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Returning home: Effects of COVID-19 on migrant households in Bihar

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**RETURNING HOME:**

**EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON MIGRANT HOUSEHOLDS IN BIHAR**

**BACKGROUND**
- Many migrants from metro cities of India began to return to their native places with the rise in COVID-19 cases in the cities and the extension of lockdown till May 31, 2020; With relaxation of travel restrictions, Bihar started receiving migrants returning home. The government made arrangements for them to be quarantined before they travelled to their villages and homes.
- The key objectives of this study are to understand the extent of return migration, impact of lockdown on migrant household livelihoods and the opportunities for household economic revival through social protection schemes.

**METHODS**
- Data was gathered between May 13-22, 2020 from the existing study cohort of households under the project UDAYA (www.projectudaya.in).
- Interviews were conducted with a total of 794 participating households enrolled. Of the 794 households, 264 were migrant households.
- Eligibility: Young boys/girls who were UDAYA participants consented to participate in the regular surveys. Participants who responded to the survey were members of migrant households.

**PROFILE AND MIGRATION STATUS**

Profile of study participants:
- Mean age (SD): 23.5 years (7.3 years); Males – 33%; Females: 67%; Currently married – 60%; Caste: Scheduled caste/tribe (SC/ST) - 18%, Other backward castes (OBC) – 64%, General caste – 18%.
- About half of the households lost complete income. Over two-thirds of the households who reported complete loss of income due to lockdown reported that they have finances that are sufficient for only less than a month.
- Job loss was relatively higher among the SC/STs. About one-fifth of them reported that their primary source of income was from government schemes.
- Almost all migrant households received ration from the public distribution system (PDS), although only 42% reported sufficiency of ration.
- More than half of the migrant households received governmental financial assistance from the government and the average amount received was Rs.1320.

**IMPACT OF LOCKDOWN ON MIGRANT HOUSEHOLDS**

Impact of lockdown on migrant household earnings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complete loss of income</th>
<th>Major reduction in income</th>
<th>Minor effect</th>
<th>No impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While there is considerable return migration, not all migrant households reported having their family member returned. Thus, among migrant households, about half of them may experience return migration.

Most of those who returned intend to go back to destination areas in 4-5 months. However, they may experience economic hardship without enough jobs or income.

Half of the migrant households received governmental assistance. And only three-fifths of migrant households reported sufficiency of ration received. Immediate financial or work for cash assistance shall be extended to rural migrant households, especially to those who lost jobs or income.

**LIMITATIONS**

Results of this brief may be interpreted cautiously due to certain limitations. First and foremost, the survey was conducted among UDAYA cohort of migrant households who had access to phones and consented to participate in the survey. Further, the survey was conducted during the first few days of Lockdown 4.0 in May 2020, around the time when migrants started returning home. Due to this, not many migrant households received their family members back home before the end of the survey. Finally, the brief presents results only of access to services among migrant households.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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