

Causes and impact of migration from Brekha village, Trashigang Bhutan

Pema Lhendrup

Sherubtse College, Royal University of Bhutan, Bhutan

Abstract: In recent years the high rate of rural to urban migration has become alarming with the influx of more and more people into urban areas from the rural areas. Against such a backdrop this paper studied and examined various causes of out-migration from the Brekha village to the urban areas which resulted to rapid deterioration of agricultural production in the village leading to the escalation of per unit cost of agricultural production. A survey on 55 households comprising of 100 people was conducted in Brekha village. This study revealed that from every household at least one or two members migrated to other parts of the country. Some of the family members have moved permanently to other places while some others were seasonal. The causes of out-migration from the village were for education, better standard of living, and drudgery of village lives. The outcome of rural migration was influx of employment seekers in the urban job market and unavailability of enough work forces in the village thereby hampering pace of economic development in the village. Therefore, the Royal Government of Bhutan has recommended some measures to curb the migration from rural areas by providing better facilities and trainings for the people living in the rural areas.

Key words: Impact, migration, Brekha village, Bhutan.

Introduction

Brekha is one of the villages under Khaling Gewog in Eastern Bhutan under Trashigang district. The economy of the village is predominantly agriculture oriented. The village has a primary school which is connected with a farm road. However, the village lacks health facilities as even for a minor sickness. People have to go either to Riserboo Hospital which is 22 kms away or to BHU in Tsangpo village which is around 10 kms away. "Migration is a spatial mobility of people by changing usual place of residence to a well-defined destination" (National Statistics Bureau, 2008). Migrant are defined as persons who were enumerated in a place different from the place where they were born. In other words, migration is the movement of people from one geographical location to another, involving permanent or temporary settlement. Migration is one of the three components of population change. Any change in the volume and flow of migration will change the size, growth, and other characteristics of the population both in sending and receiving areas. Migration within a country does not affect the total size of the population and growth rate but it affects regional and sub-regional population and growth rate within the country. The migrants remit to the area of origin from the area of destination and thus at times migration have positive impacts to their area of origin. (Stark, 1991). This in a way leads to the diversification of income. Nevertheless, migration also has negative impacts as well. This case study was conducted to examine the cause and impact of migration in Brekha Village, under Khaling Gewog, Eastern Bhutan with the objectives (i) to find out the cause of rural migration and its impact and (ii) to give recommendations to check the rate of migration from rural areas.

Materials and Methods

A case study design was adopted in this research where Brekha village was chosen as a case. The data for this study were mainly collected through a survey from 55 households and 100 respondents. The respondents were selected randomly. The primary data for the study were gathered through administering a structured questionnaire. Existing literature were used for secondary data. Besides a few statistical tools was used in this study.

Results and Discussion

Gender Distribution of Respondents: Survey data revealed that 80% of the respondents were females while only 20% were males. This shows that the majority of the migrant from the village were the male folks and those that remain in the village were the females.

The study found out that most of the migrants were of below 45 years of age. Those who have come back to the village to carry out the ancestral agricultural practices were the elderly and the aged ones. This indicates that propensity to migrate was higher among the young and energetic people (Fig. 1).

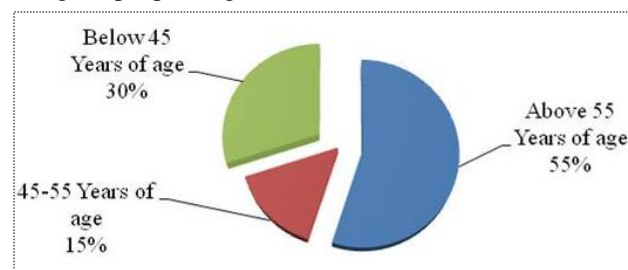


Fig. 1. Age distribution of respondents

Findings from the study also indicate that 75% of the respondents have never attended any form of education, 20% have attended non formal education programme and about 5% of the respondents have attended at least primary education (Fig. 2).

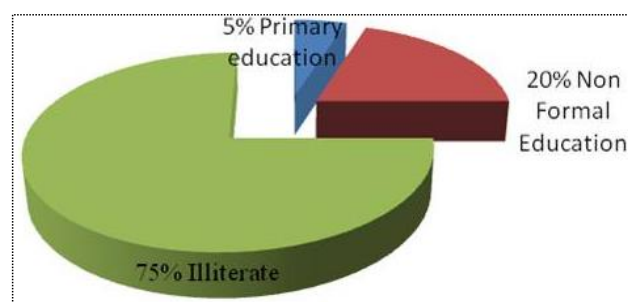


Fig. 2. Educational qualifications of respondents

This shows that with the level of education, the inclination to return back in the village was declining and the urge to migrate to other areas was increasing. Gregg *et al.* (2000), confirmed that people with higher levels of education, and those working in managerial, professional and semi-

professional, were much more likely to migrate among regions than other occupational groups.

Causes of Rural-Urban migration: The major causes of rural-urban migration were identified as; search for better wages, education, social stability, better technologies, and employment and business opportunities. Others were poverty, unemployment, crop failures and wildlife encroachment (Fig. 3) to agricultural lands (Fig. 4), inadequate social amenities and facilities in the rural areas such as lack of water supply through pipe line, electricity, good roads, hospitals, schools, vocational centres. The respondents mentioned that their family members migrated to the urban areas because of the following reasons:



Fig 3. Wildlife encroachment into the village

i) Unemployment in the rural areas: 70% of the respondents said that due to unavailability of employment opportunities or in other words, very limited job opportunities; there was high influx of young and productive age groups from rural areas to the urban areas. These group of people who have migrated to the urban areas were unskilled or semi-skilled and facing difficulty in getting employed in urban areas as well, where there were demands for skilled work force only. A study stated that educated persons seeking employment opportunities have high tendency to move because they have better access to information about job opportunities (Nidup and Lhendrup, 2009). Hence it has led to unemployment in urban areas on one hand and on the other hand the agricultural lands remained unattended back in the village. Due to large scale migration, the labour force has reduced in the village. Most of the migrants were men but women, especially young women, also have moved to cities. As a result, villages were increasingly populated by older women, the elderly men, and children.

ii) Education: The other reason for moving out from the village to other urban places was mainly for the educational purpose. This was because there was only a community primary school in the village. Once the children complete their primary education they move out of the village to pursue their education. The study also found out that students despite the fact that they could study up to primary level in their village, they move to urban places with their relatives as they were not advantaged like their counter parts in the urban places who have access to quality education, internet facilities and other better opportunities. With the increased rate of

female enrolment into schools, the female migrants were also increasing (Ministry of Agriculture, 2005).

iii) Seasonal Nature of Employment in Agriculture: Like in any rural areas of the country the nature of the occupation in the Brekha village was also seasonal. Once the crops were harvested the villagers remained unemployed for most part of the year and it made difficult for them to meet the basic necessities. So, to get rid of all those troublesome nature, people have migrated to places where they could get employed during their off season of agricultural.

Impact of Migration: The study has revealed that among the positive impacts, migration improved the standard of living in the village through the means of remittance from the migrants. It has also led to the reduction in the pressure on the limited resources that were available in the village when people moved out to the other areas.



Fig 4. Abandoned houses and agricultural lands

Nevertheless, migration also had some negative impact as well. Since the young and able people have tended to leave the village (Fig. 4), it has created labour shortages in the peak periods. Thereby, the labour shortage has led to under utilization of the agricultural lands and some fields which were cultivated in the past but left fallow for years together and in the mean time have been covered by Artemisia plants and other secondary growths (Fig. 5).



Fig 5. Growth of secondary forests after the agricultural farms were being left fallow

This has further led to increase in the encroachment by the wild animals like monkeys and wild boars even in the heart of the village (Fig. 3). With people moving out from the village, the density of the population has also decreased. As a result of low-density and dispersed population, the delivery of modern services has become more costly than the urban areas which are denser in nature. The other outcome of migration in the village was lack of enough children who were of school going age. In contrast to the urban areas, like in most of the villages in Bhutan number of school going children in Brekha village

also reduced yearly. Thus, there was no scope for up gradation of the school (Fig. 6).



Fig 6. A community school amidst scattered settlement

The rate of rural-urban migration has been accelerating in an alarming rate in the recent years, and its effect has been felt in the urban areas where there was competition for the resources as well as in the rural areas in which the agricultural lands remain unattended because of lack of able and economically productive workforce. Hence, there was a need by the government to put in place some effective measures like the provision of the basic modern facilities, and provision of employment of the productive youths in the rural areas.

Recommendations: On the basis of findings of the study, the recommendations to check the rate of migration are as follows:

1. The Government should provide employment opportunities to the citizens of the rural areas, provide compensation for crop damage by the wild animals ; and

encourage the school drop-outs and retired civil servants to go back to the village to carry out agricultural farming.

2. The government and its development partners should do everything in their power to create job opportunities for youths in the agricultural sector.
3. To curb the rate of migration from the villages, some growth centers should be set up in the villages rather than concentrating in the urban areas only. This will in a way or other boost up the economy of the rural people as there will be a market where the village folks would be able to sell their farm products at profitable prices.

References

- Gregg, P., Machin, S., and Manning, A. 2001. Moving for job reasons, working paper. Department of Economics, University of Warwick.
- Ministry of Agriculture, 2005. Rural-Urban migration in Bhutan. Royal Government of Bhutan.
- National Statistics Bureau, 2008. Socio-Economic and Demographic Indicators 2005. Royal Government of Bhutan. Thimphu.
- Nidup, J. and Lhendrup, P. 2009. Migration in Bhutan: Population Dynamics of Bhutan. An Occasional Publication for Population and Development Studies, Sherubtse College, Vol.1.
- Stark, O. 1991. The Migration of Labor. Oxford and Cambridge, M.A.: Basil Blackwell.