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## **Issues and Challenges of Forced- Seasonal Labour Migrants: A study in Bolangir District of Odisha**

**Diptimayee Jena**



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## **Abstract**

People migrate, where they get more opportunities for their existence and survival. There are pull factors and push factors behind migration. Seasonal labour migration has turned as a common source of income for the poor in rural areas in Bolangir district of Odisha. Most of the people, who migrate, are belong to the most vulnerable groups. They possess very small land or no land without any stable employment in their local area. They engage themselves in brick kilns of Andhra Pradesh. The vulnerable community particularly tribals and the lower caste people are honest, laborious and without any agitation they can work over time with low wage. Therefore, they are preferred by the contractors. The amount they earn in six month is not sufficient for the next six month in a year. In order to maintain the rest of the six months, they don't have any saving, so they are forced to borrow rupees from the contractors or from money lenders. In order to repay the debt, again they have to migrate. Like this the process of migration continues for the poor labours of Bolangir district. Thus seasonal migration has become a cyclical process for the poor labours. This paper understands the responsible factors which are forcing them to migrate and what the challenges they are facing at work place. The present paper is based on empirical study, conducted in Belapara block of Bolangir district of Odisha which is one of the highly migration-prone areas.

**Keywords:** pull factors, push factors, seasonal migration, employment, vulnerable groups, and cyclical process..

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Statement: All the views expressed in the paper are of the author(s).

# Issues and Challenges of Forced- Seasonal Labour Migrants: A study in Bolangir District of Odisha

**Diptimayee Jena**

## INTRODUCTION

People generally migrate where they get more opportunities for their existence and survival. There are many types of migration depending on distance, stream and duration. People may migrate for long period of time or short period of time according to the opportunities they get at the destination areas. Although migration occurs across people irrespective of their socio-economic status, purposes and destinations, most of the poor, landless and backward people migrate seasonally outside the state within a country or outside the district within a state in order to earn for their livelihood. The (NSS 64th Round, 2007-08) has estimated 15.2 million seasonal migrants in India. Out of this, most of the migrants are from rural area and more than two thirds migrate to urban areas. Since a large number of people seasonally migrate from one place to other, it is necessary to see different aspects of these migrant labors at source and destination places. Therefore, this study will make an attempt to understand the nature and causes of seasonal migration and examine the livelihood status of seasonal migrant labours.

In simple words, migration can be defined as the rational choice of the individuals to move from one place to another place. In India there are two sources of collecting data on migration. According to the Census of India, migration is of two types such as: migration by place of birth and migration by place of last residence. If a person is calculated in Census, i.e. village or town different from his place of birth, he is considered as migrant by place of birth. If a person had last resided at a place other than the place of calculation of census, he is considered as migrant by place of last residence (Srivastava, 2012).

Migration in developing countries has been explained in terms of push and pulls factors, respectively. The pull factors lay emphasis on the circumstances at the source and push factor lay emphasises on the

circumstances at the destination. The pull factors are poverty, unemployment, unavailability of work at native place, low productivity from agriculture, indebtedness, ineffectiveness of local governance, flood, drought, cyclone, earthquakes etc. The push factors are job opportunity, better wage than native place, enjoyment, education, health and other facilities. Labour migration is a form of labour movement to industry and employment growing areas. Migration is nothing but the movement of people from less-endowed area to well-endowed area with the push factor poverty and lack of wage at the native place and the pull factor more wage at the destination.

According to (64th round of NSSO, 2007-08), the individuals who move for a period of six months leaving their usual place of residence for employment are called short term migrants. However, the Census does not cover the short -term migration of labour flows and it only focused on permanent and contemporary migration.

## NATURE OF SEASONAL MIGRATION

Seasonal migrants don't have stable employment or stable livelihood. According to the macro data and field survey, seasonal migrant labours are belong to the most poor and deprived sections of the society such as: Schedule Caste (SC), Schedule Tribe (ST) and Other Backward Class (OBC) (Deshingkar 2010). Though migration provides livelihood maintenance to the labours and their family but they faced a vulnerable condition at the workplace. Most of the migrants even don't possess land of their own so they don't have option for cultivation. Most of the seasonal migrants don't hold their claim paper like Voter Identity card, Ration Card, Old Age pension card etc. According to the National Commission on Rural Labour, (NCRL) the majority of seasonal migrants are employed in cultivation and plantations, brick-kilns, quarries and construction sites additionally large numbers of seasonal migrants work

In India, droughts happen once in every five years in some parts of India. (MEDC, 1974), viz., West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Coastal parts of Andhra Pradesh, some parts of Maharashtra state, like east and west parts of Maharashtra, interior of south Karnataka, Bihar, Orissa, Rajasthan and other parts of India. Except drought there are other natural calamities those affects India every year like cyclone, flood, earthquake etc. According to (UNESCO & UNICEF, 2012) inside the country there is visible migration from Odisha to Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, Bihar to Delhi, Haryana and Punjab, Uttar Pradesh to Maharashtra. In rural part of India there is unemployment because of disaster of season or absence of assets. Pattern, development and social structure influence migration (NCRL, 1991 & Mosse et al., 2002). (NCRL, 1991) has determined that uneven growth and regional inequality are the main causes of seasonal migration. Education level, land holding, job opportunities and age also are the determinants of migration. According to the 11th five year plan, 2006 estimation there are 27.8% of people who are unable to fulfill their basic needs like food, clothes and shelter in 2004-05. For the first time 55th Round of NSS calculated the number of seasonal migrants in 1999-2000.

Labour migration is considered as a part of temporary migration or seasonal migration. There are two main reasons for rural labour migration such as migration for existence and migration for maintenance (Migrant Labour - Problems of the Invisible). The first reason mentions to the socio- economics distresses faced by the rural labours and the second reason mentions to the need for add on income in order to fill the gaps of seasonal employment. In the Indian history, migration of labour started during the period of British colonial rule (Gill, 1998). It was aimed at to meet the necessities of capitalist development both in India and abroad. Gill also has argued that it was structured in the rural areas in such a way that the women and children stayed in the villages while males migrated to the urban areas.

## **MIGRATION IN ODISHA**

The people of Odisha have small land holdings and are ignore about the modern technology so agriculture is not that much profitable occupation for them. Many of the people are landless poor; they don't have any other alternative except migrating in search of work. The coastal region of Odisha is flood and cyclone prone region while the western and southern regions are drought and famines prone area. So people are forced to migrate for their survival. Odisha being gifted with rich

natural resources often attracts many corporates, multinational companies and private companies towards it for large business purpose or for building of dams, and irrigation projects. So the ethnic group who live in forests and hilly areas are being displaced from their home without proper rehabilitation. They are separated from their land and livelihood, so they are forced to migrate to other place for their livelihood. Most of the farmers in rural areas of Odisha depend on monsoon for their cultivation as there are no irrigation facilities in most of the areas. So during the lean agriculture season rural people don't get any job at their native place. So they migrate to urban areas in search of getting employment.

Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput (KBK) region of western Odisha are considered as the most backward regions of the state. The districts of Bolangir, Koraput, Kalahandi, Ganjam and Nuapada etc. of Odisha are famous for seasonal migration. With the arrival of winter season people of western Odisha start their migration to outside of Odisha or to the urban areas within Odisha. It is believed that after the drought of 1960 there is such movement people in every year from western Odisha. Comparison to other regions of Odisha, the western region is more backward in terms of development. The people who migrates from this area are belongs to the most vulnerable group having small land or landless tribal and dalits. Every year large number of people from the KBK region is migrating to the most destination area of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. They engage themselves in brick kilns or in construction work. It is also believed that the tribal and the lower caste people of western Odisha are honest and laborious and without any complain they can work over time with low wage. So they are preferred by the contractors or by the employers.

MNREGA has failed to generate employment to stop seasonal migration in backward districts. So there is need to speed up the scheme in order to prevent seasonal migration. Since the last decade, the district of Bolangir is sending a large number of seasonal labour migrants to its neighbouring states and mostly to the brick kilns of Andhra Pradesh. The migrant labours are called "Dadan" in local language in western part of Odisha. Most of the seasonal labours are landless poor from deprived class of the society. Leaving their old parents at home, they migrate with their spouses and children to Andhra Pradesh. They start migrating during the month November, after Durga puja and Diwali. They migrate for six months and they return back during the month of April and May.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- a) To understand the underlying causes of migration.
- b) To understand the problems the migrants face at the destination.

## DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Bolangir district of Odisha is the survey area among the thirty districts of Odisha for the present study. Compared to other districts of Odisha, Bolangir is less developed but rich with natural resources. Not only this but also this district have many tribal communities living in this district. On other hand large numbers of labours are migrating outside or within Odisha for work every year.

For the purpose of the study both primary data has been used for the study. Primary data have been collected from the migrant labours through personal interview method and from government officials through discussion. The migrant labours those migrate regularly or frequently or current year have been interviewed.

Two villages of Belapara Block have been randomly selected for the survey. The reason behind selecting Belapara Block as the study area is that this block is sending large number of labours as seasonal labours to outside of Odisha. The samples have been selected randomly. The study areas are Budhabhata village of Sarmuhan panchayat and Chacherbeng of Nunhad panchayat of Belapara block. The sample size is 120 seasonal migrant labours of Budhabhata and Chacherbeng village. The respondents for the survey are male and female migrant labours. The samples include respondents from different age group and different communities of the two villages.

## MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### a) Factors Forcing for Migration at Native

There are many factors which force the labours to migrate to the destination leaving their native places. There are certain reasons behind their migration.

#### i) Unavailability of Work at Native

The poor labours of the study area prefer to migrate leaving their native place because of certain reasons. It is necessary to know the reasons behind their migration. According to the studied samples there are two reasons for their migration such as: ( i) No work at the native

place and ii) For more income. 59.2% of the respondent replied that there is no work at their native place, so they are forced to migrate outside for work. 40.8% of the studied respondent replied that they migrate outside to get more income.

#### (ii) Borrowing status of loan of the Respondents

Borrowing of loan is one of the major factors that force them to migrate to work. There are less numbers of respondents who have taken loan. The poor labours in the present study loan for their required expenses. So it is necessary to know from whom they get the loans. It is studied that majority of the people have not borrowed money for their expenses. The respondents borrowed from the contractors, money lender and from their friends. Among the labours, majority of the labours have borrowed from the contractors. There are 16.7% of respondents those borrowed from the contractor. There are 5% and 6.75 of the respondents who borrowed from the money lender and friends respectively.

#### (iii) Purpose of Loan of the Respondents

The poor labours have very few sources of earning income in their native places. So they do not have enough money for their required expenses. There are many reasons for which they borrow. So it is necessary to know the reasons of their borrowing at the native place.

Very few have taken loan for their household consumption and medical expenses. 24.2% of respondents have borrowed for their household consumption and only 4.2% of the respondents have taken loan for their medical expenses.

### b) Problems at Work Place

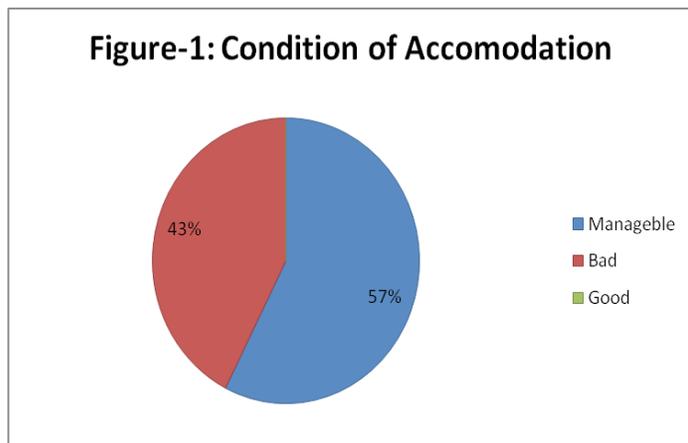
At the work place the migrants must be provided with minimum facilities at the workplace by the contractor. There must be housing facilities for the migrants at the workplace. Beside this drinking water facility different toilets facilities for both male and female migrants, the shelter for rest. Along with these, there should be first-aid box facility at the workplace for the migrant labours.

#### (i) Housing problem

The contractor is supposed to provide proper accommodation facilities to all the migrant labour. They should not be charged for the accommodation facilities. All the respondents reply that at the workplace they

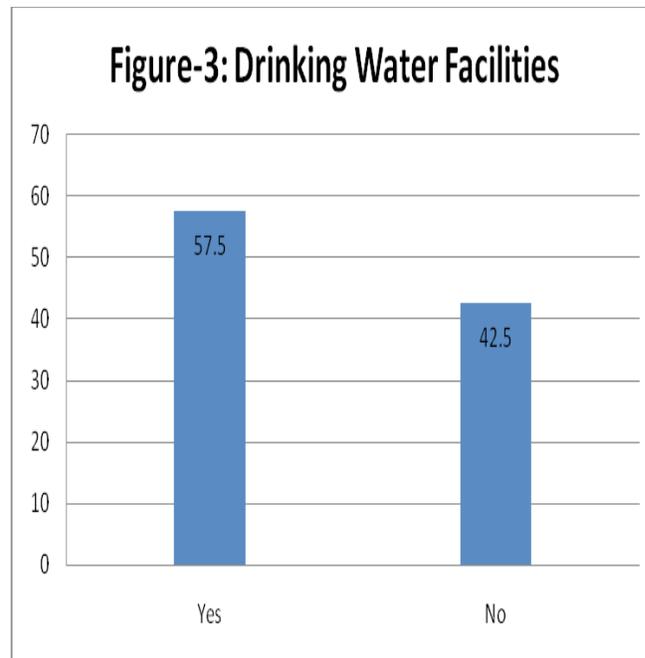
get the housing accommodation from the contractor. Though all get the accommodation facilities at the destination but it is necessary to know the condition of their accommodation facility.

(iii) Drinking Water Facility



Source: Primary Data

Figure1 reveals that only 57.5% of the accommodations are in manageable condition for the respondents and 42.5% of the accommodations are in bad condition.



Source: Primary Data

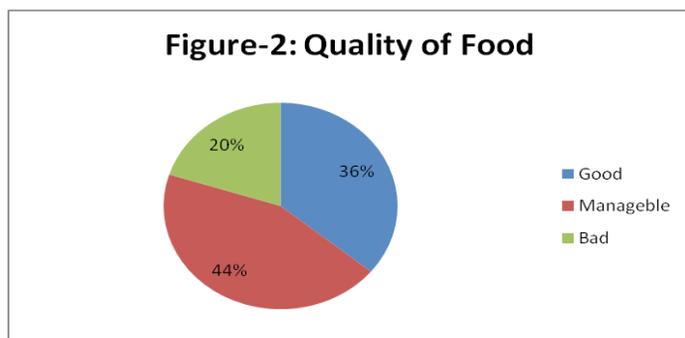
The above figure 3 shows the availability of drinking water facility at the workplace. 57.5% of the respondents get drinking water facility at workplace while 42.5% of the respondents don't get drinking water at the workplace. This pie chart reveals that at what condition the migrant workers are living without getting drinking water in the workplace.

(ii) Food Facilities and the Quality of Food

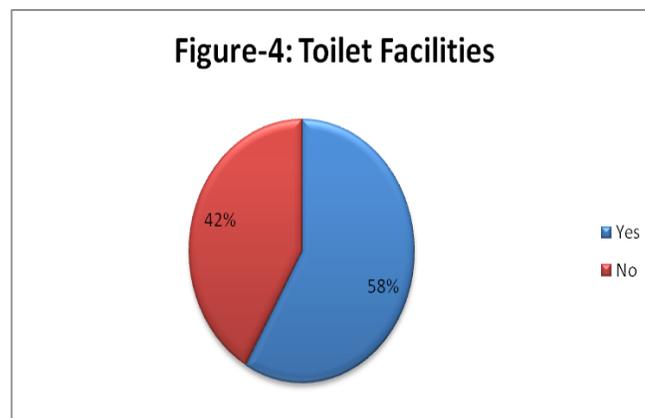
At workplace they get the cooked food facility. They don't have to pay for the food. The contractor provides them the cooked food at the workplace. It is necessary to know the quality of food they get at the workplace. Figure 2 explains the quality of food the labours get at the workplace. At workplace all the respondents get food. Some of the respondents are satisfied with the food and some of the respondents are not satisfied with the food they get. So there are three categories of food such as good, average and bad. There are 30.8% of the respondents replied the food they get is good. There are 47.5% of the respondents for whom the food for them is average and for 21.7% of the respondents the food is bad.

(iv) Toilet Facilities

It is necessary to know that there are toilet facilities or not at the destination area.



Source: Primary Data

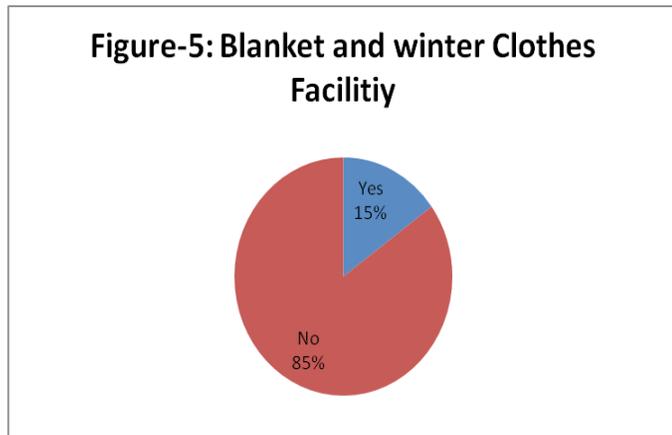


Source: Primary Data

The above figure 4 shows the availability of toilet facility at the workplace. Out of 120 respondents, 58.3% of the respondents get to avail of toilet facility at workplace while

41.7% of the respondents don't get the facility of the toilet at the workplace. It is clear that more of the migrant workers live in an unhygienic condition at the workplace without a toilet.

(v) Blankets and Winter Clothes



Source: Primary Data

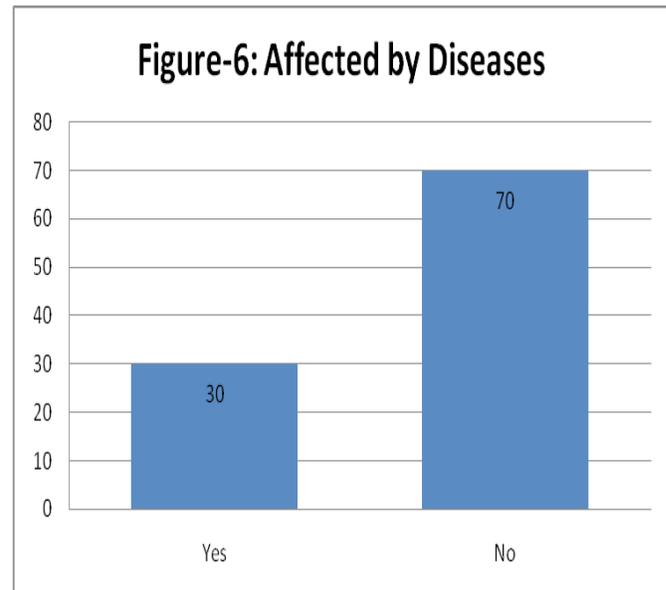
Figure 5 reveals the facility of blanket and winter clothes at the workplace. The above pie chart shows that majority of the labour don't get blanket and winter clothes at the workplace. There are 85% of the respondents who don't get blanket and winter clothes at the workplace. There are only 15% of the respondents who get blankets and winter clothes at the workplace.

(vi) First-aid Facility

The respondents reply that they are avail of the first-aid facility by the contractor in the workplace. At the time of any injury or small accident at the workplace, they get the first-aid facility immediately.

c) Affected by Diseases After Return

After coming back from the workplace there are more chances of affecting by diseases. Because of the unhealthy atmosphere, unavailability of drinking water and unavailability of toilet facilities at the workplace the migrants are more likely to affect by diseases.



Source: Primary Data

Figure 6 shows that after coming from the workplace many of the respondents are affected by diseases. Out of 120 respondents, 30% of the respondents are affected by diseases and rest 70% are not affected any diseases. They are affected by fever for more than one month after returning to their native places.

(d) Age and Affected by any Diseases after Return

After coming back from destination most of the labours fell sick. So it is necessary to know which age group falls sick after coming from the destination.

Figure-7: Affected by any Diseases After return

Figure-7: Affected by any Diseases After return			
Age (in year)	Yes	No	Total
10-15	0	5	5
16-39	4	54	58
40-60	16	20	36
above 60	16	5	21
Total	36	84	120

Source: Primary Data

After coming back from the workplace many of the people are down with fever for more than one month. In my study, out of 120 samples, 36 respondents are affected by fever after returning from the workplace. Figure7 shows that no respondent in the age group of 10-15 is affected by fevers after returning back to native

place. In the age group of 16-39, only 4 respondents are affected by fever and 54 respondents are not affected by any diseases. Out of 36 respondents in the age group of 40-60, 16 are affected by fever and rest 20 respondents are not affected by any diseases. Out of 21 respondents in the age group of above 60, 16 are affected by fever and 5 respondents are not affected by any diseases.

#### (e) Payment of Wage

All the respondents get their wage in advance. The contractors pay them in advance for the brick making work. Per person, the wage amount they get in advance by the contractor is Rs.25,000. For making one thousand of bricks they get the Rs.250 amount which they adjust with the advance payment. Suppose in case, the labour cannot make bricks worth of 25,000 for which they get in advance from the contractor, they are not supposed to return the rest amount of money. If someone has taken the loan from the contractor then he won't get the wage. The contractor adjusts with the debt of the labour.

#### CONCLUSION

The constitution of India allows its citizen the freedom in mobility and the right to livelihood. There are different reasons for the migration of the citizens of India. There are pull factors and push factors behind the forced migration. Depending on the conditions of the origin the factors pulls the people to migrate and depending on the conditions of the destination the factors push the people to migrate. Bolangir district of Odisha is considered as one of the backward district of Odisha. Migration in this district happens because of two main reasons such as poverty and unavailability of job at native place. The labours from Bolangir district migrate to outside the state and within the state because of their existence and subsistence. Beside the two main reasons people are forced to migrate because of indebtedness, during lean agricultural period and due to drought. Many of the poor labours don't have land of their own.

Majority of the landless poor labours prefers to migrate for their livelihood. It is also found that not only the land less poor but also the landed households also migrating with their family for their livelihood. Because for them agriculture is no more profitable. Apart from this due to lack of irrigation facilities and drought they are not interested in agriculture any more. During lean agriculture period they don't get any job in their native place. Every year they migrate to the destination for their survival purpose only. If they stop their migration

they don't have any other option for their livelihood. The amount they earn in six month is not sufficient for the next six month of a year. They spend the money for their medical treatment because after coming back they suffer from different disease. Apart from this the money is spent on for marriage and festivals, construction of house or for household consumption. For the maintaining the rest of the days they don't have any saving, so they are forced to borrow from the contractors or from money lenders. In order to repay the debt again they have to migrate to the brick kilns of Andhra Pradesh. Like this the process of migration continues for the poor labours of Bolangir district. Thus migration becomes a cyclical process for the poor labours. They cannot maintain their livelihood if they stop migrating.

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