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Impact of Male Out-Migration on Women Left Behind: A Study of Two Villages in Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract

Male out-migration is the most often adopted strategy in rural areas to surmount risks associated with agriculture and to diversify income. There are various reasons for the increased exodus of labor from rural areas, such as underdevelopment, unemployment, less availability of non-farm jobs and population pressure. Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of male out-migrants. Male persistent absence has many repercussions on women left behind. Despite this, there is a dearth of literature on the impact of migration on women left behind. The current study tries to fill this void. The objective of the study is to look into various socioeconomic, psychological and political impacts of male out-migration on women left behind. To meet the objective, 100 women from migrant households were surveyed in two randomly selected villages of Uttar Pradesh using snowball methodology. The study found that the impact of male out-migration on women has both positive and negative facets. Migration has increased their household income, thereby increasing their social status in village. But economic gains are often offset by increased workload of women in household and agriculture. Although decision-making has empowered women, at the same time a lack of financial autonomy and an inability to take decisions on important matters impedes their empowerment. Insecurity and loneliness are other major issues, followed by a hindrance in access to entitlements. Women are more prone to physical, social and verbal abuse in the absence of men. Thus in order to reap positive benefits of out-migration, the government should empower women by providing them agriculture-related technical knowledge and should encourage a change in the mindset of communities.

Keywords: Out-migration; Financial autonomy; Empowerment; Decision-making; Rural; Women.

JEL Classification: F24, F24, J16, J61

Introduction

Male out-migration is the way of life in rural households in developing countries for decades. Most families in developing countries believe

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that working abroad is one of the most sought after strategies as a way out of poverty (Adepoju 1997; Desai & Banerji 2008; Mondain & Diagne 2013) and is a very common livelihood and diversification strategy of the poor (De Haan and Rogaly, 2002, Ellis, 1998), although as Kothari (2002) notes, it may not be an option for the poorest.

Uttar Pradesh has a long history of migration, and the earliest migration stream can be traced to the 1830s when people migrated as indentured laborers to the British colonies of Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad and Fiji (Husain, 1995). Since the mid-1960s and the spread of the Green Revolution, a large bulk of migrants has been going to the northwestern states of Punjab and Haryana to work as agricultural laborers. Recently, there has been a shift in destinations of male migrants from Uttar Pradesh towards Maharashtra, Delhi, Gujarat, Hyderabad and other big cities.

In Uttar Pradesh, a large section of population depends on agriculture for their subsistence. A lack of non-farm jobs, underdevelopment, and lack of industries, along with huge population pressure, makes it difficult for many households to meet even the most basic requirements and often results in a huge male exodus to urban areas. Uttar Pradesh is divided into four economic regions: Western UP, Central UP, Bundelkhand and Eastern UP. The Eastern part is the most populated and least developed region (Diwakar, 2009; Kumari et.al 2013; Kumara 2014; Rajni, 2007). Inadequate employment opportunities, industrial backwardness, inherited fragmented landholdings, minimum returns from agricultural activities, and the growing price of necessary commodities have compelled males from rural Uttar Pradesh to migrate in search of work elsewhere. From secondary analysis using national sample survey organization (NSSO) data, it was found that Jaunpur is among the leading districts, with a very high male out-migration from rural Uttar Pradesh. It ranks second among 75 districts, the first being Azamgarh district. The difference of male out-migration between the two districts is merely of one percentage therefore Jaunpur was selected for the study

Jaunpur is the district with the least land per capita in all 75 districts of Uttar Pradesh, further adding to the problems of rural people by making agriculture less feasible and leading to more male exodus from the area. This study only focuses on the women of households with male out-migration, however by taking into account women of non-migrant households as well, and then comparing their social status and responsibility, a wider analysis can be derived.

The focus of research has increasingly shifted from male migration to women who are migrating out for work (Bilsborrow, 1992), and gender



and migration relationships have been studied thoroughly (Chin, 1997; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992). However, the literature is very scarce on women who are not migrating themselves, rather they are staying behind to look after the homestead and family. Although migration diversifies income and reduces the risks associated with agriculture and capital market imperfections in households of rural Uttar Pradesh (Singh, 2014), the result of this huge male exodus has huge implications on women left behind. Many studies have been carried out to analyze characteristics, patterns and determinants of male out-migration from Uttar Pradesh (Khan, 1986; Singh et.al, 1980), but despite the fact that Uttar Pradesh has a huge number of male out-migrants, studies on the impact of male migration on women left behind in Uttar Pradesh are scarce. Gender consequences of migration for households and communities are crucial for any policy development in Uttar Pradesh.

This paper makes an attempt to fill this void and aims to explore how women suffer or feel empowered when the male member moves out for work. The study will highlight how male migration has altered women and their responsibilities within the household and in the rural community. The objectives of this study are twofold: 1. To analyze the socioeconomic background of migrants' households and women respondents. 2. To assess various impacts of male out-migration on women left behind.

Data and Methodology

An exhaustive literature review was undertaken to disentangle existing literature on the impact of male out-migration on women left behind. To support the objectives and major findings of the literature, the study undertakes a primary survey of 100 women in randomly selected two villages of Jaunpur District, namely Chitkon and Jarasi in Dhobi block of Jaunpur District, whose husbands have migrated out for work. There are a total of 255 households in Chitkon village and 420 households in the Jarasi village as per the census of India. With the help of key informants (the head of the village and other well informed people), 50 migrant households from each village were tracked using snowball methodology. The direct questionnaire method was used to gather information from respondents. The study is qualitative and exploratory in nature. Structured questionnaires along with focus group discussions, in depth interviews and key informant method were used for data collection. The collected data were tabulated and analyzed with the simple statistical techniques.

Review of Literature

As discussed earlier, studies have been done on the determinants, characteristics and pattern of male out-migration from Uttar Pradesh

but literature on the impact of male out-migration on women left behind is very scarce and literature on the impact of male out-migration on women left behind in Uttar Pradesh has attracted little attention.

Khuseynova (2103) found that migration has both positive and negative effects on households. Positive outcomes included improved health and nutrition status, increased purchasing power and diversified income and consumption patterns. Negative impacts included a very high dependency on remittances by household members, accidents, illness, difficulties of women managing the household chores in the absence of men in the family, difficulties in child rearing, and their education, along with the psychological impact on women left behind. Various studies highlight both positive and negative impact of male out-migration on women left behind (Adhikari, 2015; Démurger, 2015; Gulati, 1993; Maharajan, 2012). The literature shows that male migration increases the workload of women (Van Rooij, 2000; Gulati 1993; Hadi 1999; Hugo, 1995; Jetley 1987; Bhandari & Reddy, 2015). Kouser & Sumaira (2014) found that children and family feel migration increases budget allocations for health and educational requirements via remittances, but creates an emotional vacuum for the women left behind. Although women feel more responsible financially, and more empowered in decision-making, they often go through prolonged emotional stress and loneliness in the absence of men. Gartaula et.al (2010) studied the impact of male out-migration in Nepal on the women left behind in relation to labor participation and decision-making in agriculture. The study found that women who were the head of the household seemed to move away from agriculture. Sarkar (2007), made an attempt to highlight the status of women who are left behind, in terms of gender division of labor, woman empowerment, social insecurity, and economic perspectives to provide strategies for policy makers. Sadiqi and Ennaji (2004) found that women's autonomy and self-esteem increased post male migration by expanding their role and responsibilities in the household beyond the traditional ones. Literature thus shows the complex nature of the impact of male out-migration on the status of women (workload, roles, and responsibilities). The magnitude and nature of impact of male migration depends on several conditions, such as migration pattern, type of household, number and age of children, land, and livestock holding. Migration leads to restricted empowerment of women (Menjívar & Agadjanian, 2007; Loxsin & Glinskaya, 2009).

Paris et.al. (2005), found that in rice producing villages in Uttar Pradesh, the women had to takeover the workload of the migrant



male when remittances were not large enough, thereby increasing the overall physical workload. Desai and Banerji (2008) found that the effect is conditional on the family structure that the women left behind lives in. Their study highlights that the effect is substantial in the case of women living in a nuclear family and limited in the case of women residing in extended families. In nuclear families, male migration increases a woman's autonomy, decision-making responsibility, as well as labor demand, but not so in extended families. Louhichi (1997) also notes that the financial and moral authority of women is the highest when they live in a nuclear family and are also mothers. Male migration improves family welfare with increased remittances and also sharing ideas and attitudes (Hamann, 2007). Kakati (2014) made an attempt to understand the impact of the male migration on women left behind in the Oraon community in Jharkhand village. The study found that migration increased autonomy and decision-making power in women left behind. Other studies found that male migration empowered women, increased authority and power in decision-making (Findley & Williams, 1991; Iqbal et.al, 2014; Kasper, 2006), whereas Shaheed (1981) and Hjorth (2011) mentioned that male out-migration subsequently cannot change the decision-making capacity of left behind woman.

Loneliness, emotional insecurity and prolonged separation and adjustment in patrilineal society is the major problem mentioned in most of the studies (Ikuomola, 2015; Zachariah and Rajan, 2001; Hoodfar, 1996). A study by Menon (1995) shows that women oppose male migration in apprehension and fear of being left by their husband. Datta and Mishra (2011) found that migration has increased the workload of women left behind and the work burden has increased tremendously who work on family farms and as sharecroppers. Palmer (1985) found that male migration leads to a feminization of agriculture as a result of the labor crisis.

The study shows that migration is beneficial for families and migrants but it is a total loss to the community.

Results and Discussions: Findings from Field

Socio-Economic Background of Migrant Households

Literature shows that the impact of male out-migration on women left behind is very diverse and has affected women in both positive and negative ways. Before analyzing different dimension of impacts of male migration on women left behind in sample villages, this section gives a brief overview of the background of migrant households and women left behind. Table 1 gives an overview of the number of households and rates of male out-migration. The out-migration rate of

Chitkon village is 75 per 100 males and 87 per 100 males for Jarasi. Table 2 gives details of the socioeconomic background of sample migrant households surveyed in two villages, namely Chitkon and Jarasi.

Table 1. Socioeconomic Table 1. Migrant and non-migrant households in selected two sample villages in Jaunpur district (in percentage)

Village name	Total No. of households	Total household number surveyed	Total male in surveyed households (18-50)	Total male out-migrants	Male out-migration rate*
Chitko	255	50	162	121	75
Jarasi	420	50	135	117	87
Total	675	100	297	238	80

Source: Field survey 2016

*Rate of out-migration is defined as number of total male migrants by total male per thousand. In the current study per 100 male have been considered.

From Table 2 it can be seen that the majority of migrant households are male headed in both villages i.e. 76 percent and 68 percent. The average household size for Chitkon and Jarasi is 9 and 7. A large household size can be one of the major reasons for male out-migration. A primary source of income for Chitkon village is remittances, whereas in Jarasi the primary source of income is agriculture. The monthly income is nearly the same for both villages. Hindu is the dominant religion in both villages.

Majority of the migrants households possess land up to one hectare in both the villages. The households with larger land size are comparatively higher in Jarasi. More than 50 percent of households in both villages own livestock, but Jarasi has a lower percentage. As one of the women respondents said: "no male member stays at home so who would look after the livestock's". The major reasons for male migration reported by women respondents are poverty, huge population pressure leading to shortage of land for cultivation, lack of non-farm employment opportunities, and lack of access to credit. The study by Ogden (1984) also found the same reasons for male migration in Latin America.

The general background of women respondents is shown in Table 3. Various demographic features such as education, average number of children, age, and years of marriage have been analyzed. From Table 3, it can be seen that women of migrant households rarely accompany pany men to the destinations. Migration in India is very highly gendered. This can be one of the major reasons for the highest



sex ratio in Jaunpur among all districts in Uttar Pradesh, i.e. 1023 and is in sharp contrast to other parts of India where males outnumber

Table 2. Brief profile of background of migrant households

Name of Variables	Name of village	
	Chitkon	Jarasi
Head of the Household		
Male	38 (76)	34 (68)
Female	12 (24)	16 (32)
Average HH size	9	7
Average No. of Adult males (18-50)	2	3
Average No. of adult female 18-50	3	2
Primary Source of Income	Remittances	Remittances
Secondary Source of Income	Agriculture	Agriculture
Average Monthly income including Remittances (in Indian Rupees)	20,000	23,000
Religion		
Hindu	50 (100)	48 (96)
Muslim	0 (0.00)	2 (4)
Social Group*		
SC	8 (16)	6 (12)
OBC	24 (48)	25 (50)
Other Upward Caste	18 (36)	19 (38)
Land Endowment		
Landless	12 (24)	10 (20)
Land up to 1 hectares	31 (62)	23 (46)
1-2 hectares	4 (8)	9 (18)
2 hectares and above	3 (6)	8 (16)
Households who own livestock	31 (62)	29 (58)
Reasons for Migration	Poverty, huge population pressure leading to shortage of land for cultivation, lack of non-farm sector employment opportunity, lack of access to credit	
Total	50	50

Source: Field Survey 2016

* None of the Migrant household reported that they belong to Scheduled Tribe (ST) Category

**Figures in parentheses represent percent to total.

Table 3. General details of women surveyed villages in Jaunpur District

Name of Variables	Name of villages	
	Chitkon	Jarasi
Average Age (in Years)	35	33
Educational status		
Illiterate	11 (22)	7 (14)
Primary	7 (14)	9 (18)
Matriculation	18 (36)	15 (30)
Intermediate	9 (18)	11 (22)
Graduate	4 (8)	6 (12)
PG and above	1 (2)	2 (4)
Average No. of children	4	3
Husbands age (average in years)	36	38
Years since leaving household (in years)	15	14
Duration of marriage (average in years)	17	15
During time of marriage was husband living at home or a Migrant (In Percentage)		
Home	5 (6)	5 (10)
At Other Place (Migrants)	47 (94)	45 (90)
Average no. of times husband visit home (in a year)	3	2
Purpose of visiting Home	Festivals and Ceremonies and Health Issues	
In case of emergency or need whether husband visit home (In Percentage)		
Yes	46 (92)	48 (96)
No	4 (8)	2 (4)
Have you visited husbands' work place ever? (In percentage)		
Yes	6 (12)	9 (18)
No	44 (86)	41 (82)
Are in regular touch with your husband (in percentage)		
Yes	42 (84)	44 (88)
No	8 (16)	6 (12)
Do you own any landed property in your name? (In Percentage)		
Yes	12 (24)	19 (38)
No	38 (76)	31 (62)
Total	50 (100)	50 (100)

Source: Field Survey 2016.

*Figures in parenthesis represent percent to total.

*Only three categories have been taken as none of the household reported that they belong to Category.



females. It is only during festivals such as Holi, Dusshetra and Diwali that a large majority of male migrants return home for a visit; the rest of the time, women have to manage and handle house chores and agricultural work alone, sometimes with the help of relatives and other male members of the family. Table 3 shows that the majority of women in both villages have an intermediate level of education. The women in the Jarasi village have a comparatively better level of education. Table 3 also shows that very few women have land in their name.

Impact of migration on women left behind

Remittances and financial autonomy

This section will throw light on the financial autonomy of women. Sixty percent of women have reported that male migration has increased their purchasing power and liquidity of households via remittances; 40 percent of women reported that remittances are not enough for household expenses, thus women also look for jobs in the village. The majority of women reported that their husbands send money in the name of parents in law (57 percent) and only 43 percent of women respondents reported that they receive remittances in their name. As far as control of remittances is concerned, most of the women reported they have partial control on remittances and other financial sources of households (64 percent), whereas only 9 percent of women reported they have full control over money and 27 percent of women respondents reported that they did not have any control over financial resources of household including remittances. They also did not have control on earnings from farm activities either. Although many women (82 percent) reported that financial autonomy had increased over time after male migration, elderly relatives often need care and thus handed over their responsibilities to women. Women reported they enjoyed more financial autonomy in comparison to women whose husbands were working in the village. Regarding money spent, most of the remittances were spent on day-to-day household expenses (78 percent) and women decided on their own what to spend the money on. The majority of women (79 percent) had to seek advice from husband or other male members in family when spending money on gold ornaments, purchasing durables or any other asset. Regarding keeping money without their husbands' knowledge, the majority of women respondents (63 percent) mentioned they do keep money without their husbands' knowledge. Some of the women from upward castes and rich sections of the villages mentioned that migration helped in constructing houses, buying ornaments and consumer durables. The negative facet of remittances mentioned by the women were dependency of other

members of households on remittances and risks associated with remittances, such as job loss, accident, and illness of male migrant. Women staying in joint families had less access to remittances and in some cases (12 percent) women were not even aware of the amount sent by their husband.

Role in decision-making and managerial functions in household

Decision-making in rural Uttar Pradesh is often made by the male members of the household. The study found that few women managed their household affairs on their own (72 percent), while some (28 percent) depended on others such as parents, parents in law, directions from in laws and husband and others.

Women reported that they felt more empowered in decision-making and managerial functions in comparison to women whose husbands worked in the village. Most of the women reported that they had decisional autonomy in day-to-day household decisions such as household expenses, purchasing clothes and other daily basic requirements of children and elderly in the households, and taking children out for social visits within the community. In big decisions such as land purchases, agriculture investments, consumer durables purchases, and taking elderly and children for treatment within or outside the village, women had to seek directions either from their husband, father-in-law or other male member of the family. Moreover, 91 percent of women reported that they could not take decisions on important issues on their own even after taking directions from the aforementioned members of households. Women reported that despite the fact that they are empowered post male migration, they cannot make big decisions on household matters; however, women felt empowered as they had all the rights to take decisions on day-to-day household affairs, which previously fell to their husbands.

Increased burden of work

The majority of women (76 percent) reported that the work burden had increased manifold post migration of male member of family. Only 24 percent of women respondents reported that migration via remittances have reduced their work load as their lost labour effect have been negotiated by hiring a labour from village with the amount sent by migrant as remittances. Most of the respondents (76 percent) mentioned increased workloads in the home, agriculture and looking after the elderly and homestead in the prolonged absence of men. Migration has forced women to work in areas and domains that were previously reserved for male members of the household. Moreover, raising children in the absence of male members of the family is tough; 89 percent of women found it difficult to raise children alone. Women from very poor households have to go through significant hardships



because of the migration of male members of the family. In the households surveyed most possessed land less than one hectare, very few women respondents reported that they hire agricultural labor for their fields. Another major finding of the study is that especially in lower castes, women of migrant households had to perform all the tasks in the fields, from sowing to harvesting, and in some cases they sought help from young children and relatives. Thus in the two villages there is some degree of feminisation of agriculture. It was even tougher for women who worked as agricultural labor or casual labor in village. These women also reported that remittances were not enough, and were used for basic subsistence living. Richer sections of the villages, i.e. upper caste had no issues with migration, as pre migration they leased out their land and hired agricultural labours to work in their fields. Thus, women have had an increase in workloads in agriculture varied by familial structure, caste and economic class.

Access to civic entitlements and political participation

Fifty-nine percent of women mentioned that they find it difficult to get benefits from government schemes. Only 73 percent of women have a Mahatma Gandhi national rural employment guarantee act (MNREGA) job card. One of the reasons for not having a job card found in this study was that most of the women workers were engaged in domestic work at houses of the upper sections of society. Only 34 percent of women reported that they easily got work under the scheme. The study found that only 40 percent of women had a level of awareness regarding MNREGA and minimum wages. The overall tendency of demanding entitlements from the government was found to be abysmally low. Women from migrant families, though they attend panchayat meetings, do not participate. Despite this, they are at least better informed now. One of the interesting findings of the study is that around 73 percent of women casted their vote and when asked who influenced their choices of representative said they made the choice themselves. The women who never used to come in panchayat meetings when the men were around, were now taking part in village meetings in the absence of men. Seventy-nine percent of women reported that although they still cannot raise their voice in patriarchal society but still feel empowered as gradually their issues will be addressed. Seventy-two percent of women respondents reported that after the initial period of settling down post migration, they were so happy and realised that they are more capable of managing multiple things than they had ever imagined.

Changes in living arrangement and structure of family

Another important finding of the study is that migration led to changes in the familial structure of few households in sample villages. Migration,

family relations and women have complex relationships. Due to persistent intra-family tensions over cash income, families and living arrangements structure is changing in sample villages. Young male members of the family migrated out and the remittance and other income earned from local sources were shared jointly by all household members. There has been a change in attitude of women towards sharing remittances where migrants' wives are reluctant in sharing remittances with other members of the households. This leads to an emergence of two households within one roof. This is particularly very strong with households with less land and in poorer sections of the village. Migration is also increasing number of nuclear households in villages where most of the households were joint households prior to migration.

As mentioned by one women "All hard work was done by my husband and still all financial autonomy were with my in laws. To have better use of remittances in my children's education we decided to stay as different households with two kitchen in same households".

This statement also shows that the person who controls remittances does not want to share it with the members of family who are not economically active.

Credit accessibility and women left behind

Fifty-two percent of women responded reported that they do not get credit easily, whereas the remaining 48 percent of women mentioned that they have easy access to credit. Two issues came out of this. Women who do not have easy access to credit reported that no one trusted them, thus women are often denied access to credit when they need it in their husband's absence. The second point was that women who mentioned they have easy access to credit was because of the extra income their household received in the form of remittances. Most of the women in need of credit borrow money from relatives and friends (82 percent) and 18 percent of women borrow credit from agricultural money lenders.

The group of women in the focus group discussions mentioned: "In the village no one listens to us nor shows any credibility when it's a matter of borrowing money. They think we are not mature enough to handle financial issues". Another elderly women mentioned that "It's considered as shame for the family, if women of the family step out of the households and borrow money. It is considered something out of women's domain. Women of the village should be confined only to four walls of the households, and even in households they must limit themselves to the kitchen of the households".



Thus migration has a mixed effect on accessing credit for women left behind.

Psychosocial issues

Male out-migration has the worst impact on the psychosocial wellbeing of women left behind. Ninety-three percent of women reported that they suffered from constant feelings of loneliness, 86 percent of women mentioned that they suffer from insecurity and constant fear. Few women also mentioned that they suffer from constant fear of being left by their husbands or that their husband may be starting another family at their work place. As one of the respondents said: "I am very worried for future of my children and I have this strong feeling that my husband is having another family in Mumbai". The prolonged absence of their husbands also affected their social relations with relatives and family. They often have to depend on relatives, in-laws or other male members of household for some kind of work. Indian society is patriarchal in nature, which worsens the conditions of women left behind who end up having strained relationships with their in-laws. One of the major reasons for having rows with their in-laws is financial issues and lack of basic understanding. Sixty-three percent of women mentioned that they find it difficult to adjust to living with their in-laws. Women reported that they often go through verbal and physical abuse in their family as well as in society. Fifty-nine percent of women mentioned that they have witnessed verbal abuse in families and society in the absence of men as members of community often abuse women as they think that they have been left by their husbands and have another family at their work place. Moreover, 33 percent of women reported physical forms of abuse within the family and community. These women are perceived as left wives by community, as male members spend most of the time at their work place. Another major issue is that few women of lower castes (29 percent) reported that they receive very small and leftover amounts of remittances as most of it is being spent on alcohol by the men. Mobility of women have reduced, as in village male figure assist mobility. Seventy-two percent of women mentioned that they find it difficult to travel to their parents or any relatives place in the absence of their husband. They have to seek help from other male members in the households or relatives. The positive dimension of male migration is acculturation and exposure to the outside world. Seventy-eight percent of women reported that their husbands migration brings sociocultural changes and brings changes in attitudes of women and household members left behind, along with changes in the community as well. Another major change felt by women left behind is the increase in social status within the

community in the village. Sixty-three percent of women reported that their social status had increased over time post migration in village.

Concluding remarks and suggestions

The findings from the study is similar to findings from the literature. A review of the available literature on the impact on women left behind by male migration revealed that there is no common consensus on whether male out-migration is an opportunity or a threat to the status of women left behind. There are both positive and negative impacts of migration on women left behind. Positive aspects include increased autonomy in finances and decision-making, women empowerment, increased income via remittances, followed by increased expenditure on health, education and agriculture. More political autonomy was felt by women in the absence of male members. Women of migrant families hire labor with increased remittances and thus to some extent their workloads have decreased.

Negative dimensions of male migration on women include the lost labor effect leading to an increase in workloads. Women have to overwork by working in agriculture and house chores. Male migration has increased the workload of women by engaging them in various agricultural activities. The added responsibility of child and elderly care is another major issue. Denial in access to civil and political entitlements in the absence of males is another big issue. Prolonged separation and loneliness, lack of emotional support, the fear of being left by their husbands and extramarital affairs at urban areas were major negative aspects found in reviewing the literature. Another negative aspect is that although women are empowered in the absence of males, they are not allowed to make decisions on major issues. Moreover, they have to be dependent on relatives and close family members. Being with their in-laws in the absence of their husbands and adjusting to life in a patriarchal society was another issue found in literature.

The findings from studying two villages found the same. The major benefits of male migration felt by women left behind in these villages were: acculturation; alterations in attitudes; financial benefits in the form of additional income via remittances, through which they constructed houses, bought gold ornaments for their sisters'/daughters' weddings, purchased land, and invested in agriculture; they had improved social status in society and with their relatives; helped relatives and in-laws; cleared long overdue debts; could afford better education for children; had an improved lifestyle; had greater exposure to the outside world; increased decision-making power and financial autonomy to some extent; and increased confidence. Major negative impacts on the women left



behind in sample villages included: loneliness and isolation because of prolonged absence of their husbands; heavy responsibilities; worries about future and studies of children; outstanding debts and disposal of properties and assets and gold; insecurity of being left by husband and extramarital affairs; children's health problems; anxiety and fear; disarray in household matters; sexual exploitation; both verbal and physical abuse within the family and society; lack of credit access; lack of civil and political entitlements and voice; disarray and frequent fights over household matters; legal disputes; overdependence on outside help from village people and relatives; overburden of work in household and agricultures; and the added responsibility of caring for in-laws, elderly relatives, and livestock.

These women play a very important role at both household and community level. Their status and education should be improved by the government and community at all levels. Proper training and access to resources of production such as land, and access to civic entitlements in the absence of men should also be provided. Land should be granted to them, as absence of land in their name often impedes long-term investment. The situation is often worsened by a low amount of remittances received and aggravates the problems related to agriculture.

This study found that male migration has both positive and negative impacts on women left behind, policy-makers and communities at grass-root levels should try to minimize the negative impacts associated with male migration on women as these women are major actors in the development process of rural areas. Agricultural work is still biased towards men, and women are often denied basic training and facilities. Moreover, insufficient household incomes have forced women to work in various non-farm jobs. Efforts should be made to provide more training programs in terms of technical and vocational training to increase the level of education, and credit facilities should be provided by local level government to empower and equip these women with more knowledge on farm and non-farm works. Women's roles in the household and community have increased manifold as a result of male migration, so any policy not taking into account this new trend in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh will be incomplete and will not be able to meet its target.

As Taylor (2000) wrote "how migration of humans out of rural areas affect those left behind is not only important from a social welfare point of view. In light of the increasing integration of markets, it also may have ramifications for economic growth outside of rural areas (e.g., by affecting food production, agricultural exports, the rural demand for manufactured goods, and future economic surplus in

agriculture available for investment anywhere in the economy) and the economic welfare of non-migrants certainly influence future migration pressure".

The change must be initiated in conventional mentality and mindsets of society that prevails in the villages of India, which forces women to perform conventional work while remaining at home. Women should be encouraged to come out from the veils of the house and should openly involve themselves in the public domain. Government and local bodies should work to raise awareness on gender issues so that women feel more empowered and can have access to rights. Gender discrimination in access to entitlements and education should be stopped right from childhood. Being a patrilineal society, land in India often belongs to male members; traditions and culture, along with in-laws, work to keep land intact with men. Women's access to land is very limited and often they have a joint share with men in land rights. Thus policies should be drafted that provides more accessibility of land to women. More social security policies should be encouraged and implemented for women so that they do not have to look to men of the households during health concerns, income insecurity, food security and to protect themselves against physical and verbal abuse and violence.

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