

Sustainable Use of Natural Resources to Curb Migration in the Hilly Regions of Uttarakhand

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Abstract:

Since its formation Uttarakhand has economically developed but the development of the non-hilly areas outpaced the development of the hills leading to out-migration from the hills. The state has abundance of natural and human resources which should be optimally utilized for development of the hilly regions to curb migration. In this manuscript the reasons for migrations from the hills of Uttarakhand are enumerated. The manuscript also highlights how the abundant natural resources could be used for generation of employment opportunities so that the hilly region is developed and out migration can be curbed.

Keywords:

Uttarakhand, Migration, Hilly Regions, Agriculture, Cottage Industry, Tea Industry, Tourism.

Introduction to Migration:

Human migration is the movement by people from one place to another with the intention of settling, permanently or temporarily in a new location. Oxford defines migration as movement of people to a new area or country in order to find work or better living conditions.

Migration occurs when the perceived interactions of push and pull factors overcome the friction of moving.

Push factors: These are the elements of original inhabitation that are perceived negatively as they lead to the desire of leaving. For example: Poverty, drought, famine, pressure on land, fewer jobs, lack of services and basic facilities, remoteness in industry, lack of infrastructure, violence due to multiple factors, disease and lack of medical facilities, etc.

Pull factors: These are the elements of destination that are perceived positively and attract migration. For example: Water supply, electricity and improved housing, better job opportunity, higher paid jobs, better schools and hospitals, shops and entertainment, better living conditions, etc.

Friction of moving: It means cost in time, finance or emotions in leaving one location and moving to another. The strength of the Pull and Push factors need to overcome these costs to cause potential migrants to finally turn the movement into an actual relocation.

Uttarakhand: A Profile

Uttarakhand, officially called the State of Uttarakhand, is the 27th state of the Republic of India. Created on the 9th day of November, 2000, it was formed from the hill district of Uttar Pradesh under the Uttar Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2000.

The state is divided into two regions namely Kumaon (6 districts) and Garhwal (7 districts) with a total of 13 districts. Ranking 19th with respect to the size in India it has a total area of 53,483 square kilometre of which 86% is mountainous and 65% is covered by forest.

Shrouded by the Himalayas and the glaciers, in the north and veiled in thick forest in the lower parts, the topography of Uttarakhand boasts of rich forests, glaciers, mountain peaks and beautiful network of rivers. The state exhibits rich biodiversity. It is host to a large number of animals, trees, plants and rare herbs.

Migration in Uttarakhand:

The State ranks 20th among Indian States with a population of 10.09 million in 2011. According to 2011 Population Census, nearly 70 per cent of Uttarakhand population lives in its rural areas. The ten hill districts (generally referred as Hill Region) of the State account for 48.1 per cent of its population. The State had witnessed significant changes in its demographic structure, particularly during the decade of 2001-2011—a period of high economic growth in the State. It had registered a moderate growth in its population (1.74 per cent per annum) during the decade 2001-11, which was comparatively higher than the national average. Moreover, the Hill Region of the state witnessed much lower growth in population (0.70 per cent) as compared to plain districts (2.82 per cent). The rural areas of hill districts registered a lowest growth of 0.38 per cent in population during 2001-2011. Population in urban areas of hill districts substantially increased during this period.

The demographic features of the State clearly show that out-migration has become a widespread phenomenon in the Hill Region of the State. The growth of population in rural areas is less as compared to growth in urban areas.

The State faces disturbing migration numbers from hilly areas towards urban areas, majorly due to the lopsided development of the state. There are 1048 villages in the state that are uninhabited, also known as the "Ghost villages". According to Census, 2011, the Hills of Uttarakhand are filled with ghost villages and as the growth in inequality is widening, migration has emptied out the entire villages.

Though, there has been a history of high incidence of migration from Hill Region but at the same time a large number of migrants had tended towards returning to their villages. However this process of return migration seems to have stopped now as the government has taken no major steps to improve the quality and standard of living and provide employment opportunities in the Hill Regions.

Reasons for Migration in Uttarakhand:

Lack of employment opportunities is the major cause of migration in hill districts of Uttarakhand. The state reflects high incidence of migration of educated male youth and also high incidence of unemployment among the youth. The educated youth is unwilling to take up agriculture related task. The state exhibits lack of entrepreneurship.

There is lack of quality education with less number of educational institutes. The existing educational institutes face shortage of teachers and available faculty is in-proficient. Absenteeism among students and teachers is a common feature. No major facilities for technical education are available even at the block level. Besides all this, the state still witnesses high literacy rate but low technical competencies.

The hill district lack proper infrastructure and transport facilities and the existing Jerry-built infrastructure have a high cost of maintenance. The hill district have scanty basic amenities like water, electricity, drinking water etc.

The Hills also have deficient public health facilities and the ones which exist have substandard facilities and inadequate staff. People have to bear major expenses in case of illness as the traditional practice of Ayurvedic medicine is disappearing. Thus, for health-care, people have to depend on expensive quacks and untrained practitioners.

Other factors of migration are frequent damage to the infrastructure and agricultural land due to landslides. There is also destruction of crops by wild animals like pigs, bores, bears, stags, etc. Procurement of fuel wood is a major problem in the hills. Women have to travel long distance to collect fuel wood and supplies for livestock. Thus, women are highly overburdened and the males exhibit high magnitude of alcoholism.

Even after separation from Uttar Pradesh, the hilly regions face poor governance and high corruption in public offices. Poor quality assets are created under government supported programmes as there exists a nexus between local politicians, contractors and government functionaries. Thus, the hills confront insubstantial economic development.

Natural Resources and Employment Opportunities in the Hilly Regions of Uttarakhand:

The state has historically witnessed traditional agriculture and army as the major occupation of the people. However, the state being rich in natural resources is capable of creating ample of opportunities for employment and economic development especially of hilly regions to curb migration.

Augmentation of agriculture and its allied industries:

Uttarakhand has a suitable climate and soil for agriculture. The hilly regions of the state are indulged in terrace farming. The topography is suitable for fruits, flowers and tea plantation along

with vegetables. Fruits such as apples, oranges, pears, grapes, peaches, plums, apricots, litchis, mangoes and guavas can be grown in the state and therefore has immense potential for development of horticulture crops and processing units. The soil is also conducive to grow Walnuts which has a huge demand in export market.

The state is home to more than 175 species of rare medicinal, aromatic & herbal plants. It is home to nearly 4048 species of Angiosperms and Gymnosperms belonging to 1198 genera under 192 families. Of these nearly 116 species are specific to Uttarakhand. There is a huge potential for medicines and herbal product. 161 species of flora found in Uttarakhand are recognized as rare or threatened under the categorization of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Out of the 223 species of Orchids reported from the North Western Himalayas, over 150 have been reported from the State.

Uttarakhand has several agro-geo-climatic zones making it particularly conducive to commercial horticulture and floriculture. The floriculture industry is being developed in order to meet the demand of domestic as well as the foreign markets. The climate of the state makes it ideal for growing flowers all round the year. Floriculture parks with common infrastructure facilities for sorting, pre-cooling, cold chaining and processing, grading, packing and marketing facilities have been planned in order to provide adequate incentives and facilities to the industry. However, more work can be done in this direction. Floriculture can be propagated and the flowers can be exported. The government has initiated the Uttarakhand Organic Commodity Board (UOCB), a government body, founded in 2003, located in the Dehradun district of Uttarakhand. UOCB advises and assists the State Government in the overall strengthening and implementation of the institutional set up. It is engaged in and dealing with the production, processing, marketing and the promotion of organic farming in the state. The Board also focuses on promoting organic farming in the fields of land use - agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, dairy, floriculture, sericulture, apiculture, herbs and medicinal plantation, tea plantation, fisheries, forest and all related areas – for the promotion and development of organic farming in the state, and network and liaison with various department of the states.

Tea industry:

The soil and weather of Uttarakhand is very optimum for tea cultivation. Even though the tea cultivation in the region dates back to the year 1835, it lost its charm to locals after the independence as it was seen as a foreign trade brought in by British Regime. But now the government and other local people are eyeing this as a good option for economic growth in the state. The Government of Uttarakhand has formally created an independent Uttarakhand Tea Development Board, looking at tremendous potential it holds for tea cultivation. It was established on 12th February, 2004, with the prime objective of development and expansion of tea industry in the state. Since its inception it is focused on tea related development work. It has established tea gardens in Almora, Bageshwar, Champawat, Chamoli, Nainital, Pithoragarh and Rudraprayag districts of Uttarakhand. The commercialization of this labour intensive, eco-friendly industry through the participation of villagers, small and marginal farmers as a unique prolific cash crop model of its own, has added a new dimension to the traditional farming in the state. The state government and the Tea Development Board have come up with various schemes for the people with agricultural land in hilly regions suitable for tea cultivation. These tea gardens have huge potential for providing employment to a large number of locals in fields as well as in the tea

factories set up for processing it. Till date the board has set up 5 factories in the state. An area of 572.19 hectares of organic tea garden and 593.81 hectares of inorganic tea gardens has been developed. Since it is a labour intensive venture, a total of 558,202 man days were generated in the financial year 2017-18 for the local people. At present, 2548 locals are deployed in tea Gardens of which women have the representation of 70%. This industry has great potential for improving the living conditions of the locals by providing year round employment.

Cottage Industry:

Cottage industry has a lot of scope in Uttarakhand. Fruitage and Gandhi Ashram are two brilliant success stories to quote here. The government should thus focus on development of small scale industries centred towards manufacturing and marketing of sauces, jams, jellies, squashes, pickles etc. using the produce of the state. Fruitage acts as an exemplary factory to be cited here. Industry focused on creating herbal/organic products and organic, green and herbal tea will also be beneficial for the locals. As most of the states in India have banned the use of plastics, government can start various initiatives to produce disposable plates and spoons using leaves from Pine trees and various other trees. Baskets and other decorative items can be made from the bark of trees, pine cones and bamboos.

FRUITAGE, BHOWALI



(Source: Internet)

In 2018, Uttarakhand Policy for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship was launched by the government to increase the employment of the workers, competitiveness of enterprise and inclusiveness of growth.

In April 2018, the second mega food park was inaugurated by Union Minister of Food Processing Industries at Mahuakhera Ganj village, Kashipur in Udham Singh Nagar district. M/s Himalayan Mega Food Park Private Ltd has been set up at Rs 99.96 crore (US\$ 15.51 million) and will benefit 25,000 farmers and neighbouring districts.

The Kumaon University of Uttarakhand has also launched MBA in Rural Management and Entrepreneurship Development, a postgraduate program, in 2018 to propagate entrepreneurship qualities among the graduates and ensure rural development.

Tourism industry:

Uttarakhand is a well renowned scenic, religious and wildlife tourism destination. Places like Nainital, Ranikhet, Ramnagar, Mukteshwar, Jageshwar, Mussoorie, Lansdowne, Chamoli, Munsiyari, Sheetlaket, Ramgarh etc. attract a lot of tourist. However the government needs to ensure that tourism act as an employment provider to the locals, by encouraging locals to open hotels, shops and other trades to help tourist enjoy their stay. The government should also ensure that the natural resources and traditions of the state are not destroyed by the outsiders as they are very vital for sustenance of locals and the area. Ecotourism should be promoted. Ghost villages can be developed and abandoned houses can be converted into beautiful home stays. Itmenaan Estate in Binsar Himalayas near Almora gives recognition to this concept. It provides employment to various locals and has led to the development of the village and brought people back into the village.

ITMENAAN ESTATE, BINSAR



Exterior View of the Estate



Bedroom



Washroom

Itmenaan Estate - Tariff

*Special rates available for 2 night, 3 night stay or on booking the entire estate of 4 rooms. Call us on 9818705508 or write to info@itmenaanlodges.com for quotation.
Tariff valid from 1 March 2018 to 30 June 2018 / 16 September 2018 to 15 April 2019*

Kafal Room
Double Occupancy: Rs 5500 per room per night including breakfast, 18% GST extra

Oak Rooms 1 & 2
Double Occupancy: Rs 6800 per room per night including breakfast, 18% GST extra

Deodar Cottage
Double Occupancy: Rs 7800 per room per night including breakfast, 18% GST extra
Special Monsoon Tariff: Valid from 1 July 2018 to 15 September 2018 (Excluding long weekend)

Kafal Room
Double Occupancy: Rs 4800 per room per night including breakfast, 18% GST extra

Oak Rooms 1 & 2
Double Occupancy: Rs 5800 per room per night including breakfast, 18% GST extra

Deodar Cottage
Double Occupancy: Rs 6800 per room per night including breakfast, 18% GST extra

Extra person in the room:
Infant to 5 years – complimentary
6 to 12 years – Rs 500 + GST
13 years onwards – Rs 1000 + GST

Meal Charges Excluding Taxes
Infant to 5 years – Complimentary
Lunch or Dinner (6-12 years): Rs 350 Meal + 5% GST
Lunch or Dinner (13 years onwards): Rs 600 Each Meal + 5% GST

(Source: Itmenaan Estate Binsar official website)

The Wise Wall Project is an initiative of Project FUEL under which the entire village of Saur in Garhwal and Khati Village in Kumaun are painted. The project was undertaken to draw attention towards the problem of out-migration and increasing numbers of ghost villages and also to increase the livelihood of the inhabitants.

VILLAGE SAUR, GARHWAL



(Source: www.thebetterindia.com)

VILLAGE KHATI, KUMAUN



(Source: www.wisewallproject.com)

The Hills of Kumaon and Garhwal are known for various temples and shrines. These places can be developed to attract pilgrims. Uttarakhand has a great fauna diversity to compliment the floral diversity. It includes about 102 species of mammals, 623 species of birds, 124 species of fish, 69 species of reptiles and 19 species of amphibians. Highly endangered species like the Snow Leopard, Musk Deer, Tiger, Asian Elephant, Bharal, Himalayan Monal, Cheer Pheasant, King Cobra etc. find suitable habitat in the forests of Uttarakhand. This precious natural wealth is our common heritage. In order to conserve this heritage, the state has declared twelve areas as 'Protected' including 6 National Parks and 6 Wildlife Sanctuaries. Nearly 65% of the geographical area of the State is under forest cover, of which over 12% comes under the Protected Area network. Government should increase the number of such areas for preserving the natural resources. The Corbett National Park, established in 1936 is the first National Park of the Asian mainland. The Nandadevi Biosphere Reserve, established under the "Man and Biosphere" programme of UNESCO has the honour of being Uttarakhand's only and the country's second Biosphere Reserve. This biodiversity wealth is the pride of Uttarakhand. These Heritage areas can be developed and help provide employment to various people living in the nearby villages.

The state government should also focus on upgrading the Jolly Grant airport as an international airport in coordination with Airport Authority of India. It should develop more railway routes into the state and create roads to the interior areas to make travel easy in the state.

Conclusion:

Though Uttarakhand has economically developed and progressed since its formation, there are huge regional inequalities within the State. The pace of development of the hills and plains is so disturbingly different that it has created a bridge between them which is being crossed by people through migration. The development of the hills needs to be focused on to curb migration. A plethora of issues and areas require immediate government concern and intervention. These include consolidation of farm land, diversification of crops towards high value and less irrigation intensive crops; better R&D of agricultural extension services, improving access to markets for farm and non-farm produces, use of MNREGA for farm development, village tourism, religious tourism, eco-tourism, drinking water, road connectivity, quality education and technical competency, skill development training, quality health services, mobile services for health checkups, promotion of village level organizations for development, etc.

The state has an ample of opportunities to use its natural resources to provide employment to the citizens of the state. The government should focus more on developing the villages and making them self sustaining so that migration can be minimised. The government should develop the infrastructure, provide better educational institutes, hospitals with better facilities and doctors, better transport facilities. The NGOs and the government organisations should focus on skill development keeping in mind the natural resources available in the area. Tourism should be promoted by developing the scenic and religious places of the state. Ghost villages should be transformed into beautiful home stays. Food processing and manufacturing industries should be propagated. The government should aim at marketing of the fruits and fruits related edibles produced in the State. Propagation of the tea industry should be among the major plans of the state. If the government provides ample of job opportunities and helps improve the standard of living by

providing better facilities and infrastructure, the migration from the villages of the state will reduce and also lead to economic development.

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