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50% of Bihar households exposed to migration: Study

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PATNA: If a recent study conducted by Institute of Population Sciences (IIPS) is to be believed, more than half of the households in Bihar are exposed to migration to more developed places within or outside the country and majority of households depend on remittances for their livelihood.

The report of the IIPS-sponsored study project, 'Causes and consequences of out migration from middle Ganga plain', was jointly released by IIPS director K S James and state education minister Krishnandan Prasad Verma here on Thursday.

The survey, which covered 36 villages and 2,270 households, reveals that migration from the region is male selective without family. Highest migration occurs in the traditional migration pockets of Saran, Munger, Darbhanga, Kosi, Tirhut and Purnia. Seasonal migration is highest in Kosi, Tirhut and Purnia divisions. The migration is highest from other caste groups followed by OBCs, SCs and STs.

Middle Ganga plain covers 64 districts of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Historically, migration from this region dates back to the first quarter of the 19th century. Due to persistent widespread poverty and under development, migration from this region continued even after Independence and mainly remained confined to the developed western states of the country. Recently, this region also showed a significant rise in trend of international migration towards the Gulf destinations. The continuum of two-century-old association between migration and poverty has led to the "culture of migration" in Middle Ganga Plain, the study says.

It has been observed that migration is highest for the landless group and nuclear families in Bihar. The average age of migrants is 32 years. Eighty per cent migrants are landless or have less than one acre of land and 85% of them have passed Class X. Ninety per cent of the migrants work in private factory or as casual workers. Average remittance by a migrant is Rs 26,020 in Bihar and Rs 38,061 in eastern Uttar Pradesh per annum.

As far as the status of women in migrants' local households is concerned, 47% women are literate and 22% of them work for wages. Majority of the left behind women in Bihar lives in nuclear family. Three-fourth of the left behind women communicate with their husband daily on mobile. Only 29% women are members of self-help groups and 80% women have their own bank accounts.

Wives of both migrants as well as non-migrants feel that economic status, lifestyle, autonomy, education and health of children improve after the migration of their husbands.

Seasonal migration is more predominant in Bihar, as 90% of the seasonal migrants are from Bihar. While 31% from Bihar migrated to Punjab, 27% from UP migrated to Maharashtra. Nearly 46% of seasonal migrants bring cash at the end of the month and 48% operate through banking system, the study reveals.

The study further reveals that 75% migrants perceived improvement in their family income, family bonding and social status after their return. As many as 25% of them want to migrate again while two-thirds would encourage their children to migrate for employment, the study concludes.

Project coordinators K C Das and R B Bhagat, both from IIPS, observed that the most important outcome of migration is remittance which influences the process of development and brings change in the consumption pattern and lifestyle of the

individual.

“Remittances result in increase in wealth of the family and consequential improvement in education and nutrition of the members of the household and greater use of hospital facilities during times of illness of the family members,” they said.