

Abstract

International Labor Migration and Women's Status of the Left Behind: The Case of Bangladesh

While the role of remittance sent by the migrant labors on economic development of the sending communities has received much attention, the non-economic consequences of international migration on the left behind family members have not adequately explored. By extracting data from a demographic surveillance system, this article examines the social impact of the international migration on women's status of the sending communities in rural Bangladesh. Findings reveal that the remittance sent by the migrant labors has not only raises the living condition of the left behind but also the diffusion of secular ideas along with remittance significantly modifies the traditional behavior of the sending communities. Women's role in managing the household affairs and control of the remittance sent to them substantially raise their social position within the family. The study concludes that the social and economic aspects of overseas migration raises the status of the left behind women by enhancing the individual position in their families and modifying the cultural values of the communities.

Compared to earlier permanent moves, the contemporary international migration is primarily 'south-north' temporary flow of labors (United Nations, 1985) although the migrants include a wide spectrum of population including high skilled professionals to low paid laborers. South-north international migration not only produces large inflows of valuable remittance that stimulate economic growth but helps reducing unemployment and poverty at the sending communities (Russell, 1997). Policy-makers of the less developed countries are convinced that exporting labor to developed countries stimulates their economic growth (Russell, 1997; Simmons, 1984). While the role of remittance sent by the migrant labors on economic development of the sending communities has received much attention, the non-economic consequences of labor migration on the left behind family members have not adequately explored (Shah and Arnold, 1985).

The economic impact of international migration on the left behind is fairly well documented (Russell, 1997; Shah and Arnold, 1985; Dasgupta, 1981). One set of studies report that migration has little or no economic impact on the sending communities (Durand et al., 1996; Simmons, 1984; Dasgupta, 1981) while the others found considerable socioeconomic improvement as a result of international migration (Abbasi and Irfan, 1983; Islam et al., 1987; Madhavan, 1985; Russell, 1997). Most of the studies are reported to have methodological problems particularly in assessing the impact of labor migration on the behavioral aspects of the receiving communities (Shah and Arnold, 1985). As the role

of cultural as well as contextual variations in the effects of migration was not adequately addressed in most literature, the findings have remained inconclusive.

CONCEPTUALIZING MIGRATION – WOMEN’S STATUS LINKAGE

The role of international migration on the women left behind in less developed context has rarely been addressed in demographic literature probably because the implications of international migration are difficult to measure (United Nations, 1985). Women of the migrant families at the place of origin have to adjust with the absence of husbands and other adult male migrants and, as a result, their role and status often undergo change. Such adjustment process depends upon a number of factors: who moves, the length of stay in abroad and the sociocultural system at the place of origin (Hugo, 1997). Kinship linkages and family residence patterns also determine the nature of adaptation (Connell et al., 1976).

One direct result of male migration is the female headship of incomplete nuclear families (Hetler, 1990). In some cases, they are appointed to head their villages traditionally reserved for men (Hugo, 1978). In the absence of adult men, women and children perform additional agricultural and other tasks of the households (Siegel, 1969; Colfer, 1985). Coping with husbands’ absence depends on the context and cultural tradition. While women have little difficulty in coping with their husbands’ absence because of the availability of support from the extended kin (Lineton, 1975). Naim (1974) reports that the absence of adult men creates tension and strains within the family. A heavy out-migration may also reduce the incidence of arranged marriages (Gonzalez, 1961) and, as a result, inflate the size of dowry (Naim, 1974). The change of women’s role as well as the adaptation with the new situation was intensively studied by Colfer (1985) where women were able to manage the household chores in their husband’s absence and they enjoyed their freedom and autonomy in managing their households. Dawson (1995), on the other hand, argues that women’s autonomy and *de facto* headship is rather a fiction.

Women’s status¹, conceptualized in this research at the family level, is a relative term that depends on both the context and time. Three indicators of women’s status viz. women’s decision making capacity, access to school among girls and practicing dowry in marriages are considered for this research recognizing that such a definition reflects only a part of women’s status. As the study attempts to link labor migration with the indicators of women’s status, we seek to examine several basic assumptions relating to migration and women’s position. Based on empirical evidence, we hypothesize that the economic and social aspects of overseas migration tend i) to modify the status of women; and ii) not only to raise the economic condition but also operate to modify several behavioral aspects of the left behind.

In assessing the impact of labor migration on women’s position, we have considered both the type of country and duration of exposure to overseas. First, we assume that both the earning money and the interaction with foreign cultures greatly increase with the longer duration of stay of migrants and, thus,

the duration of the period of staying abroad is considered an important predictor of both the economic status and social behavior. Secondly, the change in social behavior depends, to a great extent, on the context (country) where the migrants live and interact. It is assumed that the social and cultural environment is very different in western more developed countries (MDCs) such as Britain, Germany, Italy, USA, Canada, Japan, etc. than in conservative less developed countries (LDCs) such as Middle East, India, Malaysia, etc. Thus, the possibility to accept, adopt and promote secular behaviors is expected to be much higher among the migrants living in developed countries than others.

The possible pathways through which international labor migration may influence economic and women's status are not clearly known. Remittance is expected to increase the opportunity to save money and enhance the standard of living by providing greater access to and control over resources that subsequently would tend to create an enabled condition to change the status of women. In addition, the flow of remittance along with the diffusion of modern and secular² ideas may interact with economic and social spheres of the left behind to modify their status. The relationship between international migration and the change in women's status change could be simple and linear has there been no major intervening factor such as NGO-led women's program was present in the study area. The primary focus of such program has been to alleviate poverty and empowering poor rural women.

Participation in micro credit based development programs is reported to improve not only their economic opportunities but also significantly raises their position in their family, raise their decision making role and tends to reduce gender inequality (Hashemi, Schuler and Riley, 1996; Hadi, Nath and Chowdhury, 1996). If the NGO-led women's development program would have focused primarily on the non-migrant families, the contribution of the flow of remittance and the diffusion of secular values on women's status may have played a diminishing role because the differences in indicators of women's status are expected to be negligible even where the impact of migration on women's status is significant. After adding the NGO contribution, we expect that the duration and nature of exposure to migration may modify the traditional patriarchal attitude to gender roles and women's status when the influence of NGOs is controlled. Participation in family decision making³ occurs when women assume control over the resources of the families as a result of the absence of adult men in the families. The change of women's position with a greater understanding of social and cultural factors affecting them may result in greater mobility, reduce dependence on traditional patrons and increase self-confidence (Hugo, 1997). The presumed relationships depend on a complex set of confounding factors some of which may have significantly alter or modify the direction of associations between migration and women's position. For example, families of modest means have access to credit facilities to finance family-based micro-enterprises is not available to relatively better off families. In such a context, tendency to migrate to acquire capital quickly may be more attractive among the members of the relatively better off than poorer

families. International labor migration may, therefore, be a strategy, not only to escape unemployment and poverty (Massey et al., 1994; Russell, 1997), but also to earn money primarily to finance the family consumption and secondarily to finance new productive activities. A number of individual and family characteristics such as educational level, occupation, amount of land owned, religion and the sex of the head of the family is considered to influence the effects of labor migration on the change of women's status of the left-behind. Also, the consequences may differ by the country and duration of exposure to overseas. We assume and recognize, therefore, that the effects of international labor migration are multi-dimensional, complex and change with the context and time.

THE BANGLADESH CONTEXT

It is not known exactly when the Bangladeshi workers began to migrate to overseas. The first documented migrants were a small group of unskilled labors who moved to the British islands and its overseas colonies in the late nineteenth century (Hadi and Kamal, 1997; Islam et al., 1987). Since then, the Bangladeshi labors, although smaller in scale, continued to migrate primarily to the British islands and Germany till the beginning of World War II. During fifties, a large number of semi-skilled labors had the opportunity to move to England when the British government introduced employment vouchers to foreign workers (Hadi and Kamal, 1997). But the flow of labor migration from Bangladesh to England fell considerably after restricting the entry of overseas workers to British islands. During 1970s and 1980s, a large number of unskilled and semi-skilled labors migrated to the oil-rich Middle East countries and Western Europe, particularly to Germany and Italy, a significant proportion of whom ultimately moved to North America (United Nations, 1985). The primary reasons of such accelerated migratory flows were the political changes in the mid 1970s and famine in 1974. The income and wage differentials between the sending and destination countries are considered the key determinants of such south-north migration (Massey et al., 1994) that are often shaped by the government policies. The pressure for jobs forced the young workforce to seek employment opportunities in more developed western countries along with other destinations in East Asia particularly South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore and the Middle East.

The labor migration from Bangladesh has both economic and sociocultural significance (Hadi and Kamal, 1997). The diffusion of newer ideas and secular values from overseas has tended to change the traditional pattern of behavior. The contribution of remittance in raising living standard is well known. But the pathway through which migration modifies the social behavior is not adequately addressed. Bangladeshi labor migrants assumed to interact with their left behind kin in many ways. We conceptualize two pathways of influences: i) raising basic economic needs through injecting remittance; and ii) modifying social behaviors through the diffusion of secular ideas to traditional values. Given such

a backdrop, the focus of this study is to examine the contribution of the economic and social aspects of international migration in raising women's status of the left behind in rural Bangladesh.

DATA AND METHODS

The Survey

Migration data are rarely collected in Bangladesh. Official statistics of the manpower export are either incomplete or inaccurate although the first documented migration from Bangladesh began in the last century (Islam et al., 1987; Hadi and Kamal, 1997). Data for this study were collected from a demographic surveillance system covering 70 villages located in ten regions of rural Bangladesh. A complete enumeration of the study villages in 1996 revealed that migrant families were concentrated in few pockets in Bangladesh. Migrant families are defined as families where at least one member either had been living or returned home after living in a foreign land for at least six months. About 530 migrant families were identified in total of which information from 515 families was successfully collected. A comparable number of non-migrant families was randomly selected from the same villages to yield a total of 1,030 sample families for the study. All sample families were interviewed that provided ability to save, living condition, women's position, practice of dowry in marriages and educational aspiration for girls in addition to basic demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the study families. The respondents were adult female members of the families.

Model Specification

As the study focuses on women's status of the left behind members of the families, the unit of analysis of this research is considered 'family'. The sample families are categorized from two types of migration: i) duration of exposure to migration variable into *non-migrant*, migrant for *<5 years* and migrant for *5 years or more*; and ii) nature (country) of exposure to migration variable into *non-migrant*, migrant *living in less developed conservative* countries and migrants living in *more developed western* countries.

The study assumes that the international labor migration from Bangladesh villages significantly improves the status of women of the left behind migrant families. As there is no universally accepted indicator of women's status, we have considered several proxies to measure it. Three indicators of women's status are conceptualized in this research: a) decision making, to measure women's relative position in the family; b) access or intention to send their girls to school that refers to the behavior of a family toward gender equity; and c) practice of dowry, a negative scenario from the secular perspective indicating the prevalence of patriarchy and gender inequality.

In designing the analytical model, we use three dichotomized dependent variables. A number of socioeconomic and demographic variables of study families are estimated and used as confounding

variables to assess the role of migration on women's status. The confounding variables are age, years of schooling, occupation of husband, amount of land owned by the household, religion and participation in credit program. The models employed are of the following form:

$$\ln \frac{(p)}{(1-p)} = \alpha + \sum_{i=1}^k (\beta_i * x_i)$$

where p is the probability that women's status indicator of the household is positive (or negative in case of the practice of dowry), α , β_i are estimated regression coefficients; and x_i are the explanatory variables. In our analysis, log odds ratios of explanatory variables in the models are estimated to predict the status indicators of sample women. This helps to understand the percentage change in the odds associated with each unit change in the explanatory variable.

Analytical Procedure

The analysis begins with a description of the background variables of the sample population by the country of migration. Secondly, the role of labor migration on the economic status at the family level is assessed. Thirdly, the women's status indicators are differentiated by the country of exposure. And finally, the net impact of international migration on the three indicators of women's status is examined. In the absence of longitudinal data, this study has followed the cross-sectional approach. The results may generate biased estimates of the impact of labor migration on women's position because families that are relatively better off may be more likely than others to send their members to overseas. To minimize the possibility of selection bias, multivariate analyses have been used to control the effects of confounding factors. Despite these steps, the estimated effects of the labor migration on women's status may distort the findings and the conclusions drawn from them.

RESULTS

Information about the samples is summarized in Table 1 where the study variables are differentiated by the country of exposure to labor migration. When age distributions of non-migrant and migrant adult (20 + years) populations are compared, it appears that migrant population is much younger than non-migrant population. For example, compared to only 16.5 percent non-migrants, more than 42 percent migrants in LDCs i.e., those who migrated to conservative developing countries are less than 30 years old and more than 77 percent are less than 40 years old. Among the migrants in more developed and secular societies, about a third is < 40 year old and nearly 55 percent are 40 year old or less. Sex ratios, measured women as the base, show that migrants are almost exclusively men compared to non-migrant population. Mean schooling is much higher among migrants than non-migrant population and the percent of population with

at least secondary level education is also significantly higher among the migrants. Migrants in MDCs are relatively more educated than migrants in LDCs.

Migrant families possess more land than non-migrants in general. Among the families having migrants in MDCs, the amount of land owned is significantly higher than others. The difference indicates a possible selection bias in migrating to overseas. It is also quite possible that the remittance sent to the migrant families has increased inequality in land ownership. About 42 percent of non-migrant families depend on selling manual labor⁴ for their livelihood compared to less than 8 percent in the migrant families. NGO-led credit facilities are generally available to bottom 50 percent of the families in the study villages. Data indicate that migrant families are generally less poor and have limited access to local credit market. Accessibility is even lower in families having migrants in MDCs than LDCs. International labor migration is higher among Muslims than other religious minorities.

Labor Remittance and Change in Living Condition

The effects of the nature of country and duration of exposure to migration on the ability to save money and living standard are summarized in Table 2. The role of labor migration on economic status of the families left behind clearly demonstrates that the remittance sent by the migrant can contribute in raising the ability to save money and standard of living of the left-behind. The role of labor migration in the improvement of economic status of the left behind would be maximum when the labors move to the more developed countries (MDCs) and stay longer period.

The relationship between the country of exposure and economic status is shown in Table 3. It is very difficult to explain why the ability to save would increase and the living condition would be better in families having migrants in more developed (MDCs) than in less developed countries (LDCs). If the amount of remittance sent to home is the key factors of such increase in economic status, it is quite possible that the chance to earn and sent more is significantly higher in the more developed western than conservative developing countries even when the experience and skills of migrants working in two types of countries are similar.

Table 4 shows that the effects of the duration of migration on both the ability to save and living standard are statistically significant controlling for age, education, land ownership, selling manual labor and access to credit. When the duration of exposure becomes 5 years or more, the odds ratios of the ability to save tend to increase but the living condition does not. These findings demonstrate that longer a migrant is exposed to an international labor country, the greater the likelihood that the left behind members of that migrant will be able to save more money. The participation in micro credit based income generating program, years of schooling of the household head and land ownership are also important predictors of economic status. Given the fact that micro credit program beneficiaries are

primarily the non-migrant families, it can be argued that the estimated economic effects (in terms of the ability to save and raising living condition) of remittance in migrant families would be even more had there been no credit facilities available for the non-migrant families.

International Migration and Change in Women's Status

The role of demographic and sociocultural consequences of international migration is getting importance among both the researchers and policy makers (Hadi and Kamal, 1997). However, it is not clearly known how does labor migration associate with the change in social and behavioral aspects of the sending families. The diffusion of secular values to migrant families from the overseas cultures is assumed to play an important role in modifying social behaviors while it is also assumed that the diffusion process will depend on the social and cultural environment where the migrants live and interact. In this research, we attempt to link the economic and social aspects of labor migration with women's decision making role, access to school among girls and the practice of dowry, and explain how the diffusion of the nature as well as the duration of exposure have modified the indicators of women's status.

Decision Making

Women's decision making, measured as the extent to whether women can decide or actively participate in the decision-making processes within the families, is significantly higher ($p < 0.01$) in migrant than non-migrant families (Table 5). In the absence of men, women in the migrant families play wider roles in family affairs and are less under the domination of men (Khafagy, 1982) that would have substantially raised their decision-making capacity (Shah and Arnold, 1985; Gulati, 1983). The changed position of women in the migrant families may be willing or an outcome of the problems experienced as a result of separation from spouses and managing the families (Hadi and Kamal, 1997; Gilani, 1983).

Tables 6-7 indicate that women's decision making capacity is positively associated with the country of migration and the duration of exposure to international migration when other variables are controlled. While the role of NGOs in raising women's decision making role in the study villages is well documented (Hadi, Nath and Chowdhury, 1996), the estimated impact of credit program participation in decision making role in our data is an indication of the role of the diffusion of secular values on migrant families who are generally non-participants of NGO-led women's program has diminished the credit program impact on women's status. In many cases, the left behind families is headed by women because of the prolonged absence of adult men in the families. Thus, women in the migrant families are forced to play additional domestic roles (Hadi and Kamal, 1997).

The role of the diffusion-effect is also visible as the women having migrants in the western countries are more likely to enjoy freedom than others. The decision-making role also increases as the

duration of the absence of male family members becomes longer. The absence of men encourages women to take major roles in managing the family (Gulati, 1983), enhances women to grow independently, helps develop new interest and discover hidden potentials (Go et al., 1983).

Access to School

Traditionally, women are deprived of getting education in rural Bangladesh compared to men. Thus, sending girl children to school is assumed to reduce gender inequality in education and as an indicator of women's status. Table 5 shows that migrant family members are more concerned for the education of their girl children than others (Shah and Arnold, 1985) probably because cultural exchange as a result of international migration have raised the aspirations for the education of their girl children. Data also show that the access to school among girls increases with the length of stay of migration (Gilani, 1983) indicating that both the remittance and secular values have played an indirect role in modifying behaviors relevant to education of the girl children (Roongshivin, 1985). Tables 6-7 indicate that the access to school enrollment for girls among the migrant families is significantly higher than others controlling for the economic status and the characteristics of the household head. We argue that the remittance as well as the diffusion-effect has raised the educational opportunity for the girls (Roongshivin, 1985). The pattern of relationship suggests that the behavioral aspects of labor migration have the potential to reduce gender bias in education (Parasuraman, 1986).

Practice of Dowry

The dowry is lower among the migrant than non-migrant families (Table 5). The incidence of dowry continues to decline as the duration of migration increases. The role of labor migration on the practice of dowry is shown in Tables 6-7 when most other potential predictors are controlled. The practice of dowry particularly among the poorer section is widespread (Amin and Hadi, 1998). Dowry is significantly higher among the non-Muslims (mostly the Hindus) and among the credit program participants. Dowry is a traditional practice among the Hindus as the Hindu inheritance law does not allow married women to receive parental property. Dowry has remained culturally acceptable to the wider community except educated and socioeconomically better off section who considers the practice of dowry is wrong, unjust and should be prohibited. Controlling the role of a number of confounding factors, our data support the assumption that the diffusion-effect of secular values from the west through international migration reduces the practice of dowry among migrant families (Tables 6-7). The capacity to spend money in the form of dowry in migrant families is higher because the migrant families are financially better able to save money than non-migrant families (Gulati, 1983). The incidence of dowry declines even when the financial capacity increases with the duration of exposure.

CONCLUSION

The role of the economic and behavioral aspects of international labor migration in changing women's status in the sending communities is assessed in this research. One of the features of this study has been the presence of development intervention of the micro credit programs targeting to poor women. The credit programs also include such support services as skill training, conscientization, non-formal education and legal awareness for women. Within the framework of migration -- living condition -- women's status change linkages, the study has examined several assumptions. The results clearly suggest that the remittance sent by the migrant labors has significantly increased the living condition of the left behind and the diffusion of secular ideas along with the increasing financial capacity has significantly modified the social behavior (Abbasi and Irfan, 1983; Russell, 1997). While the differences in economic effect by the type of migration are negligible, the country of migration is a better predictor of influence in improving women's status of the left behind than the duration of exposure to migration.

Earlier research has never been conclusive about its long-term effects of the impact of international migration on economic status and behavioral change of the left behind. Amount of remittance largely depends on the country of destination and duration of exposure because the possibility to earn more money is significantly higher in MDCs than LDCs. The magnitude of the change of gender roles and women's position depends on the nature of exposure received by the migrants. The intensity of change is very high if the migrants live in more developed countries compared to living in a conservative society.

The assumptions of the role of international migration on the left behind, tested in this study, suggest that the contribution of social and behavioral aspects of migration in modifying gender roles and women's status depends on the context. Although the NGO-led women's empowerment programs have confounded the migration impact on women's position, it can be argued that south-north labor migration can play an important role in reducing gender inequality and increasing women's status in a traditional community.

FOOTNOTES

1. Women's status is the relative position in family. Three indicators are estimated to measure women's status. These are women's decision making capacity, access to school among girls and the practice of dowry in marriages.
2. By *secular ideas*, we mean modern, progressive and scientific approach in understanding and explaining any issue, event or change, etc.
3. Women's decision making capacity is measured whether a woman can make her own decision or can actively participate in the decision making processes within the family. Decision issues include: education for children, type of treatment to be given for herself or her children, whether or when to visit natal home or other places, amount of money to be spent for the family members during festivals, and whether or how much money should be lend to or borrowed from others.
4. The concept of *labor sale status* of a family is extensively used by the NGOs in identifying the poorer section of the community. A family is considered poor if any adult member of that family sells manual labor for at least 100 days a year and owns cultivable land of 50 decimals or less.

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TABLE 1
PERCENTAGES AND MEANS OF STUDY VARIABLES BY
THE COUNTRY OF MIGRATION, BANGLADESH

Study Variables	Country of Migration		
	None	LDC	MDC
% aged < 30 years	16.5	42.4	32.6
% aged ≤ 40 years	27.4	77.3	55.1
% male	47.6	97.4	85.4
Mean schooling (years)	2.3(4)	6.5(4)	8.4(4.6)
% with Grade X or more	2.5	10.0	32.2
Mean land owned (acres)	2.1(4.6)	2.3(3.9)	7.9(10.2)
% owned land 2 ≥ acres	31.3	39.2	73.0
% sale labor	42.2	4.1	7.3
% access to NGOs	40.9	17.7	14.6
% Muslim	72.4	87.6	97.6
N	515	468	47

LDC Less developed countries.

MDC More developed countries.

Standard deviations are shown in parentheses.

TABLE 2
EFFECTS OF LABOR MIGRATION ON INDICATORS OF ECONOMIC STATUS
BY COUNTRY AND DURATION OF MIGRATION

Type of Migration	Economic Status	
	Ability to Save	Living Condition
Country of Migration		
No migration	12.1	32.4
Less developed	24.5	48.1
More developed	41.5	70.7
Duration of Migration		
No migration	12.1	32.4
< 5 years	24.2	49.4
5 years or more	29.6	51.0

TABLE 3
ODDS RATIOS OF THE EFFECTS OF THE COUNTRY OF MIGRATION TO
PREDICT ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE LEFT BEHIND

Predictor	Economic Status	
	Ability to Save	Living Condition
Country of Migration		
No migration	1.00	1.00
Less developed	1.36	1.48**
More developed	2.14**	3.23***
Age	0.99**	1.01
Year of Schooling	1.05**	1.01
Land Ownership	1.01***	1.00
Labor (rc=Sale)	1.78*	1.36
Credit Program Participation		
Not participated	1.00	1.00
Participated	0.97	1.62***
Not eligible	1.73**	1.65***
-2 Log Likelihood	887.53	1299.08
* p < 0.10 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01		

TABLE 4
ODDS RATIOS OF THE EFFECTS OF THE DURATION OF MIGRATION TO
PREDICT ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE LEFT BEHIND

Predictor	Economic Status	
	Ability to Save	Living Condition
Duration of Migration		
No migration	1.00	1.00
< 5 years	1.41*	1.58***
5 years or more	1.43	1.50*
Age	0.98**	1.00
Year of Schooling	1.05**	1.01
Land Ownership	1.01***	1.01*
Labor (rc=Sale)	1.74*	1.32
Credit Program Participation		
Not participated	1.00	1.00
Participated	0.98	1.63***
Not eligible	1.74**	1.66***
-2 Log Likelihood	889.02	1303.84
* p < 0.10 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01		

TABLE 5
EFFECTS OF LABOR MIGRATION ON INDICATORS OF WOMEN'S STATUS BY
COUNTRY AND DURATION OF MIGRATION

Type of Migration	Women's Status		
	Decision Making	Access to School	Practice of Dowry
Country of Migration			
No migration	9.6	72.7	59.9
Less developed	12.6	89.0	33.7
More developed	34.1	82.6	---
Duration of Migration			
No migration	9.6	72.7	59.9
< 5 years	28.7	88.4	38.0
5 years or more	22.2	88.7	16.9

--- Sample size is too small.

TABLE 6
ODDS RATIOS OF THE EFFECTS OF THE COUNTRY OF MIGRATION TO PREDICT
INDICATORS OF WOMEN'S STATUS CONTROLLING FOR THE ABILITY
TO SAVE MONEY AND SEX OF THE FAMILY HEAD

Predictor	Women's Status		
	Decision Making	Access to School	Practice of Dowry
Country of Migration			
No migration	1.00	1.00	1.00
Less developed	1.90**	2.02**	0.51**
More developed	5.73***	1.36	---
Age	0.98**	1.00	0.98*
Year of Schooling	0.98	1.04	0.87***
Land Ownership	1.01***	1.00	1.00
Labor (rc=Sale)	1.61	2.56***	1.77
Religion (rc=Muslim)	0.89	0.79	1.96**
Living Standard (rc=Poor)	1.19	1.09	1.11
Credit Program Participation			
Not participated	1.00	1.00	1.00
Participated	0.80	1.35	1.90*
Not eligible	0.59*	1.25	1.05
-2 Log Likelihood	530.10	503.15	407.52

* p < 0.10

** p < 0.05

*** p < 0.01

--- Sample size is too small.

TABLE 7
ODDS RATIOS OF THE EFFECTS OF THE DURATION OF MIGRATION TO PREDICT
INDICATORS OF WOMEN'S STATUS CONTROLLING FOR THE ABILITY
TO SAVE MONEY AND SEX OF THE FAMILY HEAD

Predictor	Women's Status		
	Decision Making	Access to School	Practice of Dowry
Duration of Migration			
Non-migrant	1.00	1.00	1.00
< 5 years	2.01**	1.93**	0.62
5 years or more	2.13**	2.04*	0.23***
Age	0.98**	1.00	0.98
Year of Schooling	0.98	1.04	0.88***
Land Ownership	1.01***	1.00	1.00
Labor (rc=Sale)	1.54	2.61***	1.68
Religion (rc=Muslim)	0.85	0.79	2.16**
Living Standard (rc=Poor)	1.22	1.09	1.05
Credit Program Participation			
Not participated	1.00	1.00	1.00
Participated	0.82	1.35	1.81*
Not eligible	0.61	1.24	1.09
-2 Log Likelihood	534.97	503.50	409.83
* p < 0.10 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01			

Overseas Migration and Well-being of the Left Behind in Rural Communities in Bangladesh

Abdullahel Hadi

Correspondence

Abdullahel Hadi
Senior Research Sociologist
Research and Evaluation Division
BRAC
75 Mohakhali
Dhaka, Bangladesh

About the author

The author of this article is *Senior Research Sociologist* in the Research and Evaluation Division, BRAC, Dhaka, Bangladesh. The article is prepared for the *Workshop on Migration and Sustainable Livelihood* which was held from 5 to 6 June 1998 at Sussex University in Brighton, United Kingdom.

Abstract

Overseas Migration and Well-being of the Left Behind in Rural Communities in Bangladesh

This article examines the role of overseas migration in raising the socio-economic well-being of the left behind household members in rural communities in Bangladesh. Using a randomly selected sample survey data, the findings of the study reveal that the flow of remittance along with the diffusion of secular values are the key processes through which various forms of migration operate to improve the socio-economic well-being of the left behind. It is argued that the flow of remittance not only contributes to raise the economic well-being but the social and cultural aspects of overseas migration have the potential to modify the livelihood and behaviour of the sending communities through interacting secular ideas with traditional values.

The issues of the benefit and cost of overseas migration for development in countries of origin were hotly debated. International migration not only produces large inflows of valuable remittance but also offers an outlet for domestic frustrations for unemployed workers that might otherwise present serious problems. As a result, the policy-makers of the less developed countries encourage overseas migration to reduce unemployment at home and accumulate valuable foreign exchange to stimulate their economic growth. More than 100 million people were living outside their country of origin in the 1980s according to a United Nations estimate (Russell, 1997). Migrants include a wide spectrum of population: skilled and unskilled labourers, technical and kindred workers, forced or voluntary migrants moved at response to poverty and lack of employment.

Overseas migration from the south to north is reported to have multi-dimensional effects on both the sending and receiving communities (Hadi and Kamal, 1997; Shah and Arnold, 1985). Most of the studies conducted have concentrated on the demographic and economic aspects ignoring the complex social and cultural consequences of international migration (Shah and Arnold, 1985). Social and cultural aspects of overseas migration on the country of origin have recently been receiving attention but most of the studies are reported to have methodological problems particularly in estimating the net effects of international migration on socio-cultural spheres (Shah and Arnold, 1985). Although a considerable number of studies on the economic impact of south-north migration on the sending communities has been conducted (Simmons et al., 1977; Goldstein and Goldstein, 1981), the findings have remained inconclusive. For example, Simmons (1984) found migration as an integral part of socio-economic development and concluded that the effects of migration depend on the context within which it takes place. On the other hand, migration found to have very weak and sometimes negative influence on the socio-economic development in many studies (Durand et al., 1996; Simmons et al., 1977; Dasgupta, 1981).

The key to the migration impact on economic development is regarded as the contribution of remittance sent by the migrants to their kin in the source countries. The socio-cultural change as a result of international migration is considered to operate through the diffusion of secular values along with remittance. The role of remittance in economic development is fairly known but the non-economic impact of remittances as well as the process through which the remittance and diffusion of values operate to change the society and culture has remained unknown. Overseas migrants interact with their left behind kin in many forms and influence them to modify their traditional behaviours and values. We focus on two forms of influences on their left behind: i) raising economic condition through injecting remittance; and ii) modifying social behaviours through the diffusion of secular ideas to traditional cultures of the sending communities. The objective of this article is to examine the role of the economic

and social aspects of overseas migration in raising the well-being of the left behind household members in rural communities in Bangladesh.

Conceptualising migration – well-being linkage

Well-being is a process rather than static condition or status of a situation. There is no universally accepted definition of 'well-being'. In this study, we have attempted to conceptualise well-being¹ at the household level and focused on the economic and social dimensions only. A number of indicators is used to measure various aspects of socio-economic well-being. As the study conceptualises to link overseas migration with various dimensions of well-being of the left behind communities, we seek to examine a number of basic assumptions of the role of international migration on the presumed economic and social well-being of the left behind. These assumptions are based on available empirical evidence that reveals a strong influence of the behavioural aspects of international migration on the improvement of social, economic and health status of the left behind. One set of studies assumes that the remittance sent by the migrants has little or no economic impact on the sending communities (Durand et al., 1996; Simmons, 1984; Dasgupta, 1981) while the others found considerable economic development as well as the improvement of the standard of living (Abbasi and Irfan, 1983; Islam et al., 1987; Madhavan, 1985; Russell, 1997).

In examining the effects of overseas migration on well-being, we have looked at the three types² of migration viz. duration of exposure, intensity of effect and the nature of exposure. First, we assume that both the amount of remittance and diffusion of secular values greatly increase with prolonged stay of migrants in overseas and, thus, the duration of the period of staying abroad is considered an important predictor of well-being. Secondly, it is expected that the amount of remittance sent and the frequency of contact of migrants with the left behind increases with the number of migrant per household. Thus, the number of migrants per household is considered a predictor of the intensity of impact in both economic and social terms. Finally, the behavioural aspects of change among migrants largely depend on the context where the migrants live and interact. It is assumed that the social and cultural environment is very different in more developed western (such as Britain, Germany, Italy, USA, Canada, Japan, etc.) than less developed conservative countries (such as Middle East, India, Malaysia, etc.). Thus, migrants living in developed countries are more likely to accept, adopt and promote secular behaviours than others.

The possible ways in which overseas migration may influence the different dimensions of human well-being are not clearly known. We focus on two aspects viz. inflow of remittance and diffusion of

secular³ ideas as vehicles of change in the socio-economic spheres of the left behind households. Remittance is expected to increase household income, opportunity to save money, and enhance the standard of living and income security by providing greater access to and control over resources. Greater availability of remittance may contribute to better housing conditions, access to available facilities, provide opportunities to spend more money for health care, helps buying adequate food, and increases access to and use of modern health services.

Reduction of sickness and decreased mortality are important indicators of human well-being in the conceptual framework of the study. Mortality is indirectly influenced by the economic and behavioural aspects of remittance through improvements in food habit, nutritional status and health seeking behaviour. As a result of exposure to multi-facet cultures, the migrant families would have more knowledge about existing modern health facilities than others. They would be able to buying necessary health care services and have greater confidence and ability to interact with health care providers. It is hypothesised that the diffusion-effect of overseas migration can modify the health care behaviour of the left behind.

The intense exposure to different cultures may modify the traditional patriarchal attitude to gender roles and women's status. Greater participation in household decision making occurs when women assume control over the resources of the households as a result of the absence of adult men in the households. The change of women's position with a greater understanding of social and cultural factors affecting them may result in greater mobility, reduce dependence on traditional patrons and increase self-confidence (Hugo, 1997). The presumed relationships depend on a complex set of confounding factors some of which may have significantly alter or modify the direction of associations between migration and well-being variables. For example, households of modest means in our study villages have access to credit facilities to finance family-based micro-enterprises such as farming, poultry and cattle raising, vegetable gardening, etc. without collateral although this facility is not available to relatively better off households. In such a context, tendency to migrate to quickly acquire capital may be more attractive among the members of the relatively better off than poorer households. Overseas migration may, therefore, be a strategy, not only to escape unemployment and poverty (Massey et al., 1993; Russell, 1997), but also to earn money primarily to finance the household consumption and secondarily to finance new productive activities. A number of individual and household characteristics such as educational level, occupation, amount of land owned and religion of the household is considered to influence the effects of overseas migration on the change of well-being of the left behind. Also, the consequences may differ by the duration, intensity and nature of exposure of migration. We assume and recognise,

therefore, that the effects of overseas migration are multi-dimensional, complex and changes with the context and time.

Data and methods

Although official emigration from Bangladesh began in the late nineteenth century (Islam et al., 1987; Hadi and Kamal, 1997), the national migration data from the government departments are either incomplete or inaccurate. The data for this study were collected from a demographic surveillance system covering 70 villages located in 10 regions of rural Bangladesh. A complete enumeration of the study villages in 1996 revealed that migrant households were concentrated in few pockets in Bangladesh. Migrant households are defined as households where at least one member either had been living or returned home after living in a foreign land for at least six months. About 530 migrant households were identified in total of which information from 515 households was successfully collected. A comparable number of non-migrant households was randomly selected from the same villages to yield a total of 1,030 sample households for the study. All sample households were interviewed that provided economic condition, women's position, educational aspiration and health status of the study households. The respondents were adult female members of the households.

As the study focuses on the socio-economic well-being of the left behind members of the households, the unit of analysis of this research is considered 'household'. The sample households are categorised from three types or perspectives of migration: i) duration of exposure to migration variable into *non-migrant*, migrant for *<5 years* and migrant for *5 years or more*; ii) intensity of migration variable into *non-migrant*, *only one migrant* and *two or more migrants* in each household; and iii) nature of exposure to migration variable into *non-migrant*, *migrant living in less developed conservative countries* and *migrants living in more developed western countries*.

The paper assumes that overseas migration from Bangladesh villages significantly improves the socio-economic well-being of the left behind migrant households. As there is no universally accepted indicator of well-being, we have considered several proxy measures to understand it. Two dimensions of socio-economic well-being are conceptualised in this research: a) economic well-being, which is considered as a process of becoming capable to fulfil the basic needs of all members of the household. Six indicators such as ability to save money, raising living condition, buying land, investing on house, access to electric facility and repaying debt are used to measure this dimension of well-being; and b) social well-being that refers to the change of the behavioural aspects of a household to be able to satisfy other needs. Health seeking behaviour, incidence of death, morbidity, education for children, women's

position and practice of dowry are used as indicators of social well-being. In this article, a description of the background variables of the study population by duration of exposure of migration is presented. Secondly, the well-being indicators are differentiated by the duration of exposure. And finally, the net impact of various dimensions of overseas migration on well-being variables is examined. Findings based on cross-sectional data may generate biased estimates of the role of overseas migration on socio-economic well-being because households that are relatively better off may be more likely than others to send its members to overseas. To minimise the possibility of selection bias, multivariate analyses have been used to control the effects of confounding factors. Despite these steps, the estimated effects of the overseas migration on various dimensions of well-being may tend to distort the findings and the conclusions drawn from them.

Table 1: Percentages and means of study variables by duration of exposure to overseas migration, Bangladesh

Study variables	Duration of exposure		
	None	< 5 years	5 ≥ years
% aged (15 - < 30) years	24.8	52.3	32.4
% aged (30 - ≤ 40) years	10.9	32.8	34.0
% male	47.6	96.5	93.5
Mean schooling (years)	1.95 (3.4)	6.34 (4.2)	7.32 (3.9)
% with Grade X or more	2.1	11.0	16.0
Mean land owned (acres)	0.62 (1.49)	2.09 (2.57)	3.77 (8.67)
% owned land 2 ≥ acres	23.0	36.2	44.4
% sale labour	42.2	4.5	3.9
% access to credit facilities	40.9	19.4	13.1
% Muslim	72.4	91.0	82.4
N	515	362	153

Standard deviations are shown in parentheses.

Findings

Who are migrants?

Information about the samples is summarised in Table 1 where the study variables are differentiated by the duration of exposure to overseas migration. When age distributions of non-migrant and migrant populations are compared, it appears that more than 52 percent *recent* migrants (i.e., those who migrated in less than 5 years) are less than 30 years old and more than 85 percent are less than 40 years old. Among the *earlier* migrants, nearly 65 percent are 40 year old or less. This distribution indicates that

migrant population is much younger than non-migrant population and most of the migrants are young. Sex ratios, measured women as the base, show that migrants are almost exclusively men compared to non-migrant population. Mean schooling is much higher among migrants than non-migrant population and the percent of population with at least secondary level education is also significantly higher among the migrants. Recent migrants are relatively less educated than earlier migrants.

At the household level, land ownership appears to have a positive association with the duration of exposure to overseas migration while non-migrant households have least amount of land. It is not known, however, whether the remittance sent to the migrant household has played a role for such pattern of relationship. The main source of earning as *selling manual labour*⁴ is about 42 percent among the non-migrant households compared to less than 5 percent in the migrant households. NGO-led credit facilities are generally available to bottom 50 percent of the households in the study villages. The distribution of the access to credit facilities indicates that migrant households are generally less poor and have limited access to local credit market. Overseas migration is higher among Muslims than other religious minorities.

Table 2: Indicators of economic well-being by duration of exposure to overseas migration

Economic indicator	Duration of exposure		
	None	< 5 years	5 ≥ years
Ability to save money	12.1	24.2	29.6
Raising living condition	32.4	49.4	51.0
Buying land	8.6	23.9	30.7
Investing on house	39.0	39.3	40.5
Access to electric facility	15.5	40.6	62.1
Repaying debt	25.1	47.5	35.3

Migration and economic well-being

The role of overseas migration and duration of exposure on economic indicators of well-being clearly demonstrate that the remittance sent by the migrant can contribute in raising the ability to save money and standard of living of the left behind household members (Table 2). The capacity to buy land, invest on building or repairing house and repaying debt is also positively associated with the length of staying abroad.

The net effects of the duration, intensity and nature of exposure to overseas migration on six dimensions of economic well-being are summarised in Table 3. The regression equations are controlled

for educational level, occupation, amount of land owned, religion and access to credit facilities of the household head. As the explanation of the effects of control variables on well-being indicators is relevant but not very important in our analysis, their estimates are not shown in the table. Data show that the duration of exposure is statistically significant for four of six indicators of economic well-being: raising living standard, buying land, access to electricity and repaying debt. When the duration becomes 5 years or more, the odds ratios of most indicators tend to increase or stabilise except the occurrence of repaying debt. These findings demonstrate that longer a migrant is exposed to an overseas country, the greater the likelihood that the left behind members of that migrant will have a better living standard.

Table 3: Odds ratios for selected economic indicators of well-being controlling for educational level, occupation, amount of land owned, religion and access to credit facilities of the household head

Migration type	Economic well-being					
	Ability to save money	Living condition	Buying land	Investing on house	Access to electricity	Repaying debt
Duration of exposure						
None	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
< 5 years	1.18	1.46**	1.81***	1.18	1.75***	4.16***
5 ≥ years	1.30	1.44*	2.29***	1.37	3.37***	2.97***
Number of migrant						
None	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
One	1.12	1.36*	1.87***	1.17	2.04***	3.64***
Two ≥	1.75*	2.06***	2.38***	1.66**	3.36***	4.94***
Country of migrant						
None	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Conservative	1.16	1.41**	1.92***	1.23	2.12***	3.94***
Western	2.17**	2.41**	2.39**	1.26	4.43***	---

* p < 0.10

** p < 0.05

*** p < 0.01

--- Sample size is too small to estimate.

The assumption that the intensity of the exposure to overseas migration, measured by the number of migrants in each household, will have significant positive effect on the economic well-being is found valid in each of the indicators. The role of intensity is found particularly important in raising the ability to save money, living condition and investment in constructing or repairing house. It is very difficult to

explain why the economic well-being indicators would be better in households having migrants in western than in conservative countries. As the amount of remittance sent to the sending households is the key determinants of economic well-being, it is quite possible that the chance to earn more is higher in the more developed western than conservative developing countries even when the experience and skills of migrants working two types of countries are similar.

Table 4: Indicators of social well-being by duration of exposure to overseas migration

Social indicator	Duration of exposure		
	None	< 5 years	5 ≥ years
Health seeking behaviour	47.0	68.0	75.2
Incidence of death	16.5	12.6	13.7
Morbidity	45.9	41.6	43.8
Education for children	54.4	78.0	83.1
Women's position	9.6	28.7	22.2
Nuptial behaviour	59.9	38.0	16.9

Migration and social well-being

Indicators of social well-being also increase with the duration of exposure to migration (Table 4). For example, seeking health care from a qualified physician when needed is significantly higher among migrant than non-migrant households that increases further with the duration of exposure. Similarly, both the incidences of death and morbidity are lower among migrant households. The value of education is better understood by the members of the migrant households. The women in the migrant households enjoy better position than non-migrants. Nuptial behaviour such as practising dowry in marriage is significantly less among the migrant than non-migrant households.

The effects of the duration of exposure are estimated in Table 5 where it is clear that overseas migration has some positive effects ($p < 0.05$) in seeking modern health care in the event of sickness probably because migrant households can better afford to visit a qualified practitioner than a non-migrant households as they are financially better off than others (Hadi and Kamal, 1997). Also, the diffusion-effect of secular ideas may have played a role in modifying the health seeking behaviour of the migrant households through frequent contacts between the migrants and their left behind household members. Affordability to spend money for health care increases with the duration of stays overseas. This trend is more distinct which indicates that the intensity (or the number of migrants per household) not only raises the possibility of earning and remittance per household but it has also significantly multiplies the

diffusion-effect on the migrant households. The diffusion of secular values is assumed to play an important role in modifying behaviours while it is also expected that the diffusion process will depend on the social and cultural environment where the migrants live and interact. We assume that migrants in more developed western countries would have more secular outlook than migrants living in relatively conservative countries. As expected, the modern health seeking behaviour is significantly higher in households having migrants in western than conservative countries. Morbidity is lower among migrant than other households as found in many studies (Parasuram, 1986). Data also support this notion that the overseas migration has negative effects on morbidity among people left behind when other variables are controlled. Like morbidity, the incidence of deaths appears to have a negative association with the duration, intensity and nature of exposure to migration. We have seen earlier that the remittance as well as diffusion of cultural values has significantly modified the health seeking behaviour of the left behind members (Brittain, 1990). Better living condition may have reduced the incidence of sicknesses which along with modern health seeking behaviour may have significantly reduced the incidence of death (Hadi et al., 1997).

Table 5: Odds ratios for selected social indicators of well-being controlling for educational level, occupation, amount of land owned, religion and access to credit facilities of the household head

Migration type	Social well-being					
	Health behaviour behaviour	Incidence of death	Morbidity rate	Education for children	Women's position	Nuptial
Duration of exposure						
None	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
< 5 years	1.44**	0.66*	0.85	1.81*	3.73***	0.59*
5 ≥ years	1.67**	0.73	0.93	2.04*	3.39***	0.21***
Number of migrant						
None	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
One	1.37*	0.65**	0.84	1.73*	3.99***	0.46***
Two ≥	2.64***	0.83	1.03	2.97**	1.84*	0.39**
Country of migrant						
None	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Conservative	1.42**	0.64**	0.86	1.92**	3.48***	0.46***
Western	5.81***	---	---	1.23	10.21***	---

* p < 0.10

** p < 0.05

*** p < 0.01

--- Sample size is too small to estimate.

Sending children to school in a traditional community is considered an important indicator of social well-being as a significant proportion of the school-aged children remains out of school. Data show that the role of overseas migration has a significant positive effect in raising school enrolment. The aspiration for education of children increases with the length of stay and intensity of exposure to migration (Gilani, 1983) indicating that both the remittance and secular values have played an indirect role in modifying behaviours relevant to education of the children (Roongshivin, 1985).

The practice of dowry particularly among the poorer section is widespread (Amin and Hadi, 1998) although receiving dowry is illegal in Bangladesh. Dowry has remained culturally acceptable to the wider community except a smaller section who considers the practice of dowry is wrong, unjust and should be prohibited. Our assumption that the diffusion-effect of secular values from the west through international migration will reduce the practice of dowry among migrant households is found valid. The

capacity to spend money in the form of dowry in migrant households is higher because the migrant households are financially better able to save money than non-migrant households (Gulati, 1983). The incidence of dowry declines even when the financial capacity increases with the duration of exposure. No reported practice of dowry among the households with migrants in western countries clearly demonstrates the diffusion-effect of secular values on cultural behaviour.

The process of empowerment in a patriarchal society is considered an important dimension of social change. Reduction of gender inequality and change of women's position⁵ in household as well as in the community are expected to increase the overall well-being. Women's position, measured as the extent to whether women can decide or actively participate in the household decision-making processes, is positively and statistically significantly ($p < 0.01$) associated with the duration, intensity and nature of exposure to international migration. In many cases, the left behind households is headed by women because of the prolonged absence of adult men in the households. Thus, women in the migrant households are forced to play additional domestic roles (Hadi and Kamal, 1997). In the absence of men, women are less under the domination of men (Khafagy, 1982; Hadi and Kamal, 1997) that would have substantially raises their decision-making role (Shah and Arnold, 1985; Shaheed, 1981; Gulati, 1983). Women's position increases within the duration of stay of adult men overseas. Diffusion-effect also plays a significant role as the women having migrants in the western countries are more likely to enjoy more freedom than others. The absence of men encourages women to take major roles in managing the household (Gulati, 1983), enhances women to grow independently, helps develop new interest and discover hidden potentials (Go et al., 1983).

Conclusions and implications

Within the framework of individual migration system, this research integrates economic, social and behavioural aspects of the households as the contribution of the inflow of remittance and diffusion of secular values from the overseas. The findings extend previous studies and highlight the importance of south-north migration for raising living standard and change of social behaviour for developing country settings (Islam et al., 1987; Madhavan, 1985; Russell, 1997). The specification of the type of migration such as duration of exposure, intensity of effect and the nature of exposure are shown to be a major predictor of influence on the left behind. The predictor variables in explaining most of indicators of well-being are shown to be statistically significant.

Previous studies on the role of remittance in improving the economic and social spheres of the left behind have never been conclusive about its long-term effects. Major concerns include whether the south-north migration is beneficial or detrimental to development efforts in the long run, reduces or increases the inequality in income distribution, or reduces the pressure of unemployment among educated youths (Fergany, 1982; Madhavan, 1985). With respects to the flow of remittance along with familial exchange with the left behind, our analysis leads us to conclude that migrants who earn and stay longer in abroad are more likely to be able to save money and invest remittance in less productive sectors than non-migrants. Economic well-being of the left behind depends on the intensity and duration of exposure as well as the possibility to earn and send more money to their dependent at home. Although most of the remittance sent to the family members goes toward consumption, the remittance along with the diffusion of knowledge have the potential to modify the socio-cultural behaviour of the left behind. The intensity and direction of the change of behaviour depend on the context. The possibility of a behavioural change is very low if the migrants live in a relatively less developed closed society compared to living in an open culture.

The assumptions of the contribution of overseas migration on the left behind, developed and tested in this study, suggest that the flow of remittance along with the diffusion of secular values from the north to south are key processes through which various forms of migration operate to improve the socio-economic well-being of the left behind in the sending communities. This approach helps explain earlier misconceptions about why international migration have produced differential or undesirable outputs in developing-country settings. With increasing globalisation of the economies, the magnitude of south-north migration is likely to grow in coming decades. The governments as well as the private foundations can play a role in providing appropriate structures to spend remittances and modify the livelihood as well as the behaviour of the migrant communities.

Footnotes

1. Well-being at the family level is the process of improving all spheres of human life. For simplicity, we have narrowed down the concept into two dimensions: economic and social. Six indicators are estimated to measure each dimension recognising the fact that the indicators have only partially reflected the well-being of the family.
2. Three types of overseas migration are used in this research since the purpose has been to understand all possible kinds of effects of migration on the left behind.
3. By *secular ideas*, we mean modern, progressive and scientific approach in understanding and explaining any issue, event or change, etc.
4. The concept of *labour sale status* of a household is extensively used by the NGOs in identifying the poorer section of the community. A household is considered poor if any adult member of that household sells manual labour for at least 100 days a year and owns cultivable land of 50 decimals or less.
5. Women's position is measured by asking whether a woman can make her own decision or can actively participate in the decision-making processes within the household. Decision issues include: education for children, type of treatment to be given for herself or her children, whether or when to visit natal home or other places, amount of money to be spent for the family members during festivals, and whether or how much money should be lend to or borrowed from others.

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