural areas. Migration is not just by the very poor during times of crisis for survival and coping but has increasingly become an accumulative option for the poor and non-poor alike.

This paper shows why some groups of people have succeeded in entering accumulative migration pathways while others have been excluded. A social exclusion and livelihoods approach that moves beyond neo-classical economics and structuralist theories is adopted. This helps us to understand that migration patterns are determined by people's access to resources, the (institutional, market, policy) environment, intra-household relations, wider social relations, and not just the productivity and demand for labour in an area.

In Andhra Pradesh (AP) and Madhya Pradesh (MP), important factors have been the historical development of different regions, interlocked markets for credit, output and labour, marketable traditional skills, other livelihood options that are complementary to migration, the availability of surplus labour within the household, cultural norms regarding the sexual division of labour, as well as decisions related to children's education. Caste emerges as an important determinant of who is excluded from positive migration streams.[1] This is because of the strong correlation between belonging to a Scheduled Caste and being poor, illiterate and assetless as well as being discriminated against by employers and contractors.

Contrary to received wisdom, the cases presented here show that people from poor areas can be on positive migration pathways and people from well-endowed areas can be on coping migration pathways. Indeed, one person's coping strategy is often another person's accumulation strategy. Thus we find that migrant sugarcane cutters, earthworkers and agricultural labourers from remote and poor villages of AP and MP have improved their standard of living significantly and are investing their savings in agriculture and educating their children. On the other hand, some migrants from the prosperous canal-irrigated coastal areas migrate for coping purposes.

And what of social policy? Although millions of poor labourers are in circulation for the best part of the year, policy continues to be ill-equipped to deal with this phenomenon, with the result that, outside their home areas, migrants have no entitlements to livelihood support systems or formal welfare schemes. Neither are they paid a full wage, because contractors deduct a part of that too. The additional burden posed by a lack of access to basic facilities is borne mainly by women and children. We conclude by identifying ways in which policy can enhance the positive outcomes of more accumulative migration and also provide support to reduce vulnerability in the case of the poor who migrate to survive.

1 We define a migration stream as a specific combination of caste, origin, destination and type of work at the destination. Therefore, a change in any of these four factors would make a different migration stream.

1 Introduction

Seasonal and circular (also known as cyclical, oscillatory) migration, has long been part of the livelihood portfolio of poor people across India (see for example Usha Rao's 1994 study of Palamur labour in Andhra Pradesh, de Haan's (2002) historical study of migration in Western Bihar, or Srivastava and Ali's 1981 study of labourers from Bundelkhand). It is now recognised that migration is a part of the normal livelihood strategy of the poor (Mc Dowell and De Haan, 1997) and does not occur only during times of emergency or distress.

Although panel data on seasonal migration in India are lacking, a growing number of micro-studies have established that seasonal migration for employment is growing both in terms of absolute numbers but also in relation to the size of the working population as a whole (Breman, 1985; Breman, 1996; Rao, 1994; Rogaly et al, 2001). The National Commission on Rural Labour (NCRL) puts the number of circular migrants in rural areas alone at around 10 million (including roughly 4.5 million inter-State migrants and 6 million intra-State migrants). But the departments of rural development, agriculture and labour are not geared to dealing with migrants and just regard them as external to the systems that they work with. According to the NCRL, the majority of seasonal migrants are employed in cultivation and plantations, brick-kilns, quarries, construction sites and fish processing. Further, large numbers of seasonal migrants work in urban informal manufacturing, construction, services or transport sectors, employed as casual labourers, head-loaders, rickshaw pullers and hawkers (Dev, 2002).

However, official awareness of the magnitude of seasonal migration or the importance of it in the lives of the poor is abysmally low. Policy-makers have tended to perceive migration largely as a problem, posing a threat to social and economic stability and have therefore tried to control it, rather than viewing it as an important livelihood option for the poor. There is little by way of organised accessible support for poor migrants who face insecurity in their source location as well as destination. Farrington et al (2001) attribute this to the 'yeoman farmer fallacy', where own-account farming is assumed to be what the poor really want and all have some prospect of succeeding in. Implicit in a number of earlier studies on migration (Rao, 1994) as well as projects on watershed management and agricultural development, is the goal of reducing migration by making it economically more attractive for people 'stay at home' (de Haan, 1999).

In this paper we are concerned with seasonal and circular migration for employment from rural areas in MP and AP. We do not discuss seasonal migration by livestock-keepers for grazing (documented by the NRMPA) or seasonal migration of fishers from coastal areas (see Tietze, 1985; Salagrama, 1999 and 2000) but much of the generic argument will apply to them too. Neither have we dealt with permanent and semi-permanent migration for employment, which has different determinants and impacts and is therefore beyond the scope of this paper. Henceforth, the term migration or migrant refers to seasonal/circular migration for employment only.

This work synthesises 12 months of primary data collected across 12 villages in AP and MP. Each of the six villages in each State provided labour for different migration options or 'streams'. There are some differences in the actual variables across the two data sets but the results are broadly comparable. The remainder of this paper is structured in three parts. We begin with a review of the literature in Part I, which covers different definitions and theories of migration. We attempt to construct a simple lens through which migration options can be analysed. Part II presents a broad picture of who migrates, by income, class, caste and gender. Part III examines specific migration streams in more detail and contains case studies of accumulative and coping migration from the two States to illustrate the complexity of migration and its determinants. It uses the framework developed in Part I to understand the broad patterns of access, choice and constraint across the two States. Finally, Part IV briefly explores how best migrants may be supported by policy.

2 Part I: Definitions and Theories of Migration

2.1 Some definitions

Much of the earlier literature on migration has been preoccupied with 'development-induced' economic migration which resulted from unequal development trajectories (McDowell and De Haan, 1997; Kothari, 2002). This supposedly led to one-way population movements from less-endowed areas to well-endowed prosperous areas through the 'push' created by poverty and a lack of work and the 'pull' created by better wages in the destination (Lee, 1966). Theories of urban expansion were in agreement with this analysis of migration. Ideas of seasonal and circular labour migration were first articulated in the 1970s (Nelson, 1976; Rao, 1994) and defined as 'characteristically short term, repetitive or cyclical in nature, and adjusted to the annual agricultural cycle'. This view challenged the linear model of migration as well as theories of urban expansion.

There are different definitions and explanations for the motivation that compels people to migrate. At one extreme there is 'involuntary' migration. This denotes extreme economic and often social hardships, and is undertaken mostly by landless or land-poor, unskilled and illiterate poor labourers. Here people do not have any choice of the place or type of work that they undertake. Migration for survival is well documented in AP (Ramana Murthy, 1991; Reddy 1990; Rao, 1994). Nearly all of the studies have identified the main drivers of migration as the worsening situation of dryland agriculture created by drought, crop failure and poor terms of trade. More recently, the idea of migration as a **coping** strategy (Davies, 1996) is gaining acceptance. This is migration that is integral to people's coping, survival and livelihood strategies (Rao, 2001; Conroy et al, 2001; Mosse et al, 2002) and not just a response to emergencies.

Seasonal migration that is undertaken to improve the economic position of the household, or **accumulative** migration, is also being noted by recent research in India. For example Rao (2001) refers to three kinds of migration in his study of Ananthapur and Rayadurga districts in Andhra Pradesh. Type 1 is migration for coping and survival. Type 2 is defined as migration for additional work/income. It takes place when the work in the village is over, normally after harvesting all crops. Type 3 is migration for better remuneration or a better work environment or opportunity to use skills or acquire new skills. They observe that there is a continuous transition between the different types. For instance, people from Rayadurga district were migrating for survival in the 1970s but changed to Type 2 in the 1990s. In Anantapur they began with Type 2 and moved on to Type 3. For the sake of distinguishing between different types of migration we will consider coping and accumulative migration, although there are various stages in between and they are not quite as distinct as the categorisation implies. Coping migration can become accumulative over time, as information improves, skills are acquired and relationships with employers stabilise. Middlemen may be eliminated and migration becomes an altogether remunerative option for the poor.

An associated question that has often been addressed in the literature is whether there is evidence that migration can reduce poverty. This is not easy to measure or understand because poverty levels are not constant and the effects of migration cannot be isolated. Also, there may be a two-way relationship between income and migration and it is therefore not surprising that there are mixed verdicts on this point. For instance, Chakrapani and Vijaya Kumar's study of Palamur labour (1994) notes that there has been an increase in migrants' incomes. Haberfeld et al's (1999) research on migration in Dungarpur found that those households that were sending migrants had higher income levels than those not sending migrants. On the other hand, Kothari's (2002) review of migration studies finds that migration can both reduce and perpetuate poverty.

Nevertheless, the dominant perception of migration among policy-makers, academics and officials in India continues to be that migration is only for survival and that migrants remain poor. The image of the migrant continues to be that of a powerless, impoverished and emaciated person who is trapped in poverty.

2.2 Theories of migration

There is a vast body of literature on migration, with interpretations from different disciplinary perspectives. Earlier analyses of migration were rooted in economic theory (Todaro, 1976) focusing on the rational behaviour of individuals. More recently, economic theories have been broadened to accommodate transaction costs, imperfect information as well as imperfections in rural capital markets (Stark, 1980; Stark, 1991). These 'new' economics of labour migration also recognised the household as the unit of decision-making according to the incentives and constraints it faces. The New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) framework of analysis (Taylor, 1991) addresses the multiplicity of factors which underlie the decision to migrate and the possible effects of migration on both migrant origin and destination economies. Migration and remittances from it have both positive and negative effects on the welfare of rural households and communities, depending on the type of household/community. The impacts also change with time: in the beginning, migration may deprive the household and rural economy of labour but in the longer term, remittances may be invested back into improving productivity and creating assets and household incomes.

The Marxist interpretation (Breman, 1996; Olsen, 1996) focuses on how wider structures have perpetuated the exploitation of migrants by capitalists and intermediaries. Some authors have portrayed migrants as no more than bonded labourers – powerless and poor and perpetually in debt. For example, Olsen and Ramana Murthy's (2000) study of the legendary Palamur labourers from Mahbubnagar district in Andhra Pradesh sums up their plight as follows:

> For labourers coming from landless and small peasant households struggling to subsist, the *maistries* (contractors) are practically monopoly creditors and monopsony buyers of their labour power in the absence of alternative sources of credit and employment.

They suggest that exploitation is both direct and indirect, wages are much lower than the market rate and there is extraction of overtime and child labour. The terms of the contract resemble those of co-existing and pre-existing attached/bonded labour relationships in the region. In addition, they argue that intermediaries also use traditional caste-based and patriarchal modes of oppression to maintain their exploitative labour relations. They accuse economists who have viewed migration as voluntary of being apolitical and naïve because of their refusal to recognise the oppression that they feel is inherent in debt-bondage contracts (Olsen, 1996).

However, others have differed and concluded that migration offers labourers an opportunity to exit traditional patron-client ties. For instance, Breman's research in South Gujarat (1993) shows how migration opened the way for labourers to break away from patron-client relationships and change from being semi-free to free. Rogaly et al (2001) contrast the situation in West Bengal with that in Gujarat as portrayed by Breman (1996), where labourers have more power because employers are not collusive. Rao's study of construction labourers from Mahbubnagar (the same group studied by Olsen and Ramana Murthy) also suggests that migrants have more choice: 'more migrants have started to bypass contractors and go directly to the big cities'.

Recent research goes beyond structuralist and neoclassical economics interpretations by adopting a livelihoods and social exclusion perspective (see for example *Journal of Development Studies* 38(5), Special Issue: Labour Mobility and Rural Society). The livelihoods approach departs from earlier narrow economics approaches to understand the importance of access to resources as well as

the institutional and policy context within which migrants must function – caste discrimination, the labour market, and labour laws.

We now understand why often, it is not the very poorest who migrate. For example, Skeldon (2002) observes:

> In apparent contradiction to the logic of survival migration, the general finding of most studies of migration in non-disaster situations is that it is not the poorest who move but those with access to some resources, no matter how meagre these might appear. Migration always involves some costs of transportation and the abandonment of many of the few possessions the poor might have. The poorest of the poor cannot afford either risk or movement and the majority starves in situ.

At this point it makes sense to distinguish between those who can and cannot sell their labour – the very poorest (the elderly, sick, children, women with many dependents) are near-destitute partly because they can hardly engage in the labour market at all. In fact, migration as an option is available only to those who are able-bodied and therefore the analysis in this paper is restricted to such persons only.

The new thinking on migration also departs from Marxist analyses and gives more recognition to agency and how complex interactions between structure and agency shape migration outcomes (Kothari, 2002). The notion of individual agency can help us to understand who migrates and why. Skeldon's (2000) analysis captures this:

> Most of those who can respond to the information coming into any community are the more innovative, the better-off and the better-educated even if these qualities themselves are relative. In an isolated rural community, for example, the better educated might be those with just the most basic primary education among the many with no formal education at all. Migrants need not always, or even generally, respond to information coming into a community: they may be selected by labour recruiters or other representatives of an expansionary urban-based group. Again, recruiters are unlikely to select the weakest or poorest members of any group. Migrants are either a selected or self-selected group within any population. Thus, the general conclusion is that migrants from any community, and particularly the initial migrants, are among the most innovative and dynamic members of that community.

The concept of social exclusion also addresses a range of economic and non-economic processes and relations to the analysis of migration (Kothari, 2002). It helps us to understand the multitude of ways in which certain groups of people are excluded based on their caste, age, gender and are not related to income in a predictable manner (UNDP, 1997). The role of interlocked markets (Bhardan, 1989) for credit, output and labour is brought into sharp focus. Small and marginal farmers as well as labourers are usually trapped in a situation where they have to borrow money from traders or employers to whom they eventually sell their produce or labour. This form of selling cheaply and buying expensively, or 'distress commerce', was conceptualised by Bharadwaj (1985) and subsequently a number of analysts have used the framework in understanding the vulnerability of poor peasant households.[2] The analysis has now been extended to understanding vulnerability among migrant households. For example, Mosse et al (2002) in their study of tribal migrants from the States of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan state that 'the problem is not so much one of declining production, as of systems of usurious moneylending, labour contracting and exploitation'. De Haan et al's work on migration patterns in Mali also shows that the social experience and consequences of migration are not uniform, but shaped by class and gender. Patterns of movement are determined by context-specific and complex dynamics, mediated by social networks, gender relations and household structures (De Haan et al, 2002).

2 It has been argued that interlocking markets could reduce the accumulation of capital (Bhaduri 1973, 1983) but Brass (1995) has argued that migrant labour is in fact part of the capitalist strategy of accumulation.

The work by Chant (1992) on gender relations and migration shows that migration is influenced by the organisation of productive and reproductive labour within the household; power dynamics, decision-making and gender divisions in rural and urban labour markets. Much of the discussion on gender and migration has assumed that women stay behind. But the evidence from AP and MP presented here shows that there are various combinations – men only, women only, men and women, men, women and children. The age composition of migrating groups also varies with old people accompanying migrants in some locations and staying back in others.

While many studies on migration in India have noted that certain castes migrate more than others, there is insufficient understanding of how caste can enable or prevent people from gaining access to remunerative work through migration. Much of the migration has been undertaken by historically poor and assetless communities who are typically lower caste and tribals. Some of them have now entered high-return migration streams where they get regular work at wage rates much higher than they would have earned at home. But for many other lower caste groups, migration has remained a low-return coping activity because of prejudices against them and their inability to invest in more remunerative kinds of migratory work. The empirical evidence presented in this paper is used to further explore these themes.

We use these new ways of analysing migration to understand why the pattern of migration varies between locations, social groups within those locations and households within the social groups. Migration is embedded in diverse processes, structures and relations. In the case of Andhra Pradesh, this includes the historical development of the region, the system of contractors and interlocked markets, the availability of surplus labour, norms on the sexual division of labour, balancing complementary economic activities in the livelihood portfolio, skills, and decisions related to children's education. We explore these and ways of supporting poor migrants in the coming pages.

Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh were chosen as contrasting States. Andhra Pradesh has shown a faster decline in poverty rates, and a faster spread of urbanisation and the non-farm economy. MP has a much larger tribal population and more forested areas compared to AP. However, AP has the second highest proportion of agricultural labourer households (41%) in the country after Tamil Nadu and has the highest labour force participation rate for women in India at 48%. Infrastructure and communication systems in Andhra Pradesh are much more developed compared to Madhya Pradesh and land use intensity and irrigation cover is also higher. Four inter-related questions are examined:

- What broad patterns of access to migration, either as a coping or accumulative strategy, do we observe across different social groups?
- How might we explain these patterns of access with respect to economic and social factors, as summarised in our framework?
- How does migration seem to affect people's ability to move out of poverty, or remain trapped within it?
- What implications might this have for policy-makers?

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Part II provides an overview of the magnitude and structure of migration in the study areas and presents an analysis of how migration patterns vary by caste, gender and landholding. Part III then differentiates between accumulative and coping types of migration in the study area and the factors that have contributed to inclusion/exclusion from these streams. Finally, Part IV addresses the question of how best policy can support migrants and reduce their vulnerability.

3 Part II: Broad Patterns of Migration in MP and AP

3.1 The magnitude of migration

Census data[3] collected from 4,647 households in AP and from 1,297 households in MP show that migration occurred from all six villages[4] but to varying degrees. On average 25% of the households had at least one member migrating. The corresponding figure for MP was twice as high at 52%. Recall suggests that the magnitude of migration has grown over time both in terms of the numbers of absolute people migrating and in terms of its importance as a source of household income. But in the absence of baseline data, it is difficult to quantify this increase.

As expected, migration rates were extremely high from villages which were remote and located in dry areas without assured irrigation and prolonged drought conditions. But as we will see in the following section, these figures masked the fact that quite a lot of this migration from drought-prone areas was along old and established routes, which although precipitated due to a 'push' of some kind (such as drought and crop failure) have now become regular and accumulative paths to engaging in high-return labour markets. Examples of this are the migrants from PT in Madhya Pradesh and MD in Medak who have migrated for many decades to more prosperous areas.

Table 1 Incidence of migration in AP and MP sample villages

AP villages	**Total number of households**	**Proportion of households with at least one member migrating (%)**
MD	427	78
VP	553	33
KO	1429	10
GU	1560	4
KA	464	15
OP	214	9
Total	**4647**	**25**
MP villages	**Number of households**	**Proportion of households with at least one member migrating**
PR	140	59
LJ	296	50
GG	187	43
PT	176	75
SM	369	21
MB	129	64
Total	**1297**	**52**

Source: Household Census, AP and MP.

The highest rates of migration were seen in the case of MD in Medak, district where 78% of households had at least one member migrating. This village is located in a very dry and very backward part of the State contiguous with similar areas in Karnataka and Maharashtra. It is nestled in a cluster of villages, all of which are known for their high rates of out-migration to the capital city of Hyderabad, neighbouring States and the sugarcane fields of Medak and Nizambad districts. Dryland agriculture is the mainstay of the economy in MD and there are few opportunities outside casual labouring. The average number of days of work available for an agricultural labourer is a mere 35 in the *Kharif* season. MD also had the highest number of persons migrating from each

[3] Basic information on occupation structures, caste, income and asset ownership was collected through a census survey that covered all households in the study villages in both states.
[4] To protect anonymity, only the initials of the twelve study villages are given throughout

household at 2.87, suggesting that there are households where nearly everyone migrates. Next was VP, also located in a low potential area, but with good trade links to Bangalore, where the average number of people migrating per household was 0.72.

The most remote village in MP, with the least agricultural potential and the highest number of marginal holdings, PT, in tribal Mandla district, shows a similar pattern to MD with the highest rates of migration and 75% of households with at least one member migrating.

The exceptions in both States were dry villages where migration rates appeared very low (OP near Chittoor town, and GU near Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh) but this could be because several households were commuting on a daily basis to nearby urban locations and this did not register in the migration data.

Next in Madhya Pradesh were villages which either had limited prospects for agricultural labour within the village (such as MB with 64% of households with at least one member migrating) or better trade links with the outside world (such as city bordering PR at 59% of the households with at least one member migrating). In AP, VP village in Chittoor has good trade links for vegetables and silkworms to Bangalore despite being located in a dry and drought-prone area. Here, roughly a third of the households (33%) had at least one person migrating.

Contrary to dominant perceptions on migration, there was outmigration from all the well-endowed villages in both States. In Andhra Pradesh, KA and KO showed migration rates of 15% and 10% respectively, while in Madhya Pradesh and 21% of the households in SM and 43% of the households in GG had at least one person migrating. Many of these villages have very high levels of land polarisation and mechanisation, and while there is strong labour demand throughout the year for high value, labour-intensive crops, particularly horticulture, only a certain proportion the substantial landless population gain access to this work. For the rest, migration forms an important coping strategy for at least part of the year.

3.2 The returns from migration

3.2.1 Income from farm and non-farm work inside and outside the village

Seasonal migration as a livelihood strategy appears to be far more important, in terms of returns, in MP than AP. Data for AP on average returns per household per annum show that the returns from work outside the village accounted for nearly a sixth of the total (average) income. Compared to this, earnings from migration were much more important in MP, with more than half of the total income being derived from outside sources. The lower figures in AP are partly explained by the fact that earnings through commuting were not captured in the survey data.[5]

In AP, in-village returns were nearly six times higher for agricultural labouring, compared to non-farm labouring work. On the other hand, the returns from non-farm work were higher, as a proportion of total earnings, outside the village. Examining the AP data by village shows that earnings inside the village were highest in the case of KO and KA, both prosperous ‘green revolution’ villages, with a large landless class and a predominance of modern, irrigated green revolution technology amongst the landed. KO is also highly diversified, with several non-farm activities and occupations within the village. The lowest returns from in-village work were seen in MD, where there are limited opportunities available locally both in the farm and non-farm sector. This village is drought-prone and backward with hardly any diversification at all. It had the highest average earnings from outside sources, indicating that migration was the main source of earning

5 Subsequent calculations revealed that there were 53 commuting households in the sample, 25 working in the construction sector and 28 as industrial labourers.

through both farm and non-farm work. A large proportion of these returns were through high-return sugarcane cutting work, which we treat in detail under the section on accumulative streams (Section 4.1). We cover this type of migration at a later point in the paper (Section 4.1.1). Next in rank was VP village in Chittoor, a drought-prone village with active trade links with Bangalore city. Here, non-farm earnings outside the village were highest. This was largely due to several households in that village engaging in high-return earthwork, a subject that we also cover in detail under accumulative migration streams (Section 4.1.3).

Although the returns from work outside the village were lower in the highly productive coastal villages of KO and KA, there was some low-return outmigration for farm work by lower caste households that were excluded from local work opportunities. This type of coping migration is also covered at a later point in the paper (Section 4.2.3).

Table 2 Average returns per household per annum in AP (Rs)

AP villages	**Inside the village**			**Outside the village**		
	Farm	*Non-farm*	*Total*	*Farm*	*Non-farm*	*Total*
OP	3303	1083	4386	111	339	450
VP	3637	2156	5793	309	1396	1705
KO	6775	1897	8672	145	79	224
KA	6352	340	6692	0	525	525
GU	2682	2877	5559	0	731	731
MD	3001	504	3505	3046	1280	4326
Total	4538	1678	6216	445	692	1137

Source: Household Census, AP.

As stated earlier, earnings from outside the village in MP were more than earnings from inside the village and accounted for over half the total (average) earnings. Returns from inside the village were highest in the case of PR and GG, both prosperous 'green revolution' villages and, like the AP villages, these too have a large landless class and a predominance of modern, irrigated green revolution technology amongst the landed. The lowest returns from in-village work were seen in MB, where there are limited opportunities available locally both in the farm and non-farm sector due to low irrigation, low capitalisation and poor market access. Average earnings outside the village were also highest in the case of MB, indicating that migration was the main source of earning for this village through both farm and non-farm work. A large proportion of these returns were through non-farm sector work, which were coping activities in many cases but had become accumulative for those who had been in the business for longer and acquired skills and contacts. Next in rank were PT, SM and GG, where non-farm earnings outside the village were high. PT has high migration rates into both farm and non-farm work due to the low intensity of agriculture in the village. In SM, one caste has diversified into ice-cream selling and another has taken up casual labouring in the urban sector.

Table 3 Average returns per household per annum in MP (Rs)

MP villages	**Inside the village**			**Outside the village**		
	Farm	*Non-farm*	*Total*	*Farm*	*Non-farm*	*Total*
PR	1577	259	1836	38	253	291
LJ	625	127	752	327	20	347
GG	1051	228	1279	51	877	928
PT	564	443	1007	456	573	1029
SM	236	443	679	104	846	950
MB	38	64	102	801	1391	2192
Total	611	272	883	279	639	918

Source: Household Census, MP

Since employment through agriculture is the most important source of livelihoods for poor labourers, we analyse the data on agricultural income in some detail below.

3.2.2 The returns from agricultural labouring work inside and outside the village

In Andhra Pradesh, households earn roughly twice the agricultural income within the village compared to outside. Of the in-village component, *Kharif* earnings are 1.5 times more than *Rabi* earnings. This could be due to the high labour requirements of paddy, which is the main *Kharif* crop. This trend is seen in most of the villages, with the exception of VP, where the returns are higher in *Rabi* and this is most likely because labour-intensive vegetable crops are grown during *Rabi* and these need even more labour than paddy.

Table 4 Agricultural labour income inside and outside the village in AP (Rs)

Village	*Kharif*	*Rabi*	Inside total	*Kharif*	*Rabi*	Outside total	Total income
OP	**1348**	**1229**	**2577**	**1369**	**0**	**1369**	**3945**
	0	613	813	0	0	0	3188
VP	**1380**	**2078**	**3458**	**1934**	**284**	**2218**	**5676**
	0	1150	2775	0	0	0	4775
KO	**4885**	**1783**	**6668**	**2243**	**133**	**2375**	**9043**
	2150	0	3300	0	0	0	4925
KA	**3245**	**3037**	**6282**	**2268**	**0**	**2268**	**8550**
	2450	2200	5050	0	0	0	6575
GU	**1943**	**836**	**2779**	**892**	**0**	**892**	**3671**
	250	0	675	0	0	0	763
MD	**1624**	**1370**	**2994**	**2385**	**2574**	**4958**	**7952**
	1225	400	2275	1410	0	2275	5335
Total	**2618**	**1723**	**4341**	**1814**	**363**	**2177**	**6518**
	913	88	1975	0	0	0	3700

Source: Household Census, AP. *Note*: Means are in bold and medians in regular font.

Outside the village, the returns from agricultural labour are nearly five times higher in *Kharif* compared to *Rabi* across all villages. But there are sharp variations here: the most backward and dry village, MD, shows high and nearly equal returns for both *Rabi* and *Kharif*, showing that migration is important throughout the year. In other villages, there is little or no earning from agricultural labour outside the village during *Rabi*, making *Kharif* the main outmigration season as well as being the main season for in-village employment.

In MP overall, households earned more than twice the agricultural-labour income locally than outside the village. Of the in-village component, almost four times is earned in *Kharif* than in *Rabi* (despite average agricultural value outputs in *Rabi* being similar to those of *Kharif*. This is probably accounted for by the high transplanting and weeding needs of rice paddy). This is a phenomenon found in all villages – the *Kharif* season simply provides far more labour opportunities per value of agricultural output. Outside the village, about 50% more labour is carried out in *Kharif* than in *Rabi* though this pattern in reversed in PT where long standing relation to the 'Havelli' wheat growing regions (advanced green revolution pockets of Madhya Pradesh in the Narmada river valley) mean that *Rabi* season becomes a peak migrating and income earning season. This *Rabi* work fits in well with agricultural cycles in the village and allows marginal farmers to tend to and harvest their rainfed crops before moving into migration.

Table 5 Agricultural labour income inside and outside the village in MP (Rs)

Village	*Kharif*	*Rabi*	Inside total	*Kharif*	*Rabi*	Outside total	Total income
PR	**1116**	**460**	**1577**	**28**	**10**	**38**	**1614**
	400	388	1015	0	0	0	1015
LJ	**526**	**99**	**625**	**211**	**116**	**327**	**951**
	600	0	603	0	0	0	735
SM	**147**	**86**	**233**	**94**	**10**	**104**	**340**
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MB	**25**	**13**	**38**	**555**	**246**	**801**	**840**
	0	0	0	355	0	500	500
GG	**934**	**117**	**1051**	**37**	**14**	**51**	**1102**
	729	29	848	0	0	0	850
PT	**427**	**137**	**564**	**82**	**374**	**456**	**1020**
	348	90	479	0	0	15	750
Total	**474**	**137**	**610**	**165**	**114**	**279**	**890**
	0	*0*	*75*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*520*

Source: Household Census, MP. *Note*: Means are in bold and medians in regular font.

In both MP and AP, in-village per household agricultural labouring incomes are highest in the villages with the highest agricultural productivity and output. In MP these are PR and GG and in AP these are KO, KA and GU. Incomes from outside-village agricultural labour are highest in PT, MB and LJ in Madhya Pradesh. These are all agriculturally backward (low irrigation, low capitalisation), remote villages with plenty of marginal farmers, more fragmented land holdings and overall less labour opportunities within the village.

In AP the figures from the most backward and dry village, MD, show the same pattern as that in MP, with high returns from migration during both *Kharif* and *Rabi*. But the returns from outmigration were higher in the AP green revolution villages of KO and KA, compared to the highly productive MP villages. This shows that despite the many locally-generated work opportunities, those that are excluded from local work still outmigrate for agricultural work.

Table 6 Agricultural labour income inside and outside the village by land category in AP (Rs)

Land category	*Kharif*	*Rabi*	Inside total	*Kharif*	*Rabi*	Inside total	Total
Landless	**4162**	**2095**	**6257**	**2481**	**247**	**2727**	**8985**
	2450	725	4550	875	0	875	6450
Sub-marginal	**2413**	**2324**	**4738**	**2720**	**207**	**2927**	**7664**
	1500	1065	3710	125	0	125	6450
Semi-marginal	**1445**	**1762**	**3207**	**1630**	**852**	**2483**	**5689**
	1200	1000	2700	1200	0	1200	4000
Marginal	**2257**	**1704**	**3961**	**1545**	**613**	**2158**	**6119**
	1500	650	2650	0	0	0	4000
Small	**1877**	**1775**	**3652**	**1355**	**360**	**1715**	**5367**
	0	0	913	0	0	0	1900
Semi-medium	**596**	**667**	**1263**	**706**	**400**	**1106**	**2369**
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Medium	**366**	**0**	**366**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**366**
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Large	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	0	0	**0**	0	0	0	0
Total	**2618**	**1723**	**4341**	**1814**	**363**	**2177**	**6518**
	913	88	1975	0	0	0	3700

Source: Household Census, AP. *Note*: Means are in bold and medians in regular font.

In AP, the landless derive the highest income from agricultural labour inside the village compared to other classes. The earnings for the landless from in-village sources are nearly three times as much as outside the village. The picture changes as we examine incomes from outside the village, with submarginal farmers earning slightly more than the landless. Medium and large farmers clearly do not migrate out for agricultural work.

Table 7 Agricultural labour income inside and outside the village by land category in MP (Rs)

Land category	*Kharif*	*Rabi*	Inside total	*Kharif*	*Rabi*	Inside total	Total
Landless	**892**	**319**	**1,211**	**135**	**97**	**232**	**1443**
	485	138	735	0	0	0	880
Sub-marginal	**373**	**47**	**420**	**511**	**280**	**791**	**1211**
	0	0	0	240	0	450	1112
Semi-marginal	**542**	**61**	**603**	**149**	**197**	**346**	**949**
	262	0	352	0	0	0	550
Marginal	**400**	**127**	**526**	**232**	**69**	**301**	**828**
	388	0	458	0	0	0	540
Small	**319**	**70**	**393**	**118**	**109**	**226**	**619**
	0	0	60	0	0	0	180
Semi-medium	**213**	**91**	**304**	**137**	**69**	**205**	**509**
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Medium	**106**	**0**	**106**	**95**	**125**	**220**	**326**
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Large	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**474**	**137**	**611**	**165**	**114**	**279**	**890**
	0	0	75	0	0	0	520

Source: Household Census, MP. *Note*: Means are in bold and medians in regular font.

In MP, patterns are very similar, with the landless earning by far the greatest income from in-village works, perhaps because they also tend to inhabit more polarised and agriculturally developed villages. By far the highest income share from outside the villages is the sub-marginal followed by semi-marginal and marginal. It is these latter groups that tend to be under-employed in the village and need to search outside.

3.3 Who migrates and why

We investigated the determinants of the likelihood of migrating in AP and MP using regression analysis. Our dependent variable is given the value 1 if at least one member of the household migrates during the year, and 0 otherwise. Our explanatory variables are the (log) value of land assets, the (log) value of livestock assets, the (log) value of agricultural assets, three dummy variables corresponding to the different caste groups Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste and Backward Caste (the reference caste group is Other Castes), size of the household and lastly the 'inverse dependency ratio' of the household (ratio of working members to non-working members). We estimated the regression using the logit method. We expect that households with more land and assets will be less likely to migrate, and that larger households with a higher inverse dependency ratio will be more likely to migrate. The results were as follows.

Table 8 Factors correlated with migration: regression analysis results for AP

Explanatory variable	Effect on likelihood of migration	Significance level
Land	1.070	.359
Livestock	0.973	.009
Agricultural assets	1.033	.014
ST	5.958	.000
SC	5.373	.000
BC	3.899	.000
Household size	1.174	.000
Dependency ratio	1.754	.001
Constant	0.023	.000

Source: Household Census, AP.
Note: The first column shows the estimated amount by which each explanatory variable affects (in multiplicative terms) the 'odds ratio': the likelihood that a household migrates as a ratio of the likelihood it does not. The second column shows the level of statistical significance of each estimated effect. For instance, an increase in (log) agricultural assets by one unit increases the probability that a household has at least one migrating member, relative to the probability it does not, by a factor of 1.033, or 3.3%. This result is significant at the 5% level, but not the 1%.

Table 9 Factors correlated with migration: regression analysis results for MP

Explanatory variable	Effect on likelihood of migration	Significance level
Land	0.584	.000
Livestock	1.085	.000
Agricultural assets	0.870	.000
ST	14.063	.000
SC	5.345	.000
OBC	4.502	.000
Household size	1.185	.000
Dependency ratio	3.208	.000
Constant	0.069	.000

Source: Household Census, MP.
Note: The first column shows the estimated amount by which each explanatory variable affects (in multiplicative terms) the 'odds ratio' – the likelihood that a household migrates, as a ratio of the probability it does not. The second column shows the level of statistical significance of each estimated effect. For instance, an increase in (log) land assets of one unit reduces the probability that a household migrates, relative to the probability it does not, by a factor of 0.584, or 41.6%. This result is significant at the 1% level.

3.3.1 Do those with land, livestock and agricultural assets stay at home?

The regression analysis for MP shows that there is a significant negative relationship between land owned and migration, i.e. the more the land owned the less the household is likely to migrate. In AP the opposite is seen but the results are not significant

With regards to livestock, the results for AP show a significant negative relationship, i.e. those with more animals are less likely to migrate. But as we will see from the case studies, livestock is essential for one kind of migration, namely sugarcane cutting. In MP, having more animals significantly increases the likelihood of migrating. But qualitative information counters these findings, because there are hardly any kinds of migration in the sample villages that depend on livestock. In fact, migration makes it difficult to keep livestock.

The results for agricultural assets are also different for the two States. In AP, more assets increase the chance of migration but significance levels are not high. In MP, the relationship is negative and

the results are significant, meaning that those with more assets are less likely to migrate, a finding that is borne out by the qualitative investigations.

3.3.2 The poorest rarely migrate

The findings from the regression analysis need to be unpacked further. Cross-tabulation between land class and numbers of households migrating (not presented here) shows that in MP, small and marginal farmers have a slightly higher chance of migrating compared to sub- and semi-marginal farmers, perhaps because these families have the resources to hire in labour and thus release family labour for more lucrative outside work. In AP, migration among sub-marginal farmers is slightly lower than semi-marginal or marginal farmers. As we shall see from the case studies on migration, a minimum level of material assets is required to make the investment for migration; for travel, purchasing supplies to take to the destination and leaving some money behind for running the household.

3.3.3 Labour-scarce households do not migrate

The regression analysis shows that the availability of labour within the household is a strong determinant of the likelihood to migrate. Having one extra member in the household increases the relative likelihood of that household migrating by 17% in AP and 19% in MP. And an increase in the ratio of working to non-working members in the household also increases the relative likelihood of migration by nearly 75% in AP and 221% in MP. Focus group discussions and participatory wealth ranking of migrating households corroborate these findings: labour-scarce households do not migrate.

3.3.4 Higher migration among the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes

The regression analysis shows that in both MP and AP the Scheduled Tribes are several times more likely to migrate compared to upper castes, followed closely by the SCs who are roughly five and a half times more likely to migrate than OCs, and then by Backward Castes (BCs) who are four to four and a half times more likely to migrate.

Caste characteristics of migration streams are closely associated with village characteristics and the two reinforce each other, leading to a higher incidence of migration amongst certain castes.

The regression analysis shows that certain caste categories are more likely to migrate. Taking the Forward Castes (FCs) as the basis for comparison it is seen in the AP villages that STs are nearly six times more likely to migrate; SCs roughly five and a half times more likely to migrate and BCs roughly three and a half times more likely to migrate.

Further disaggregation of the four broad caste categories in AP shown in Table 10 below indicates that the castes that had the largest numbers of migrants were the Lambada (ST) at 62%, followed by the BC Artisans with 33.2% households migrating. Next were the two main SCs and the BC cultivators. There was comparatively little migration from upper caste households.

Table 10 Migration rates by caste in AP and MP villages

AP castes	**Number of HHs**	**Number of migrating HHs**	**% of caste group migrating**
FC-Brahmins	53	4	7.5
FC-Reddy	370	20	5.4
FC-Kapu	389	38	9.8
FC-Kamma	250	7	2.8
FC-Non Brahmin	380	20	5.3
BC-Cultivator	1248	257	20.6
BC-Artisan	500	166	33.2
BC-Service	471	35	7.4
SC-Mala	457	104	22.8
SC-Madiga	380	111	29.2
ST-Lambada	60	37	61.7
ST-Others	89	7	7.9
Totals	4647	806	17.3
MP castes	**Number of HHs**	**Number of migrating HHs**	**% of caste group migrating**
Brahmin	34	8	23.5
FC-non Brahmin	32	2	6.3
Thakurs	185	109	58.9
Lodhis	158	51	32.3
Patidars	59	4	6.8
OBC-Cultivators	58	11	19.0
OBC-Artisans	204	85	41.7
OBC-Service providers	217	117	53.9
SC-Service providers	30	14	46.7
SC-Artisans	171	96	56.1
ST-Baigas	58	49	84.5
ST-Others	90	57	63.3
Total	1296	603	46.5

Source: Household Census, AP and MP.

In MP, we see that migration is not contained to the lower caste groups. While tribals tend to make up the largest migrating group (84.5% migrate), 58.9% of the wealthy Thakur group also migrate as do 23.5% of Brahmins. There are clearly options available that are beyond the coping level for these castes, or there are members of the household, such as young men, for whom migration as an activity suits.

The case studies presented later demonstrate that those castes that are endowed with traditional skills that can be adapted to modern requirements stand the best chance of obtaining high-return work. If skills are acquired over time by working under a skilled person, then this too leads to well-paid and regular work, as is seen in the case of some SC construction workers who have been in trade for several years. This is illustrated in Box 1, which tells of a case from MP. Simple brick kiln skills and contacts, built up over several years, have now allowed SC families in Ujjain to accumulate. But several lower caste groups, particularly the erstwhile untouchables, are routinely excluded from higher return work because of existing prejudices and beliefs held by contractors and employers who may often belong to a different caste. Lower caste people may also lack the assets that are needed for some kinds of high-return work.

Box 1 Building on skills and creating good returns from migration

LJ-MH, a landless SC Chamar, started work at the age of 9 as a cattle herder, but when he was 17 years old he decided that he should try to make more of his life and travelled 65km to Ujjain city, where he discovered the city life and found work in brick kilns through his sister-in-law who was already working there. That was 13 years ago. Since then, he has become a reliable and skilled worker for the brickmaker, able to secure advances and earning up to Rs70/day. He also went to Kota coal works and was saving Rs7000 in six months at Rs60/day, by keeping his expenses down to Rs15/day through prudence and moderate consumption habits. With the money he saved he has bought some land in LJ village and plans to return to try his hand at agriculture as a new business, confident in the knowledge that he can also work in the kilns when he needs to.

3.3.5 Gender

Much of the literature on migration suggests that it is predominantly men who migrate. But in the study villages, household members were found to migrate in various combinations – men only, women only, men and women, men, women and children. There are marked differences in the gender composition of migration between the two States. In AP, the majority of migrants were male in all villages, whereas in MP, tribal villages such as PT had more female migrants. Even within villages, some streams had more men migrating whereas others had more women.

The reasons for this are complex and related to whether or not the skills are gendered, cultural norms to do with women's work and restrictions on women migrating. For example in the case of OP which is near a town, most of the migration is by single people within households, mainly men, for employment in the non-farm sector. Data from PT in Madhya Pradesh show that migration for telephone cable digging is usually done by men.

The gender possibilities for migration are also determined by caste. For higher caste families it was traditionally often shameful for the woman to work outside her home. In KA for instance, there are strong cultural restrictions among the Kapu on females working in the fields. Therefore, only men from that community migrate for agricultural labouring work. While female participation in labour markets is now widespread, it is still seen as shameful for a woman to leave her own village to work. Lower castes have much less such social pressure. Those with spare labour capacity are able to take advantage of these opportunities create the extra income that can move a household from a deficit to a surplus trajectory.

As a rule, men-only migration occurred where men possess the required skills or in the early years when the activity is relatively new for the community and the destination areas/work are perceived to be too risky to take women and children along. As the migration stream becomes more established and the working arrangements more predictable, women accompany their husbands or may even start going without them. Data from PT in Madhya Pradesh show that more women and children go to Havelli than adult men. Of the total of 61 migrants to Havelli, 62% were women while all the 21 migrants for telephone digging were male. This is also observed as in the case of Dhimars migrating as agricultural labour to Bhind in MP. In this region, there is a time gap between the kodo millet harvest and the paddy harvest, so groups of women and children, occasionally headed by one or two male members, migrate out for harvesting work. The men stay back at home to look after their own farms.

Table 11 Gender profile of migrating households in AP

Village	Male	Female	Total	% of males in total migrating individuals	% of females in total migrating individuals
OP	20	7	27	74.07	25.93
VP	236	164	400	59.00	41.00
KO	146	126	272	53.68	46.32
KA	84	46	130	64.62	35.38
GD	75	57	132	56.82	43.18
MD	683	535	1218	56.08	43.92
Total	1244	935	2179	57.09	42.91

Source: Household Census, AP.

Table 12 Age and gender of migrants working in farm and non-farm work in AP

By age and gender (no. of people)	OP	VP	KO	KA	GU	MD
Farm						
Men	0	6	7	0	0	16
Women	0	3	7	0	0	14
Children	0	0	0	0	0	4
Non-farm						
Men	0	13	1	2	1	14
Women	0	8	0	2	0	4
Children	0	0	0	0	0	1

Source: Household Census, AP.

Table 13 Who in the family migrates in MP

Village	Nature of migration				Total
	Not migrating	*Both*	*Family*	*Individual*	
GG	106	5	22	54	187
LJ	148	0	38	110	296
MB	51	0	7	71	129
PT	44	29	10	93	176
PR	60	0	16	64	140
SM	291	0	14	64	369
Total	700	34	107	456	1297

Source: Household Census, MP

4 Part III: Accumulative and Coping Migration Streams

A common element in the history of migration in all the locations is the way in which it began – usually as a consequence of the push created by a lack of employment opportunities at home and the pull from work availability elsewhere. But different migration streams have evolved differently for different groups of people.

As a rule, the older, better-established migration streams offer high-returns and predictable employment for migrants. These are often streams where stable relations with employers have been built up by particular castes and communities over a long period of time; where specialized skills (often caste-based) are possessed or have been acquired; or where other assets that are needed for migration are available. Well-known examples of this are the legendary 'Palamur' labourers from Mahbubnagar district in AP, who are famous for their constructions skills and are employed by the Public Works Department even in far off places, including the Narmada Valley project. Similarly, earthworkers from Chittoor district in AP are migrating to destinations all over south India and also regularly employed by government.

In MP, examples are long-established non-farm migration work in quarter-skilled work. This includes rickshaw-pulling by the Baiga and Ghond in towns such as Jabalpur, brick kiln work by the Chamars in Ujjain (see Box 1), domestic services and longer term contracts in cities. Agricultural labouring in neighbouring high productivity, irrigated wheat and paddy areas, such as the 'Havelli' near Jabalpur, have also become secure sources of income each year that are often able to contribute towards savings or major expenditures. In such cases it is often the dependability that contributes towards the possibilities for accumulation, as time spent searching for work or, even worse, being cheated for work done, is a large opportunity cost.

These kinds of accumulative migration streams have now become a major source of income for many erstwhile poor communities in AP and MP and have significantly contributed to improving their lives through more investment in their farms, houses, children's education and marriages.

On the other hand are the more negative kinds of migration streams, which involve a more opportunistic search for work. Often, there is no stable relationship with any particular employer. This happens either when the migrants are relatively new, poor and unskilled or when traditional forms of discrimination work against them so that they may never graduate into better-paid work. In AP this is seen in the case of SC migrants working on earthwork projects, who, although working side-by-side with the Vaddi, earn only two-thirds as much as them. SC migrants from the coastal districts are similarly excluded. Even though they live in areas which regularly import labour, they do not get enough work during the peak seasons to tide them over the lean season and are forced to migrate for part of the year. In MP migration for coping has also been on the increase in areas where the drought has been severe over the last 2–3 years. Wages can be reasonable, but work is not available every day. Indeed labouring groups in need of work often travel for days on the basis of rumours of work only to discover that the work is non-existent, no longer available or that there are many more people waiting before them. Even if they get work, there is often no guarantee of payment, as the example in Box 2 shows.

Box 2 Risks of migration

GG05 is a landless SC Pradhan household in GG village of the tribal and remote Mandla district in Madhya Pradesh. The son and daughter-in-law went to Bhopal three years ago with their children in search of better wage work during *Rabi* season as they were tired of the insecurity of rural life. They found some casual work, and were living rough, but decided to move to Gujarat to find something more permanent. They spent the Rs200 they saved on a ticket. After one month's hard work in a sugar mill there the manager refused to pay them their wage. They returned to GG having lost all their money and had to beg for food on the three-day journey back.

We identify six migration streams from the study villages in AP and nine from MP, most of which have not been documented before. Table 14 below provides summary information on the different streams. This information was collected through Focus Group Discussions, Key Informant Interviews and Participant Observation by research officers who were posted in the villages for the entire duration of the study. As the table shows, there can be more than one completely distinct type of migration stream or 'option' from the same village. We treat some of these in detail in the text in order to highlight the major accumulative and coping streams.

Table 14 Coping and accumulative migration streams in MP and AP villages

AP village name and characteristics	Caste, skill and asset base of migrants	Type of work and when	Who migrates	Source, amount and purpose of credit/advance	Coping or accumulative and wage rate	Impact on migrant household and source location
VP: Narsapur hamlet. Far from urban centres but good transport links, unirrigated agriculture, sericulture was important until recently.	Vaddi (BC) skilled earthworkers, small and marginal farmers, good contacts with government officials who award contracts.	Non-farm: digging trenches for cable networks. Migrate during non-rainy season.	Able-bodied men and sometimes their wives. New/young families: all members migrate. In older/larger families couples take turns so that others can care for livestock, farm and children.	Contractor pays for food, transport and shelter until they get paid for the work at the end of the contract.	Accumulative and always has been. Averages Rs 110/day.	Increase in wealth, much construction work and drilling of tubewells in village, buying more land from neighbouring villages. They are educating their children in good schools.
VP: SC hamlet.	Mala (SC) marginal farmers.	Work alongside teams of Vaddi migrants but on the 'lighter' jobs in plantations and for the Forest Department. Migrate only during drought and lean months.	Able-bodied men. Women migrate only if household economic situation is very bad.	Contractor pays for food until they get paid for the work at the end of the contract.	Coping when no work at home. Rs 65/day. Work availability low.	Manage to survive during the lean season and drought.
OP: dry, partly tank-irrigated. Near district capital.	Mixed.	Non-farm and farm labouring in nearby urban and 12 nearby villages with irrigated farming. Migrate for 15–30 days at a time.	Single person from household.	None.	Accumulative Average earning is Rs 50/day and this kind of work is available all year round.	Better paid than local casual labouring.
MD: remote, unirrigated Very large number of marginal and submarginal holdings. Much of the land is unproductive.	Mudiraj (BC) and Lambada (ST). Small and marginal farmers. Pair of bulls and cart essential.	Harvest sugarcane for the sugar factory in Bodhan (Nizambad, a neighbouring district), work usually from October–March.	Two–three adults from a household migrate (usually two males and one female), together with children.	Employer in destination (he comes or they go in advance of the migration season). No middleman or contractor.	Accumulative now, started as coping migration in the 1970s. Migrants can save up to Rs 3000/ month after meeting expenses and paying off debt. Most families return with a saving of at least Rs 10,000 in a season	More wealth but children's education suffers.
MD: remote, unirrigated. Very large number of	Mala (SC), poor Mudiraj (BC) marginal farmers	Construction labour in Hyderabad. This kind of work is more	Young men, women and breastfeeding children.	Local moneylender.	Coping. Rs 70/day when they get work but this is not every day.	Survival in the off-season. But can result in savings and

marginal and submarginal holdings. Much of the land is unproductive.		opportunistic and risky so may be left with no work and may have to sell utensils, etc. to pay for ticket back home or to meet expenses at destination.			Expenses in the city are high. For those families that have been doing this for several decades and have acquired skills/contacts, the work may be more regular and therefore accumulative.	investment in children's education for the longer-term migrants.
KO, KA: canal irrigated, prosperous. In KO, very large proportion of landless households; KA has more small holdings but land is highly productive.	Mala (SC), Gowda (BC). Some of them may be tenant farmers.	Agricultural labour in other coastal districts. Only for 15 days–month in a year when there is no work locally, but it is available in neighbouring district. The agricultural seasons are slightly different in neighbouring districts.	Able-bodied men and women, no children.	None.	Coping. Rs 50/day and 0.5 kg of rice.	Without this work they would have to borrow money.
MP Village name and characteristics	**Caste, skill and asset base of migrants**	**Type of work and when**	**Who migrates**	**Source, amount and purpose of credit/advance**	**Coping or accumulative and wage rate**	**Impact on migrant household and source location**
PT: hilly with limited agricultural development. 15km off main road, restricted access and transport. But relatively close to Jabalpur city and associated high productivity Havelli areas.	Majority of (ST) Baiga and Ghonds migrate, about 50% of (SC) Pankas. Pankas are most advanced agriculturalists, particularly in newly emerging irrigated paddy. Baigas have the worst land.	Wheat harvesting in Havelli region west of Jabalpur along Namada plains. Main migration is in March, though some go for paddy harvesting in other regions in November and some are able to secure pulse harvesting in April, although this overlaps with Mahua collection at home.	Families migrate in groups via contractor *(mestri)*, and often to landlords with whom they have a long term relationship. Sometimes groups of related single women may migrate.	Contractor pays food, and sometimes transport.	Contract work means that returns can be higher if whole family works together. Accumulative compared to other works. These routes have been plied for 30 years and more. Wages in grain are approx equivalent Rs30/day/person.	Families can save up to Rs 50/day/family. If they get two weeks' work, they can save up to Rs 1000. Secures year round food security. Involves children, so has impact on schooling, though some schools shut in March anyway.
GG: irrigated agriculture, but polarised land holdings. Commutable to Mandla district town.	All castes, including non-poor cultivating households such as Lodhis (OBC).	1–2 month trips to urban centres such as Bhopal and Nagpur.	Mainly young males, looking for good pay and experience of city life.	None	High savings are possible but there is the risk of unsuccessful work search and of being cheated. Some have developed good	As these are often opportunities for single men, the main impact on the home household is positive, if remittances are sent or

					skills and returns from masonry. Returns from urban work are Rs40–60/day but costs are high (at least Rs20/day plus return transport).	savings accumulated for return.
GG: irrigated agriculture, but polarised land holdings. Commutable to Mandla district town.	Mainly poorer castes such as Pradhans (SC).	23 weeks to nearby Bhamni Banji for paddy harvesting in November.	Whole families for contract work. Often in groups, connected by kin or friendship.	Contractor pays food, and sometimes transport.	Contract work means that returns can be higher if whole family works together. Accumulative compared to other works. Wages, in grain, are approx equivalent to Rs30/day/ person.	Generates surplus income over and above the regular *Kharif* income from in-village agricultural labour.
MB: land very poor despite lake irrigation. Close to small block town, Close to bus route, but far from major town.	Single caste village of (OBC) Dhimar fishermen. Two thirds migrate, mostly those with marginal landholdings.	Paddy harvesting in Bhind district. Some wheat/mustard harvesting in Gwalior district. Trips are short: 1–2 weeks.	Groups of women are the main agricultural migrant workers. Most families have some marginal land so men may remain to manage this land.	None	Ag. migration is secure and fairly predictable and therefore accumulative. These links are often well-established. Wages, in grain, are approx equivalent to Rs30/day/person.	Women can face high risks, though these are mitigated by the established relations they have with landlords, and by travelling in groups.
MB: land very poor despite lake irrigation. Close to small block town, Close to bus route, but far from major town.	Single caste village of (OBC) Dhimar fishermen.	Non-farm, work in Tikamgargh, Gwalior, Jhansi and Delhi.	Mainly young men, though older men and even women may migrate if times are bad.	None	Work is more opportunistic, e.g. when a contractor comes or friends tell of an opportunity. It has higher returns compared to agricultural work but is more risky. This could be called accumulative, when it comes off. Those who have established secure links are best off. Returns from urban work are Rs40-60/day but costs are high (at least	Migration by young men brings remittances into the household. If female members migrate, children can suffer and if older members migrate, health can suffer. Urban out-migration is disruptive for the education of children. There are no formal facilities and children end up helping their parents or playing by the roadside.

					Rs20/day plus return transport).	
SM: good land, but much landlessness. Daily commutable to district town.	The semi-skilled artisan Sahu caste (OBC) have turned to ice-cream making from oil pressing.	Migrate en masse to Maharashtra during the tourist season.	Whole Sahu families migrate, though if they own land some members remain. Young children may remain with grand-parents.	None	Previously out-migration was part of a strategy to cope with shocks. However, now it is accumulative as expanding niche market has been located. At least Rs 60/day, sometimes more if business good.	Migration has lead to investment in land.
SM: good land, but much landlessness. Daily commutable to district town.	The landless Ahirwar (SC).	Casual non-farm wage work in nearby urban locations.	Usually men only, while family remain at home.	None	Work is sporadic and often the work-search is not successful. Therefore coping. Wage rate is Rs60/day.	Many workers have suffered accidents, which have left them permanently disabled and unable to work. Little or no compensation is received.
LJ: good land but no irrigation. Surrounding villages with irrigation are more prosperous. Close to small block town and bus route but far from Ujjain city. Traditional links into Rajasthan.	Traditional cultivating marginal and landed (OBC) Thakurs (70%) are main migrants. The former have problematic agriculture due to divided landholdings, drought and lack of irrigation.	To local villages for agricultural wage work.	Whole family migrates as they have no land or livestock to keep them in the village.	None	This is coping migration because work availability is not good, particularly following droughts. Rs 30/day/ person, though more if whole family contributes labour.	Disruptive to the education of children. Low labour demand, particularly during drought, places migrants in a weak bargaining position where they may be open to exploitation or cheating.
PR: very high productivity agriculture but highly polarised holdings and much landlessness. Daily commutable to Ujjain city.	Mainly landless (SC) Balai and Chamars (90%).	Chamars work in brick kilns and in construction in Ujjain for 1–2 months.	Men and whole families, depending on childcare facilities available in the source village.	Where good relations have been built up, advances and preferential rates may be offered. Where worker are new, terms are often at coping levels.	Depends on the nature of contract. Rs 40 for construction but Rs 60 for brick kiln work.	Where strong relations are built up with employer, reasonable domestic facilities are provided, though work is hard and sometimes dangerous.

Source: Focus Group Discussions, Key Informant Interviews and Participant Observation by the research teams

4.1 Accumulative migration

4.1.1 Sugarcane cutters from Medak district, Andhra Pradesh

MD is a remote village in the backward north-eastern part of Medak district. It receives very little rain and neither is there much groundwater to tap. The area is close to the Karnataka and Maharashtra borders. Land ownership is still along feudal lines – a Brahman landlord possesses 300 acres of land, demonstrating that land reforms have not made any difference here. The landless account for 13% of the population and marginal farmers, a further 32.5%. Their main occupation is labouring. They are mostly uneducated and unskilled. By caste, the Mudiraj (erstwhile fisherfolk) dominate the village, numerically accounting for 57% of the population. Most of them are small and marginal farmers. Next are the Lambada (ST), the Madiga (SC) and Mala (SC). The Mala and Madiga are mainly agricultural labourers, a trend that is found in several places across India and is testimony to their continuing position of disadvantage in society.

Sugarcane cutting is said to have begun roughly 30 years ago from MD and surrounding villages, when contractors came to look for cheap labour to cut sugarcane in irrigated parts of the district. What started as a coping mechanism has now become an extremely well-paid alternative to local agricultural wage labour and is attracting more and more households who are able to mobilise the necessary contacts and resources. According to the villagers, more than 40% of the population migrated for this work in 2001. On average, a team of three adult workers will bring back Rs 15000 as savings from one season's work. These people are certainly not the poorest of the poor although their older relatives may once have been. In fact, wealth ranking places many of them among the non-poor. Their large and well-maintained houses, together with the growing numbers of milch animals in their possession, are also evidence of this increasing wealth.

Migrants usually stay away from Oct/November for about 4–6 months. The main castes migrating are the Mudiraj, Lambada and Madiga. This kind of migration requires assets in the form of a pair of working bullocks and a bullock cart. Three or four persons migrate with one bullock cart and a minimum of two cart parties will work on one farmer's land. There are 141 pairs of bullocks and 47 bullock carts in the village because some migrate with one cart and two pairs of bulls. Workers are paid Rs140–60 for each tonne of sugarcane cut and transported to the crushing unit. The payment depends on the distance covered. One cart can transport up to two tonnes in a day.

Many sugarcane cutters take an advance of roughly Rs 5000 in the month of June, well before the cutting season. This is usually given by farmers to known parties, therefore social contacts and networks are all-important. This kind of arrangement, which is the interlocking of credit and labour markets, provides the employer with a guaranteed workforce at a predetermined rate. Whether or not the labourer is disadvantaged by this arrangement depends on whether they are in a position to negotiate a good wage. That in turn depends on their access to information about the state of the labour market for that particular season.

The money from the advance is used to buy a new pair of bullocks or cart or other supplies and is repaid the following May after the cutting season is over. These days, there are no middlemen involved. Farmers and labourers deal with each other directly. There is no written agreement and the arrangement works on the basis of mutual trust from previous relationships. Some families have been doing this work for more than 20 years.

Payment occurs much after the work has been completed. The labourers take the cane to the crushing unit and the payment is made by the factory to the farmer and then by the farmer to the labourers. This may take up to a month.

Although this kind of migration is viewed very positively in terms of its economic impact, it has some negative implications too, particularly for children's education. Smaller and younger families face the greatest hardship because they may not have childcare in the village and must take their children with them. The children are not admitted by schools in the destination. In addition to that, several households lose their access to Public Distribution System (PDS) rations if they are not in a position to return to the village. A common practice is for one person to come back to the village every month to claim the PDS rations and also give money to relatives at home. In some instances, migrants mortgage their PDS card for Rs 300 with the grain outlet. The dealer claims the rice illegally on their behalf and sells it on the open market. But the arrangement is mutually beneficial because this way the migrants do not lose their entitlement and can reclaim the card when they return.

Living conditions are rough in the destinations. Migrants stay in the field in a makeshift hut. Access to drinking water and water for their animals is difficult and girls are often made to take this responsibility. Similarly, collecting fuel for cooking is difficult. The tops from the sugarcane are used as fodder for the bullocks. If there is any kind of sickness, labourers depend on private practitioners who are expensive. Social networks are important and migrants help each other in various ways by looking after children and sharing provisions.

An NGO, Sadhana, has recently started a residential school for the children of migrants from this part of Medak. This has proved very popular among the migrants. The project is being supported by the Hyderabad office of UNICEF as well as the district administration. Children who were previously forced to accompany their parents because there was no one to look after them in the village are now able to carry on with their education.

4.1.2 Havelli workers from Mandla, Madhya Pradesh

Regular outmigration has become a feature of remote and tribal Mandla district. Traditionally, many tribals livelihoods involved gathering forest products and low productivity agriculture in the forest. In the past tribals from this region depended on being hired by forest contractors from outside because they had a reputation for being good loggers and sawmill labourers. But this kind of work ceased after forests came under the 1980 Forest Conservation Act. Another migration stream opened up with the establishment of the paper mill at Chanda district in Maharashtra. There, labourers would work as bamboo cutters using similar skills and strengths to those developed in forest cutting. But in the last 10–20 years, as green revolution agriculture took off in the nearby 'Havelli' areas, tribals began migrating there. In these districts the green revolution resulted in a substantial increase in labour demand.[6] Initially landlords from this area would visit specific tribal villages to make contact with a potential labour force. They offered to pay transport costs and in time designated a trusted contact person from the village who acted as the agent and go-between so they did not need to visit every season. Often, landlords would agree among them which villages would be theirs and working relations would build up creating a sense of trust and dependability.

Now, after several years, stable relations with employers have been established and these offer much security. The labourers just go to the destination at a certain time of the year even without waiting for a call from the employer. Here too the employers may provide an advance to their workers to be paid off through work. The demographic characteristics of migrant groups have also changed over time. Earlier only men went but now men, women and children migrate.

6 Mechanisation in the Havelli areas is increasing, particularly the use of mechanical harvesters hired from Punjab. But most farmers still prefer manual workers to do the job of harvesting. Mechanical harvesting has two major disadvantages: loss of grain and loss of straw (used as fodder). But labourers feel that on the whole mechanisation is affecting their bargaining position with employers.

Earlier it was mainly the poor and landless Pradhans who migrated but recently other castes have joined too. It is now common to see one member from a large farmer's household (with more than 10 acres of land) migrating to Havelli to supplement their incomes. Rich households use this extra earning to buy jewellery and other household assets including status goods.

4.1.3 Earthworkers from Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh

VP village is in the dry part of Chittoor district and has suffered from drought for the last four years. This area has strong trade links with Karnataka, particularly Bangalore city which is 120 km by road. Only two castes, the Vaddi (BC) and Mala (SC), migrate out for seasonal work. Here we cover only Vaddi migration, which is accumulative. Migration undertaken by the Mala is covered under coping migration.

The Vaddi, also known as Vaddera, were traditionally skilled stonecutters and well-diggers. They have adapted this skill to digging trenches for telephone cables, graves, desilting tanks and road works and have now become well known all over South India. In rural areas, they have benefited from public works executed by *Gram Panchayat*s and State agencies through schemes for rural water supply, housing, food for work, watershed development, the construction of schools, public buildings and offices. They work almost all year round but the nature of the job varies by agricultural season: desilting of tanks and forest department work is undertaken in the dry season and road works and trench digging is done in the rainy season. Both the poor and non-poor migrate. All of the landless households migrate. In general, there is growing demand for the kind of work that the Vaddi can do but few other castes seem to have been able to join this accumulative stream, a theme we return to under the section on coping.

Most of the land parcels in the village are unirrigated, only medium and large farmers have access to irrigation. Larger holdings are concentrated in the hands of the Yadava, Kapu and Reddy. A majority of the landless (71%) and sub-marginal farmers (84%) work as agricultural labourers. Although the Vaddi have succeeded in accumulating a degree of wealth through migration, as evidenced by the large new houses and temples that they have constructed, they rarely own large parcels of land and a quarter of them are landless. This is partially explained by the fact that their skills are outside agriculture. They have recently started buying agricultural land with their savings from migration. In addition to migration and cultivation, sericulture was a major economic activity until very recently for Vaddi families with enough labour in the household to manage it.

Groups of Vaddi relatives (15–30 persons) migrate together and go for 15–30 days at a time. They make 10 such trips in a year. Each group is headed by a *mestri* (contractor), usually a Vaddi, who bears all travelling and food expenses. The *mestri* may give an advance to the labourers to send remittances to their family. He later cuts this from the wages of the labourers. There are 12 *mestri*s in the village. Earlier, *mestri*s would be the main source of information about new jobs and wages but over time their power has eroded and they now play a more facilitating role rather than controlling and exploiting labourers. These days most Vaddi do not have fixed *mestri*s and work for the person who makes the best offer.

They may work for a daily wage or be paid Rs 100–20 to dig 12'x12'x1'6' (locally known as one *gunta*). Migration is common among newly-formed households or younger couples within joint families, i.e. very small or large households. Young households do not tend to keep livestock and therefore there is less to bind them to the village. In joint families, couples migrate by turn. Some women and old people also migrate to help in the collection of fuel, water and may also work on 'light' jobs. Women and old people who stay behind look after children, livestock, sericulture and the farm. One person goes back to the village every fortnight to give relatives money for household expenses and to bring back news.

The Vaddi have accumulated visibly through migration. Nearly 48% of the Vaddi respondents said that they had built, bought or extended their house. They are also investing their newly acquired wealth into buying land, drilling tubewells and growing vegetables. VP is clearly a village where money is coming in.

Part of this success stems from their social cohesiveness and collective bargaining power. The Vaddi formed the Narsapur Labour Cooperative Society, a registered society, in 1998. They maintain good relations with local government officials and this has enabled them to win several contracts for public works. There are other manifestations of this social cohesiveness. They have a strong caste-council which has introduced strict rules of behaviour by which everyone must abide. One such rule is the ban on alcohol consumption which was introduced as a way of conserving community wealth. Punishments for those who break the rule are severe – one man was banished from the village for drinking. There is also a rule that all migrants must return to the village at election time and this was said to be behind their recent victory in the local *Panchayat* elections where they defeated a Yadav caste family that had held power for the previous 37 years. They also have a rule that they must return to the village for major festivals.

There are negative aspects to the Vaddi migration too. Some of the commonly stated problems are the rough living conditions in the destination where they must live in tarpaulin tents provided by the employers. Many stated that migration adversely affects children's education. Employers and *mestri*s may not pay the promised amount and they may not pay promptly.

4.2 Migration as a coping strategy

4.2.1 Construction workers from Mandla, Madhya Pradesh

As we noted above, there is considerable migration from PT village in Mandla to the Havelli areas. But for a certain section of society, this stream is not an option and they must migrate to urban areas for construction work. These are mainly the Baiga (ST) people who have very poor or no land, and/or very high dependency ratios. Unlike Havelli migration, the relationship between the labourers and the employer has not become established and stabilised and workers are almost totally dependent on the contractor for information and wages.

People from PT migrate to construction sites (road and building), for telephone trench digging (note that this is coping here but accumulative in AP), rickshaw pulling and house/shop painting. If they do get work then it pays well but the risk lies in the fact that they may not get work every day. Telephone digging is done on a piecework rate. A day's work can fetch up to Rs.100, which is much higher than other work in the village.

Generally, only men go for such heavy work because the working and living conditions are perceived as too risky for women. However, in labour-scarce households, where the man is sick or has died, women may also migrate to work in quarries and trench digging. They may take their children along.

4.2.2 Construction workers from Medak district, Andhra Pradesh

Several families of poor Mala (SC), landless and marginal farmers who cannot find work locally or grow anything on their land have migrated from MD to urban areas but they have strong links with the village. These people are much poorer than the better-off sugarcane cutters who migrate from the same village. Quite a few of them were not able to enter sugarcane work because they do not have the assets to get the loans that are required to purchase or hire bullocks and carts. Hyderabad is the most common destination (40 families migrated there in 2001), where they go for construction

work. Most of them leave the village around November and return in June to look after their land. But as droughts in the area have become prolonged, some families are leaving their lands fallow and are more or less permanently away and come back only to celebrate festivals. Half of them take their families along. Both women and men work.

Such migrants work alone or in groups. They are prepared to do any kind of labouring. The construction workers work either under a contractor or freelance by standing at '*adda*s' where they try to attract trade. If they work freelance then the men earn roughly Rs 80/day and women earn Rs 60. Although the wages are reasonable, work is not available everyday and most average three working days a week. Women may also work as domestic maids in nearby houses. They spend roughly half of the income at the destination and earn roughly Rs 4,000/year through such work.

Working under a *mestri* gives them more days of work but they complain that they are exploited by *mestri*s who take a 15% cut of the wages. Even if such labourers have been in the business for several years they may continue to depend on contractors because they lack the contacts, education and confidence to find work and negotiate contracts. In addition, their caste makes them prone to being discriminated against in many subtle ways so that they can rarely break out of their traditional station of working under someone on exploitative terms. Contractors routinely flout the many regulations that are meant to give migrant labourers security and basic provisions. The most important laws are the 1948 Minimum Wages Act, the 1970 Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, the 1976 Equal Remuneration Act, the 1979 Inter State Migrant Workmen (Regulation and Conditions of Service) Act, and the 1996 Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act. Several families choose to leave their women behind because living conditions for new migrants in the city are difficult, particularly getting access to drinking water. Accidents and disease are major risks. If they acquire special skills under a *mestri* then they can obtain better paid work.

4.2.3 Agricultural labourers from coastal villages in Andhra Pradesh

KO is a large, well-connected and well-endowed village typical of the better-off villages of the delta zone. It has a characteristically large population of 1,429 households. This reflects the many work opportunities present in the village that have attracted people from outside over the years and also kept the villagers from moving to other destinations. The village is highly developed and there are many amenities, such as a variety of shops including bookshops, dispensaries, pesticide shops, etc. The cropping pattern is normally paddy followed by pulses. The village is a destination for seasonal immigrant labourers who come for 3–4 months in a year to harvest the paddy.

The landholding is highly skewed with over 65% of the population reporting that they are landless. More than 48% of all landless households reported their main occupation to be labouring. There are 29 castes and the dominant castes are Mala (SC), Madiga (SC), Kapu (OC), Kshatriya, Gowda and Yadava. In addition, there are a significant number of Muslim households. The Mala are numerically the most powerful but they are also mostly landless: of 210 Mala families, 182 are landless. The Madiga, also SC, are predominantly landless and work mainly as agricultural labourers in and outside the village. In fact, the landless are mainly Malas and Madigas, together making up 34.7% of all landless households.

KA is also a prosperous village with assured canal irrigation which enables farmers to take two paddy crops in a year. Of 464 households, 209 (45%) are landless. There are more marginal and small holdings in this village and therefore the requirement for labour from outside is greater during the six peak agricultural seasons. Roughly 1000 people migrate into the village in July–August and again in November–January to work on the paddy crop, first for transplantation and then to harvest.

Caste-wise, the Kapu are the largest community, making up nearly half of the population, followed by the Gowda (erstwhile toddy-tappers) who make up just under a quarter of the population at 23.5%. Most landless households are Kapu, followed by Mala, Gowda and Madiga. Most semi-medium, medium and large farmers are Gowda and Kapu. The Mala and Madiga are strikingly landless, which is worse than their status in the study villages in other parts of the State.

Table 15 Percentages of households as a proportion of landed households in KA and KO villages, AP

Land class	KA	KO
Sub-marginal	1.1	3.4
Medium marginal	11.7	18.6
Marginal	18.0	26.6
Small	26.2	23.2
Semi-medium	21.5	16.4
Medium	18.4	9.8
Large	2.7	1.8

Source: Household Census, AP.

In both KA and KO, there are certain times of the year when there is no work for agricultural labourers. In KO, this is during September and October and then again April and May. In KA the lean seasons are September–October and March. During this these times, the landless poor labourers migrate out to find work in nearby areas – either within the district or just beyond. Both men and women migrate and they earn roughly Rs 30/day. In both villages, the migration in September–October is for transplanting paddy in areas where the crop cycle is later. The migration in April and May from KO is for harvesting paddy and the migration in March from KA is for harvesting black gram.

Without this work and income, these households would go into debt and have to borrow from local moneylenders, which is what they would have done historically in the lean season. But seasonal migration has offered them an important coping mechanism.

4.3 Main findings

The main findings from this study are summarised in the following points:

- A large cost in migration is the search cost and moral hazard of being cheated. Migration options become more and more secure, and thus attractive, over time. For those who have risked going to find new opportunities, and have maintained the link, the investment often pays off.
- Migration is increasingly opening up to women, particularly those from lower castes. Often the woman working as well as the man can make the difference between surplus and deficit.
- Non-farm work is often better paid, but conditions are poor. The work is hard, and is often taken up in the hot summer when agricultural labour markets are slack. Also, because the nature of the work is often transient, there is not the possibility to form longer-term links as with farmers.
- All types of migration can bring new skills. Havelli migration for the Mandla tribals brought exposure to new forms of green revolution technologies. Likewise, construction work can often bring access to quarter- and semi-skilled work like masonry work.
- The social and domestic trade-offs to migration can be severe. Risk of industrial accident, poor sleeping conditions all bring hazards. If families accompany, then wives, and particularly children, are at great risk from lack of supervision. However, if families migrate together, there are stronger support networks available.

5 Part IV: Recognising and Supporting Migration as a Livelihood Strategy

Policy needs to recognise that migration is an integral and regular part of livelihood strategies and production systems; that migration is also undertaken for high-return employment and not only because of shocks and stresses such as drought i.e. that migration can be accumulative or coping; and that migration is a diverse phenomenon with various non-economic determinants including caste and gender. This reflects wider themes with respect to political-economy determinants of access and opportunity. Regardless of whether migration is accumulative or coping, most migrants receive little support and live in very difficult conditions in their destinations. Although their efforts are the real engine of growth in several sectors, providing a cheap and flexible labour source, they remain without an identity and are unable to claim State resources for education, health care, water and sanitation all the time that they are on the move. Women and children suffer the most from this kind of existence.

There are several different positions on what should be done to address the issue of migration. The mainstream view is that migration should be reduced/curbed by creating employment in villages. This is to be achieved through increasing the productivity of dryland agriculture. But it could take several years or even decades for natural resource management and agricultural development programmes to arrest migration. In the meantime, steps need to be taken to support migrants so that their hardships are reduced and they are ensured access to basic needs. For example Mosse et al (2002) argue for a rights-based approach to guarantee minimum wages, avenues for protection and redress, freedom from bondage, sexual exploitation as well as compensation for injury and death suffered by migrant labourers. They call for NGOs, labour unions, State governments and employers to work together to ensure labourers rights. Rogaly et al (2001) advocate public action to address the exclusion of migrants from health education and other social protection.

The residential school for migrant's children opened by Sadhana is a good example of how NGOs, donors and the State can work together to reduce the vulnerability of migrant labourers. Another initiative that could be explored through multi-stakeholder consultation is providing migrants with computerised identity cards that they can use to access services at their destinations, such as basic healthcare, enrolling their children in the local school. In addition, ways need to be found to ensure that migrants do not lose their entitlements to PDS rations in their homes.

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