

Rural interventions to stem migration

Introduction:

Rural to urban migration is associated with many effects that are detrimental to community and individual well-being. These include lack of labour to work on farms (leading to food insecurity), feminisation of agriculture labour, and poor life outcomes for vulnerable groups (like women and children) in the source areas, and over-crowding in cities, pressure on natural resources, poor health and education outcomes, and child labour in the destination areas. In view of this, one of the key objectives of SPMRM is reducing and reversing migration. The scheme is designed to improve the overall standard of living in Rurban areas in two ways. Firstly, through the provision of urban amenities, thereby closing the rural-urban infrastructural divide. Secondly, through its focus on supporting economic activities so as to diversify livelihoods, create employment and raise incomes in rural spaces.

Background:

The role of SPMRM in stemming distress migration is evident in the Dharambahal Cluster in Jharkhand. Ghatshila, adjacent to Jamshedpur, has faced challenges due to lack of employment opportunities. Further, being well connected with both the national highways and the railways, this region has continued to face migration due to lack of income generating possibilities. Mono-cropping culture and lack of alternative livelihood opportunities has led to low annual income. This presented the need to create or identify alternate employment opportunities which could withstand the harsh climate and ensure a good return on investment, thereby stemming distance migration.

Details of the Intervention:

In order to generate alternate employment opportunities, the Gram Sabha and the Choupal harnessed the know-how of mushroom cultivation in 2019 aiming to utilise the strong network of SHGs. During the inception phase, the community was contacted through the meetings of the SHGs, Choupal etc. which helped in bringing like-minded people to the same platform. 730 beneficiaries from 90 SHGs were targeted. These people were further motivated to ensure their participation and engage an extended portion of their land resources. The assurance of finance, technical guidance including field demonstration, exposure and training has made these farmers adopt this project.

Impact:

Change in perception towards this project could be felt within the cluster. At one level, the households who were not part of this project expressed their interest to take up mushroom cultivation. At another level, beneficiaries of the project were reported to not migrate as a result of the intervention. Due to their engagement in mushroom cultivation, the beneficiaries' incomes have been augmented and they have been able to support their families better. This has helped to restore dignity in the lives of the community members, and the rate of migration has drastically fallen. This has reinforced SPMRM's objective to reduce distress migration and ensure employment generation within the clusters. Further, additional income of upto Rs. 8000 per month per person was reported.

Source: Ministry of Rural Development. (2020). Success Stories – Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission. Government of India.