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Can anthropology work for migrants? Anthropology (-ists) at work in charities and NGOs

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Title of Paper

Anthropological knowledge and advocacy to help migrants

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Short Abstract

Anthropological knowledge on migration needs to be shared with the policy makers because of lack of data, migration is largely invisible and ignored by them.

Long Abstract

Internal mobility is critical to the livelihoods of many people, especially tribal people, socially deprived groups and people from resource-poor areas. There is a large gap between the insights from macro data and those from field studies. What data are available attest to the substantial and growing scale of internal seasonal migration. In one district of the rice-producing belt of West Bengal, the flow of seasonal migrants, drawn from tribal's, Muslims and low castes, exceeds 500,000 people. Migrants are disadvantaged as labourers and labour laws dealing with them are weakly implemented.

Poor migrants have very little bargaining power. Most migrant labourers are also employed in the unorganized sector, where the lack of regulation compounds their vulnerability. They are largely ignored by government and NGO programmes.

This paper highlights the fact that, how anthropological Knowledge can be used to advocate the problem of migration with the government and civil society to build a strong Government and NGO foundation and helping government planning. This will help the government and civil societies in introduction of new strategy for control of illegal migration. A case study from Indian state has been discussed for replication elsewhere.

Background:

In some parts of India, three out of four households include a migrant. However despite the large scale of migration in absolute numbers of people involved and India's long history of population and labour mobility, labour migration has rarely been reliably studied. Labour migration is complex. Streams differ in duration, origin, destination and migrant characteristics. Economic and social impacts on migrants and their families are variable. Migration often involves longer working hours, poor living and working conditions, social isolation and poor access to basic amenities. At destination, migrant labour affects markets, lowering the cost of labour. Migration also affects the labour market at the place of origin. Migrant earnings affect income, expenditure patterns and investment and changes relations at household and community levels. While there seems to be some positive impact on incomes and investment, the major function of migration is to act as a 'safety valve' in poor areas. The impact on asset and income inequality is more mixed. Internal mobility is critical to the livelihoods of many people, especially tribal people, socially deprived groups and people from resource-poor areas. However, because of lack of data, migration is largely invisible and ignored by policy makers. There is a large gap between the insights from macro data and those from field studies (Sharma 2009).

Most migration literature makes a distinction between 'pull' and 'push' factors, which, however, do not operate in isolation of one another. Mobility occurs when workers in source areas lack suitable options for employment/livelihood, and there is some expectation of improvement in circumstances through migration. The improvement sought may be better employment or higher wages/incomes, but also maximization of family employment or smoothing of employment/income/consumption over the year. At one end of the migration spectrum, workers could be locked into a debt-migration cycle, where earnings from migration are used to repay debts incurred at home or in the destination areas, thereby cementing the migration cycle. At the other end, migration is largely voluntary, although shaped by their limited choices. About 78% populations live in the rural areas and the rest 22% live in the 152 towns of Jharkhand. No. of villages in Jharkhand is 32,615 (2001 Census). Generally the tribal populations are in rural areas. Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka have readily available material on fostering safe migration, in terms of audio-video, posters, booklets, leaflets and so on, which are materials used for awareness generation. Most of the material mentioned above primarily addresses Inter-country migration, as most of the migrants from these countries migrate to other countries in the region. Some of the existing materials in these countries especially address the issues related to migration, whereas some other material addresses the coexisting issues such as trafficking and human smuggling etc. Some materials are also very generic in nature, e.g., material on prevention of HIV/AIDS, but can be used in the context of migration, as is essential. In India, most of the

migration is inter-state or inter-district migration. Migration in India is also marked by the phenomena of short or medium duration, and seasonal migration, rural to urban and vice versa as shown in the following table:.

Table 1: Distribution of Migrants by Sex and type of Migration

(%)

Sex	Year	Type of Migration					Total Number of Migrants (Million)
		Rural to Rural	Rural to Urban	Urban to Urban	Urban to Rural	Total	
Male	1991	43.5	30.0	19.0	7.5	100.0	61
	2001	36.4	34.2	23.0	6.3	100.0	93
Female	1991	72.3	13.2	9.1	5.4	100.0	164
	2001	72.3	13.5	10.0	4.2	100.0	221
Person	1991	64.5	17.7	11.8	6.0	100.0	225
	2001	62.9	18.9	13.4	4.8	100.0	314

Source: Registrar General of India, Census of India 1991 & 2001.

Methodology:

1. The anthropological study was conducted in the 16 districts of Jharkhand viz. Bokaro, Chatra, Dhanbad, Garhwa, Giridih, Godda, Gumla, Hazaribag, Kodarma, Latehar, Lohardaga, Pakur, Palamau, Ranchi, Shebjanj and Simdega. Secondary data was collected from secondary sources, News paper clippings and libraries etc. Quantitative data was collected by using interview schedules for Parents.
2. Data collected from 18,856 interviews migrant's parents from 128 Revenue villages of Jharkhand, India. Qualitative data was collected through focused group discussions and case studies and analyzed through content analysis method.
3. The quantitative data obtained from survey was entered and analyzed using specially designed software package and presented through percentage tables.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

Anthropological Knowledge of migrants:

The following knowledge gained through anthropological enquiry were helpful in developing the toolkit to ensure safer migration with special focus on reducing vulnerability of migrant workers to HIV/AIDS

Causes of migration:

Given the diversity in the nature of migration in India, the causes are also bound to vary. Migration is influenced both by the pattern of development (NCRL, 1991), and the social structure (Moses et al, 2002).

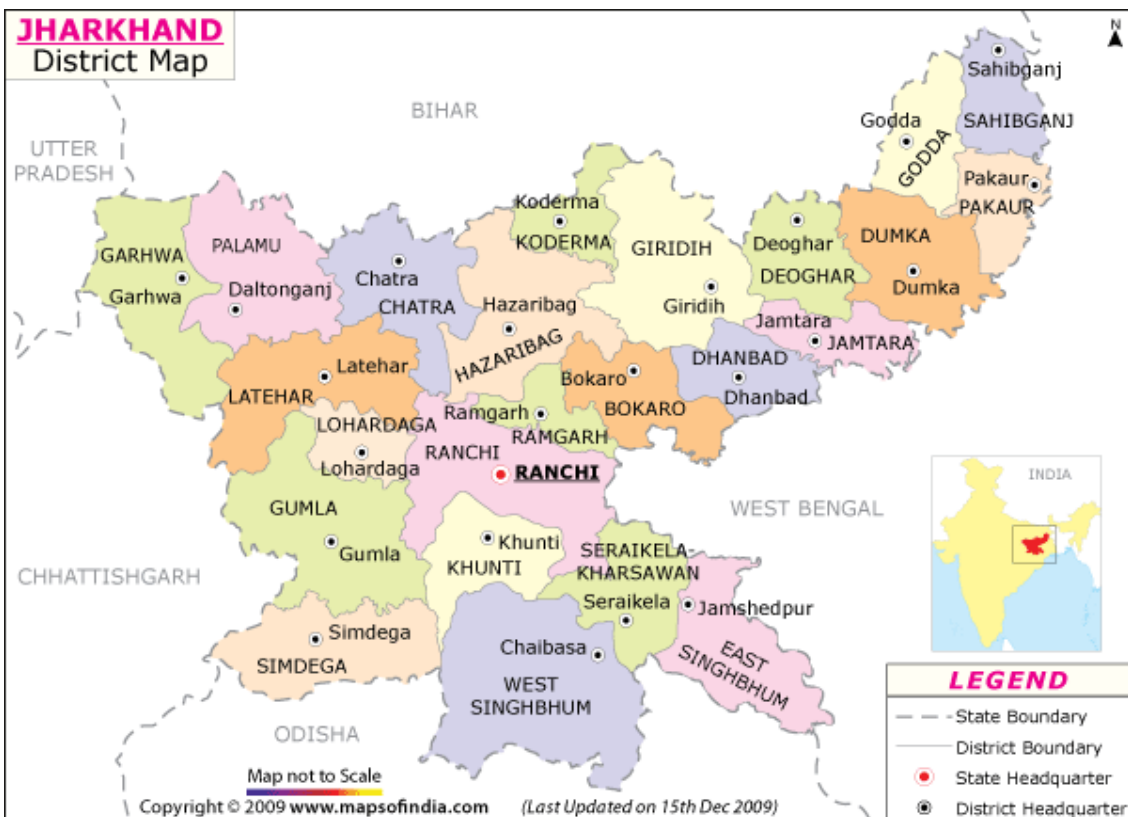
The National Commission on Rural Labour, focusing on seasonal migration, concluded that uneven development was the main cause of seasonal migration. Along with interregional disparity, disparity between different socioeconomic classes and the development policy adopted since independence has accelerated the Process of seasonal migration. In tribal region, intrusion of outsiders, the pattern of settlement, displacement and deforestation, also have played a significant role. Most migration literature makes a distinction between 'pull' and 'push' factors, which, however, do not operate in isolation of one another. Mobility occurs when workers in source areas lack suitable options for employment/livelihood, and there is some expectation of improvement in circumstances through migration. The improvement sought may be better employment or higher wages/incomes, but also maximization of family employment or smoothing of employment/income/consumption over the year. At one end of the migration spectrum, workers could be locked into a debt-migration cycle, where earnings from migration are used to repay debts incurred at home or in the destination areas, thereby cementing the migration cycle. At the other end, migration is largely voluntary, although shaped by their limited choices. The NCRL has recognized the existence of this continuum for poor migrants by distinguishing between rural labour migration for survival and for subsistence. The landless poor, who mostly belong to lower caste, indigenous communities, from economically backward regions, migrate for survival and constitute a significant proportion of seasonal labour flow (Study Group on Migrant Labour, 1990).

Reports on the alarming rise in trafficking of migrant minors and children for commercial sexual exploitation not only in India but also at an international level, is a matter of great concern. There have been many news reports and anecdotal events of the occurrence of third trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation from the district of state Jharkhand. Most of them are tribal, enslaved beyond the tribal zone of this state. It is evident that although the Jharkhand babies are enticed out of their homes on the pretext of lucrative jobs, they are virtually ensnared in the flesh trade supported by touts, equally attached to the two extremes of the rural Jharkhand and metropolitan cities of Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai. In fact it is a clandestine top grade that is centered round and it is taking advantage of its tribal natives, known for simplicity, gullibility, sincerity and affectionate nature and at the same victims of extreme poverty at local level in their hours. Ironically, Jharkhand that has the potential of the richest state is the poorest in bringing benefits of its natives. It is on this count that exploitation of girls from rural parts of Jharkhand where there is no viable source of livelihood continues. Migration is a compulsion and curse. It is occasioned out of complete lack of sources of livelihood. It doesn't lead to a better fortune for most of the girls going out of their homes but dark lanes where they are forever lost, where their lives end as victim of sexual exploitation in various ways and they fall prey to sexual exploitation in the brothels or outside the brothels. They are forced to continue because there because on the one hand network of flesh trade allows no escape for them and on the other the compulsion of being alive compels them to accept their forced destiny. Even when they get a chance to come back to their native state they dare not disclose the truth and simply give an impression that are working as domestic servants.

There have been many news reports and anecdotal events of the occurrence of Child- trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation from the district of state Jharkhand. Most of them are tribal, enslaved beyond the tribal zone of this state. It is evident that although the Jharkhand girls are enticed out of their homes on the pretext of lucrative jobs, they are virtually ensnared in the flesh trade supported by touts, equally attached to the two extremes of the rural Jharkhand and metropolitan cities of Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai. In fact it is a clandestine top grade that is centered round and it is taking advantage of its tribal natives, known for simplicity, gullibility, sincerity and affectionate nature and at the same victims of extreme poverty at local level in their houses.

Situation of Female child Migration in Jharkhand:

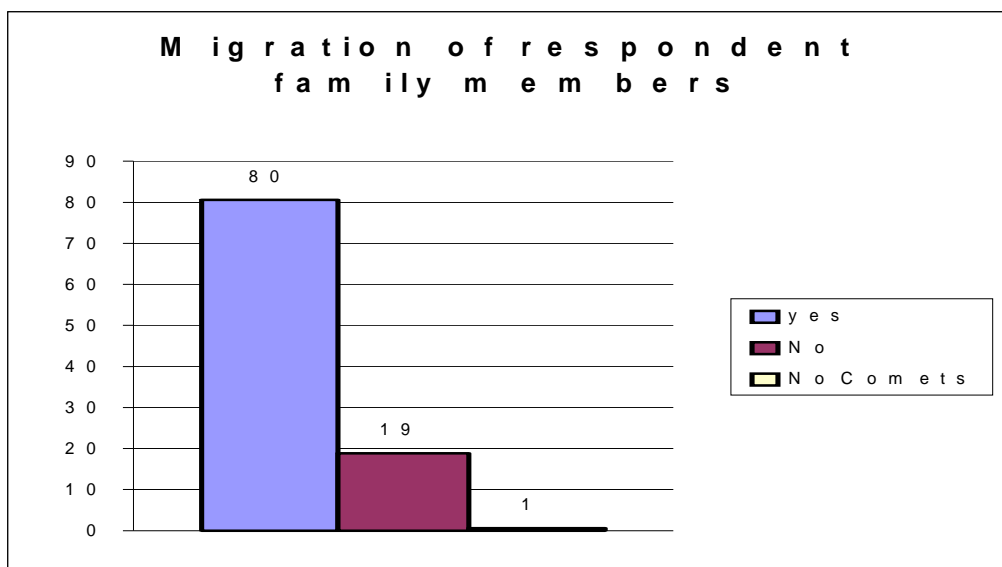
Jharkhand's Tribal population constitutes 26.36% of the state as per census 2001. There are 32 tribal communities in Jharkhand. The tribal social values can be discerned in the society. Co-operation, mutual obligation and community solidarity have helped them to stand together against disintegrative forces. The tribal's have maintained and cherish such cultural values as straight forwardness, sincerity, honesty and truthfulness. The tribal population inhabiting in rural areas of Jharkhand are mostly below the poverty line. They both are small and marginal farmers and laborers. A majority of them derive all their needs from the nearby forests, the sale of head load of wood forms their main source of income. Low literacy rate, poor hygiene facilities, lack of medical facilities in the vicinity has made their lives extremely miserable. Economy too has shattered badly.



Tribal women are living under domestic and outside agriculture work pressure but they have no say in decision making in family and society. Their labour is unaccountable. They usually suffer from anemia and reproductive infections. One of the main obstacles in tribal development is superstitious beliefs and practices. They think that the diseases, famines, water scarcities, weak crops, spread of epidemics and premature death, etc. befall on them only when the evil spirits are angry.

Thus, the socio-economic condition of the tribal's is very poor caused by many factors, i.e. undulating topography, less cultivable land with no irrigation facilities, lack of Govt. infrastructure facilities and superstitious beliefs, etc. The female child (below 14 years of age) is considered as potential workforce for tribal society. They are subject to maximum exploitation in Jharkhand as a work force. Therefore, they easily fall pray and trapped in trafficking.

- The migrant's parents responded that 80% family members migrated to other places/ towns. 19% respondents said their family members do not migrated to the other places; rest one percent people did not give any response.

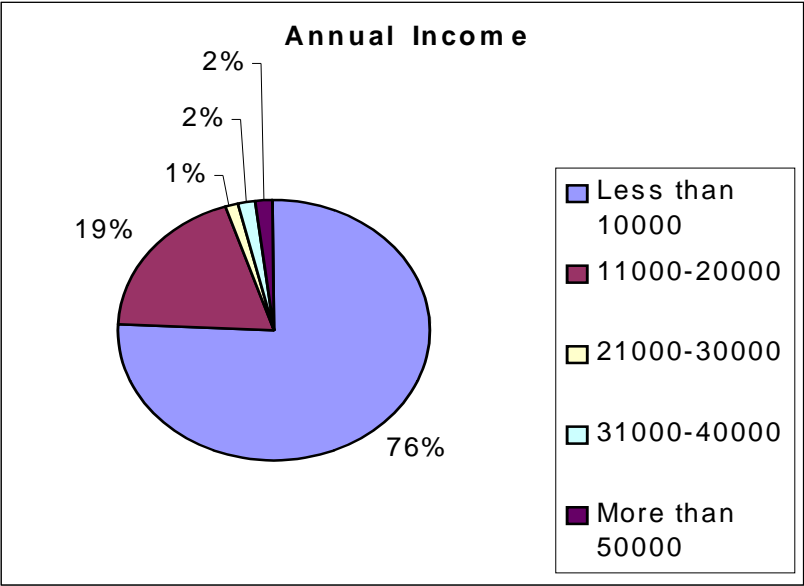


Socio-economic status of migrant's parent respondents

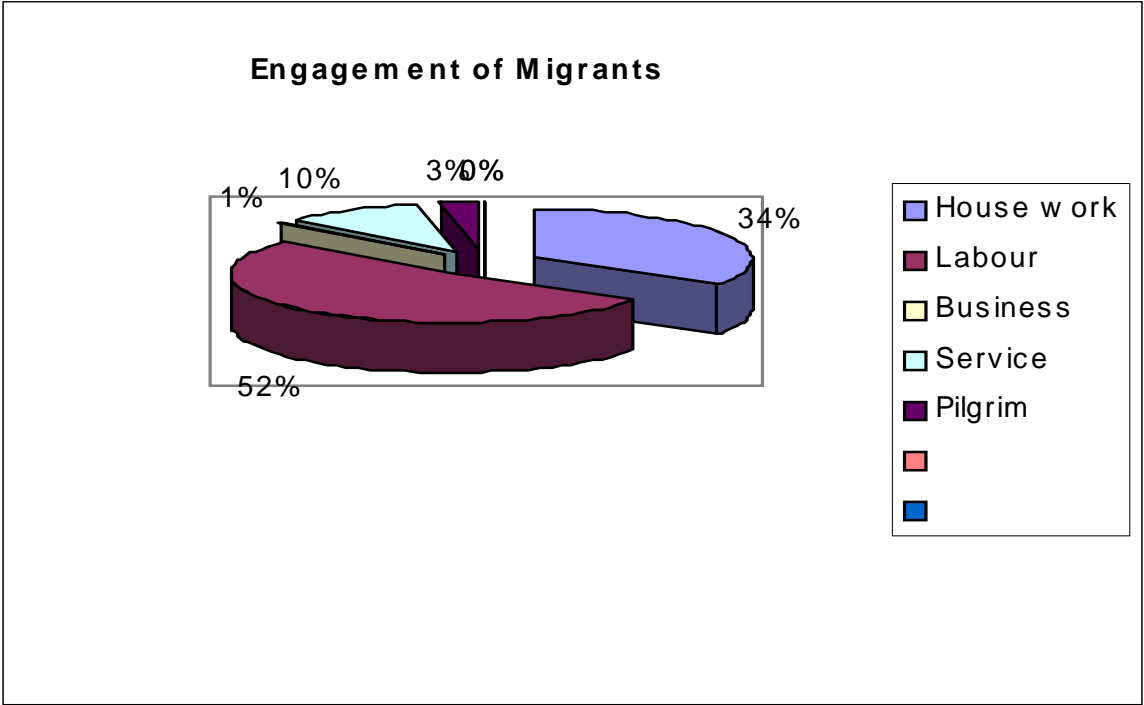
The respondents were from different socio- economic background. Most of them belong to BPL (Below Poverty Line) Category. The 9% respondent was Above BPL category and 91% were from BPL category.

The respondent parents were from different economic background. 76% respondents' annual income was less than 10,000/-, 19% respondents annual income was 19%, one percent respondents annual income was 21,000-

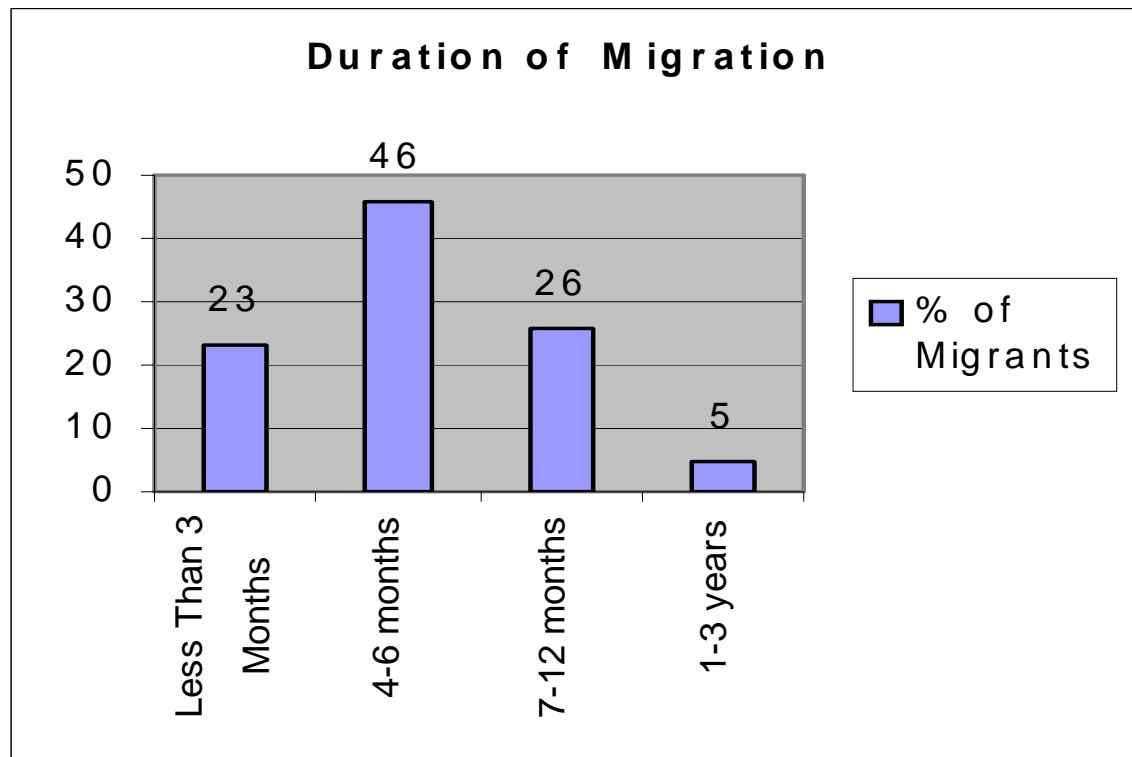
30,000 and annual income between 31,000- 40,000 and more than 50,000/- were two percent each.



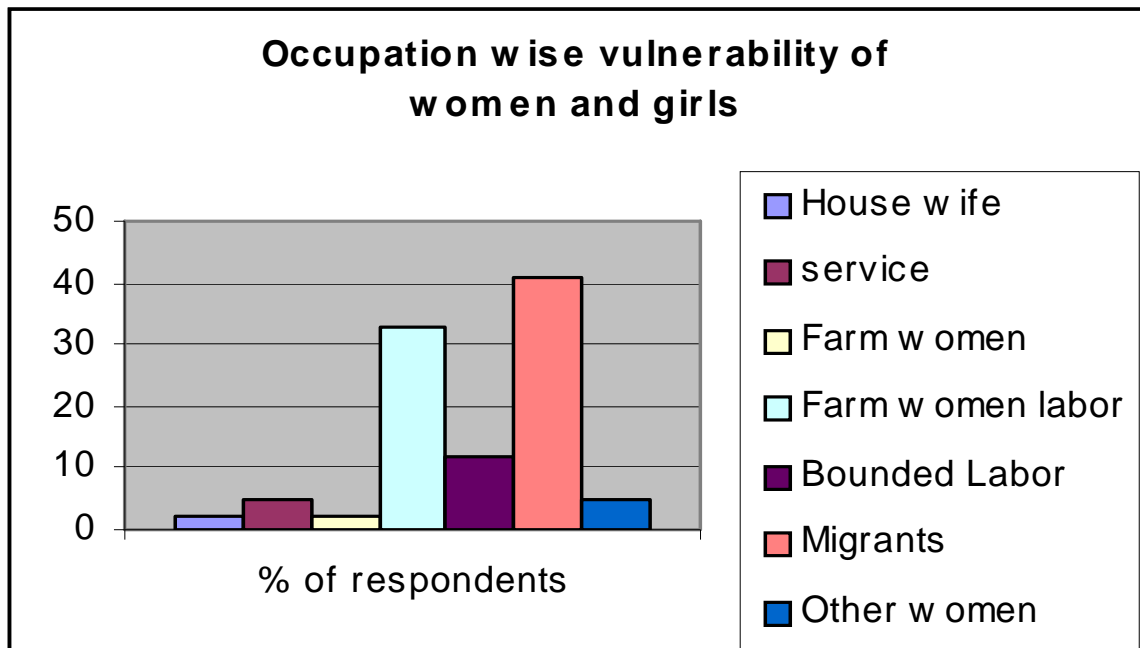
➤ **Engagement of migrants**



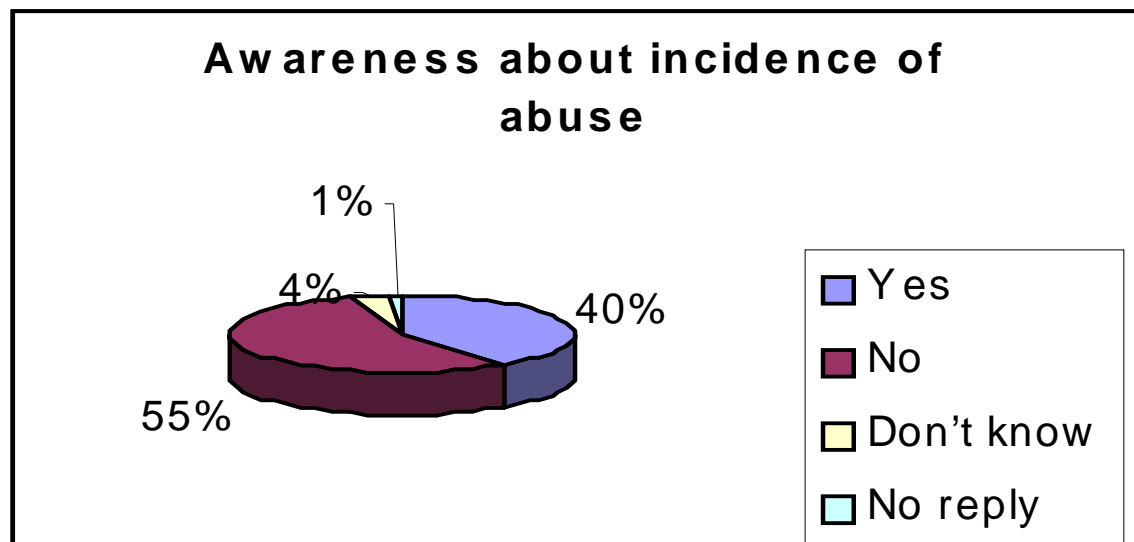
➤ **Duration of Migration**



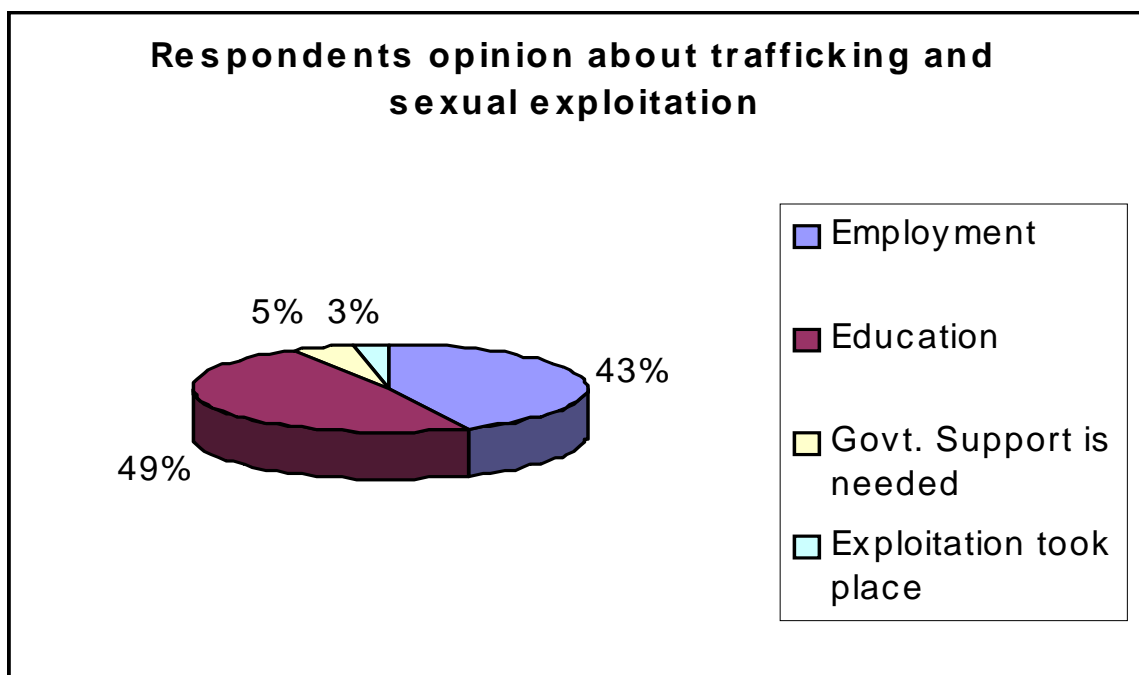
➤ **Vulnerability of migrants**



➤ **Incidence of abuse**



➤ **Opinion about exploitation:**



Use of the study: In the light of the anthropological observations it was felt that a toolkit for advocacy to check migration be developed with followings-

1. The toolkit for India and it's should focus on intra-country migration, i.e., inter-state or inter-district migration.
2. While looking at generic areas, such as HIV/AIDS should be adequately modified to suit the purpose, key message, and target populations of the toolkit.

3. The State level toolkits were prepared in English, and likewise, the National Toolkit, which was developed by compiling the State toolkits, was also prepared in English. Further recommendations will be given to donor agency for translating the same in some other languages.
4. It is also felt that the toolkit will primarily address general populations, which are potential migrants, or have already migrated, and hence will be generic in nature, as against being specific, to address a particular group, such as construction workers.

The advocacy is important to sensitize policy makers towards the issues of migrant workers like, exploitation, lack of services, and vulnerability to HIV etc. So, Advocacy with Govt ministries- Labour, Foreign, Health; Trade Unions; Civil Society and Recruiting agencies will be taken up.

Conclusion:

The state of Jharkhand is one the migrating state, especially for child laborers. Their labor is unaccountable. They usually suffer from anemia and reproductive infections. One of the main obstacles in tribal development is superstitious beliefs and practices. They think that the diseases, famines, water scarcities, weak crops, spread of epidemics and premature death, etc. befall on them only when the evil spirits are angry. Thus the socio-economic condition of the tribal are very poor caused by many factors, i.e. undulating topography, less cultivable land with no irrigation facilities, lack of Govt. infrastructure facilities and superstitious beliefs, etc.

Migration is occasioned out of complete lack of sources of livelihood. It doesn't lead to a better fortune for most of the girls going out of their homes but dark lanes where they are forever lost, where their lives end as victim of sexual exploitation in various ways and they fall prey to sexual exploitation in the brothels or outside the brothels.

- It is on this count that exploitation of female children from rural parts of Jharkhand where there is no viable source of livelihood continues. The state should have a Safe Migration Policy for safe and security of migrating people from the state. The main factors that promote vulnerability of migrant workers to HIV are lack of information and access to information, lack of services and access to services, and lack of policy implementation
- Community based intervention programmes are important to reduce vulnerability to HIV.
- To reduce this vulnerability all the sectors should come together- private, government and civil society.
- Among female workers vulnerability depends upon the countries they migrate to and the nature of work undertaken

- As the needs and vulnerability of different categories of migrants- male, female, youth/adolescent are different thus there is a need for specialised intervention.
- Awareness or information programme should be country specific.
- PLWHA are not visible, there is a need for proper documentation
 - a. Education (Adult and children's education)
 - b. Living conditions

Illegal Migration and child trafficking must be prevented through collaborative action of influential members of society and community leaders, police personals, media people, NGOs working in the field and individuals who are in professional capacity can influence state legislation to successfully combat trafficking. The advocacy is important to sensitize them towards the issues of migrant workers like, exploitation, lack of services, and vulnerability to HIV etc. So, Advocacy with; Govt ministries- Labour, Foreign, Health; Trade Unions; Civil Society and Recruiting agencies will be taken up.

In order to effectively respond to the situation there is a need to look at the issue of migration in an integrated fashion by-

- Understanding linkages between migration and vulnerability to HIV
- Focusing on illegal and undocumented migrants
- Facilitating respect for human rights, human dignity and security of migrants.
- Securing just and humane condition of work
- Ensuring access to quality health care
- Freedom of movement
- Preventing exploitation of migrant workers.
- Strengthen understanding and arrive at action oriented strategy to control illegal migration.

The case study presented in this paper clearly indicates the importance of Anthropological knowledge that helped the agencies to develop advocacy toolkit for the use by government of India in general and state government of Jharkhand in particular, to take suitable measures in the direction of safe migration. Government of Jharkhand is likely to propose legislative measures for safe migration.

This paper highlights the fact that, anthropological Knowledge can be used to advocate the problem of migration with the government and civil society to build a strong Government and NGO foundation and helping government planning. This will help the government and civil societies in introduction of new strategy for control of illegal migration.

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